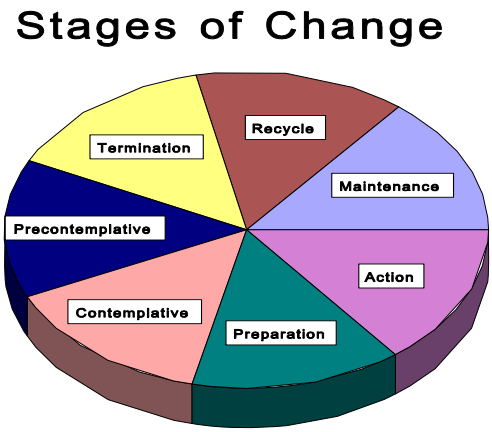
STAGES OF CHANGE

The Transtheoretical Model, or 'Stages of Change Approach' provides a framework that helps to understand not only the process involved in making changes, but also the activities individuals can engage in to make self-changes, or to assist others to make changes. The Transtheoretical Model is a model of intentional change that focuses on individual decision-making.

The Stages of Change is a simplistic framework, based on a number of basic beliefs about intentional change--*it is gradual, logical, sequential and controllable*. The framework does not look at different schools of psychology and sociology that attempt to explain *why* individuals have problems; it instead focuses on *how* people change. This model has attracted worldwide attention amongst health professionals, and addictions specialists, particularly in Canada and Great Britain. The AFM has incorporated this model into its programming.



Precontemplative - the stage where the client is not considering change as there is no perceived need for any change.

Contemplative - the stage where the client is thinking about making some changes.

Preparation - the stage where the client is preparing or becoming determined to make change.

Action - the stage where the client actively making changes through modifying behaviour.

Maintenance - the stage where the client is consistently maintaining changes made over a period of time.

Recycle - the stage where the client falls back to an earlier stage of change.

Termination - the stage where the client no longer needs to attend to the task of maintaining the change.

The model is founded on three elements that are of equal importance—the stages of change; the processes of change; and the techniques of change. These three elements are inter-related and inter-dependent. To be most effective, someone making change in their own life, or those assisting others to make changes must focus on all three elements at once.

The stages of change describe how willing an individual is to make particular changes in their life at that moment. As well, the stages describe what type of work the individual needs and is able to do to make the change. The processes of change describe strategies that are useful to make changes. The techniques of change describe individual activities, specific to each person making changes. The techniques of change help to achieve the strategies of the processes of change.

When effectively combined, the stages, processes and techniques of change suggest a menu of options that help changers to know what to do, why to do it, and when to do it to be most successful in their change efforts. The Stages of Change Approach has been widely adopted as a practice model for service delivery by addictions agencies throughout Canada.

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