

# HEALTH

## Education

### Start & Maintain Your Lifestyle Change

It's the New Year, and once again you are feeling motivated to eat better, exercise more, drink less, or any number of the positive life changes you want to make. This year, do not think of your goals as resolutions but instead as an evolution. A lifestyle change takes time and requires support. Once you are ready to make a change, the difficult task is committing and following through. A helpful tool to take the next step in your lifestyle change is to categorize your current position in one of these 4 stages of change.

#### Stage 1: Contemplation

In this stage, you think change may be a good idea, but you are not fully sold that now is the right time or how that change would fit into your life.

To leave this stage, do some research. Create a pros and cons list to evaluate if this is the right change for you at the moment. Taking this step will help you create a detailed goal. Does your goal align with a dream of yours? If not, be sure to pick a goal where you will be the most motivated. Once this has been done, make a commitment to yourself on achieving this goal. Tell a friend about your lifestyle change or write a promise to yourself and post it in a visible place.

#### Stage 2: Preparation

Now, the planning begins. Time to iron out the details on how this change will work best for you. In your preparation, aim to scout out easy obstacles—finding the time, an inevitable obstacle, etc. Then, brainstorm ways to leap over these obstacles—wake up earlier, find a substitute for your inevitable encounter, etc.

To progress from this stage, mark your change on the calendar. Pick a day, time, and place. Pack your bag and place it by the door!

#### Stage 3: Action

Look at you! You are acting on your plan and making that lifestyle change. However, remember to start small. After you have identified a short term goal and created a way to accomplish it, focus on one behavior and break it down into smaller tasks. Write daily or weekly tasks and cross them off when you have accomplished them! Remember that replacing unhealthy behaviors with healthy ones will develop over time.

To progress from this stage, stay consistent! Do not let your lifestyle change lose priority as you start to make your new routine. Trust the process, and stick to the plan.



#### Stage 4: Maintenance

You did it! You are finally acclimated to your lifestyle change and have maintained it for over 6 months. To take it to the next level, find a small change that provides even more of an enjoyable challenge. For example, maybe try exercising a little longer each work out, drinking less during the week days and weekends, or anything else that pushes you to keep progressing!

#### References:

<http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/lifestyle-changes.aspx>

<https://www.health.harvard.edu/healthbeat/7-ways-to-jumpstart-healthy-change-in-your-life>

<https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/diet-nutrition/changing-habits-better-health>



From Corporate Fitness Works Team Leader, Natalie Gish