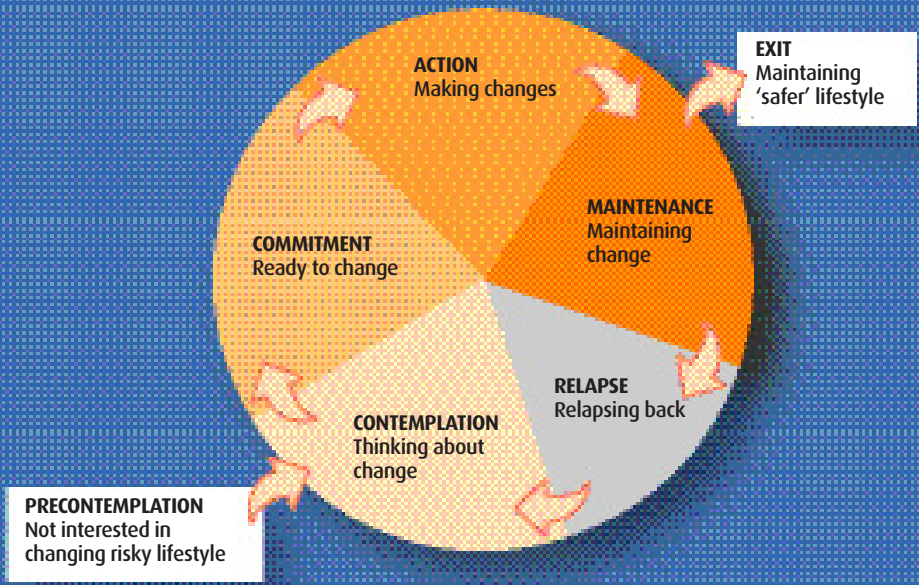


HEALTH PROMOTION: CHANGING HEALTH BEHAVIOUR

Aiming to move one step around the cycle can change health-related behaviour



CHANGING HEALTH BEHAVIOUR

- Achieving changes in health-related behaviour forms an element of many of the National Service Frameworks.
- Helping patients make healthy choices is a challenge for all nurses.
- Individuals have freedom of choice and some patients may choose to continue with unhealthy behaviour (such as smoking) because they believe the benefits outweigh the risks.
- Changing health-related behaviour is a complex process involving psychological, social and environmental issues.

STAGES OF CHANGE

- Prochaska and DiClemente (1983) identified stages in the process of behaviour change.
- Research has demonstrated that this behaviour change model is effective in changing a variety of health-related behaviours such as drug abuse and weight control (Ewles and Simnett, 1999)
- Using this model, health care professionals can help patients to make changes by focusing on moving them one step further around the cycle.

PRECONTEMPLATION STAGE

- At this point the patient has no awareness of a need to change.
- Health education and advice from health care professionals can be used at this stage to raise awareness of the unhealthy behaviour.
- Questions, delivered in a nonjudgemental way such as 'how do you feel about your smoking?' may prompt consideration of the health-related behaviour.

CONTEMPLATION STAGE

- This is where the change starts.
- Patients in this stage are sufficiently motivated to begin to think about making a change.
- Patient self-empowerment is key to moving through this stage of the cycle.

COMMITMENT STAGE

- Patients in this stage are making a serious decision to change an aspect of their health-related behaviour.
- In this stage health care professionals can help turn a decision into action by developing an action plan.
- Coping strategies and sources of support should be identified.
- A date to change behaviour and to review progress can be set.

ACTION STAGE

- Patients in this stage are changing their health-related behaviour.
- Support during this phase can be given through continued sessions with a health care professional, as part of a support group, from friends and family, via telephone helplines or a combination of some or all of these.

MAINTENANCE STAGE

- This is the stage where patients are endeavouring to maintain the behaviour change they have made.
- Using the coping strategies identified during the commitment stage will improve maintenance.
- Continuing to gain support is also vital.
- Satisfaction is gained from maintaining the behavioural change.
- Most patients are not successful at maintaining their health behaviour change at their first attempt.

RELAPSE STAGE

- In this stage they have relapsed back into their old behaviour.
- Health care professionals who can help patients identify this relapse as a stage on the way to making their change can move them on to the contemplation stage again.
- On average smokers take three cycles of the change model to successfully quit smoking (Prochaska and DiClemente, 1983).

EXIT STAGE

- This is the stage where a health-related change has been successfully made and can be maintained.

REFERENCES

Ewles, L., Simnett, I. (1999) *Promoting Health: A Practical Guide*. London: Baillière Tindall.

Prochaska, J.O., DiClemente, C.C. (1984) *The Transtheoretical Approach: Crossing Traditional Boundaries of Therapy*. Homewood, IL: Dow Jones-Irwin.

The information given serves as a general reference. Nurses should consult their individual trust policies on clinical procedures.