

Are You Ready for Change?

Are you thinking about changing a bad habit or unhealthy behavior? Take this “ready or not” quiz and see just how ready you are.

Examples of problem health behaviors that are difficult to change include:

- overeating and other eating disorders
- abuse of drugs, alcohol or pornography
- smoking or chewing tobacco
- compulsive gambling or compulsive Internet use
- any stubborn habit that has the potential to negatively affect your health

Experts in behavioral change have found that people move through five distinct stages when they go about trying to change a health-related behavior. The stages are:

1. **Precontemplation:** having no desire to change
2. **Contemplation:** knowing one should change but not taking any steps toward change
3. **Preparation:** taking the initial steps to change, such as learning more, seeking advice or simply committing to change
4. **Action:** engaging in change behavior
5. **Maintenance:** changes are incorporated into a person's daily life

It is important to assess where you are in this process so that you can take appropriate action to move through your current stage and enhance your chance of success. To find your stage of readiness for change, read each statement below and circle the response that best reflects your current thinking on a problem behavior or habit.

1. Regarding my awareness about this behavior:
 - Others have suggested that I have a problem behavior but I don't agree.
 - I might have a problem behavior but I am not sure.
 - I have a problem behavior.
2. When a loved one or trusted friend suggests that I may have a problem behavior...
 - I am likely to tune them out, change the subject or get defensive.
 - I don't like it, but I know that they see something that worries them and are right in expressing concern.
 - I am ready to listen and talk about it.
3. This problem behavior ...
 - is really just a nuisance and I don't have time to deal with it.
 - is causing me worry and/or distress.
 - is causing me, and some of the people I care about, significant worry and/or distress.
4. When I think about my problem behavior...
 - I usually make excuses, rationalize or minimize its impact on my life.
 - I want to change but I don't because of fear, pride or lack of motivation.
 - I really want to change but don't know how to begin or continue once I start.
5. Regarding knowledge of my problem behavior:
 - I know very little about it.
 - I have begun learning more about it.
 - I have learned a great deal about it.
6. Regarding my knowledge of resources for my problem:
 - I don't know of any resources.
 - I have learned about some of the resources available but don't feel I have enough information.
 - I have more than adequate knowledge about how or where to get help.
7. Regarding my current motivation for change:
 - I have practically no, or very little, motivation at this time.
 - I have some motivation to change but I will need more to succeed.
 - I am very motivated to change.
8. Regarding my current plans to change:

- At this time, I have no plans to change.
 - I am thinking about change and the impact it would have on my life.
 - I have a definite plan for change.
9. Regarding my support for change from others:
- I have almost no support from others.
 - I have some support but it may not be enough.
 - I have excellent support.
10. Regarding previous attempts to change:
- I have never seriously attempted to change this behavior.
 - I have tried to change on one or more occasions but have failed miserably.
 - I have tried to change before and have had some temporary success.

Scoring key

If you answered “a” to any question, give yourself 1 point.

If you answered “b” to any question, give yourself 5 points.

If you answered “c” to any question, give yourself 10 points.

Results

Total your score. If your score is:

10-15 points, you are in the **precontemplation stage**. Your score suggests that you are not yet ready to engage in changing this problem behavior. Many people never acquire the motivation or knowledge necessary to move beyond precontemplation.

16-40 points, you are in the **contemplation stage**. Your score suggests that you are considering changing this behavior but are not quite ready. People in this stage seek knowledge and additional encouragement before they engage in behavior change.

41-100 points, you are in the **preparation stage**. Congratulations. Your score suggests that you are preparing to change this behavior. People in this stage have acquired additional knowledge and support and have a viable plan.

Sources: *Changing for Good* by J.O. Prochaska, J. C. Norcross, and C.C. DiClemente. Morrow, 1994; *The Transtheoretical Approach: Crossing the Traditional Boundaries of Therapy* by J.O. Prochaska and C.C. DiClemente. Krieger Publishing Company, 1984.

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