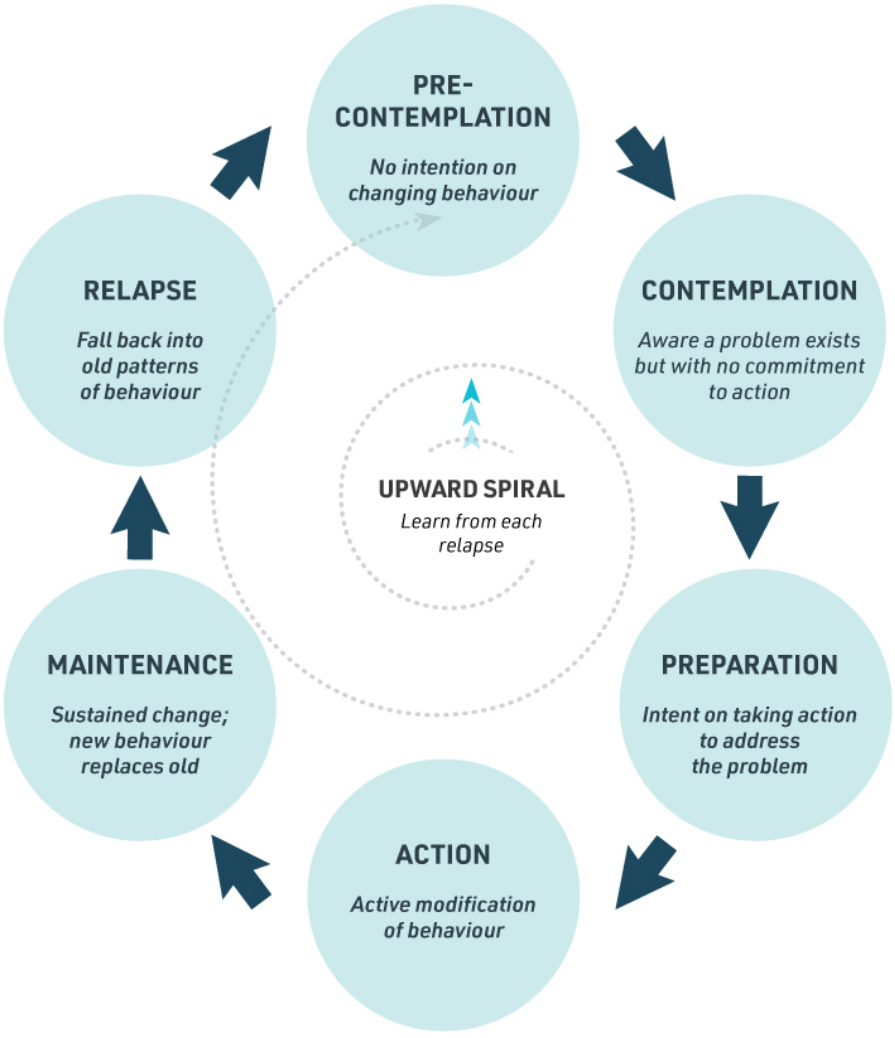
HelloSundayMorning

Stages of Change

The Stages of Change model is a great resource to use when looking at behavior change. According to the model, change is a process and has several stages – and it is important to be aware of what stage you're in.



Pre-contemplation is the first stage and where most people start – having no intention of changing our behavior. Each subsequent stage gets us a little bit closer to deciding to make a change - right up to the **Action stage**. After that, we are ideally in **Maintenance** – where we keep up the changes and integrate into our daily lives.

Relapse is included in the model as the last stage – allowing for the possibility that we may slip back into old behavior, and this may result in us progressing through the Stages again – until we arrive back at **Maintenance**.

This model is really useful when we are looking at any type of behavior change, not just alcohol use – it applies to exercise, changing jobs, starting or ending a relationship – anything that requires us to make a decision about something, and take action to make it happen.

Often what moves us between the stages is a catalyst such as a loss (eg. the loss of a friend due to excessive drinking), or a realization of the costs of the behavior (eg. visiting our GP and learning of blood test results). It can also be the realization of what we are missing out on, or a desire to succeed (eg. realizing we feel more energetic without alcohol or seeing friends improving their health after cutting back).

This model is also useful for knowing what kind of support to get:

- If you're in the **Preparation stage**, you may benefit from doing some reading about what others have found useful when changing their drinking habits or starting to keep track of your drinks.
- It can also be good to recognise if you might be experiencing a loss of motivation – if you have slipped back from **Action** into **Preparation** – and the kinds of things that might be impacting you.

Often we can slip back one or two steps in the Stages of Change if we have experienced barriers (e.g. stress, social pressure, old triggers), however understanding this and finding ways of boosting motivation can help you to get back on track.