Wellness Snapshot

# Stages of Healthy Behaviour Change



Have you ever tried to change a behaviour, but then somehow couldn't do it? You may start and feel very motivated, but suddenly that motivation is gone and you fall back into old habits. Change is hard. But why?

It's important to understand that most of our behaviours are habitual or automatic. Think about brushing your teeth - you've done it so many times that the habit becomes automatic! Behaviour change is hard because our brains get stuck in fixed patterns. But the good news is that our brains are moldable. When you repeat a new behaviour, it becomes stronger, and this is what makes a healthy behaviour become a habit.

So, you're ready to make a change! According to experts, there are 6 stages of behaviour change. Let's look at each one and see if you can identify which stage you're at:

1. **Precontemplation** is when there is no intention to change. Many individuals in this stage are unaware or unaccepting of their problematic behaviours.
2. **Contemplation** is when people are aware that a problem exists, and are thinking about overcoming it, but have not yet made a commitment to take action.
3. **Preparation** is when a person is ready to make a change. They become committed to changing and are motivated to take the necessary steps.
4. **Action** is when a person modifies their behavior, experiences, or environment to overcome their problems. Action requires commitment of time and energy.
5. **Maintenance** is when people work to prevent relapse and consolidate the gains attained during action.
6. **Relapse** is when people slip back into old behaviors and habits. Relapsing is a normal part of the process of change. The key is to identify the trigger that caused the slip and look for new strategies to maintain the change.