

Guidance for Effective Conversations/Engagement with Students & Families

Stages of Change Model

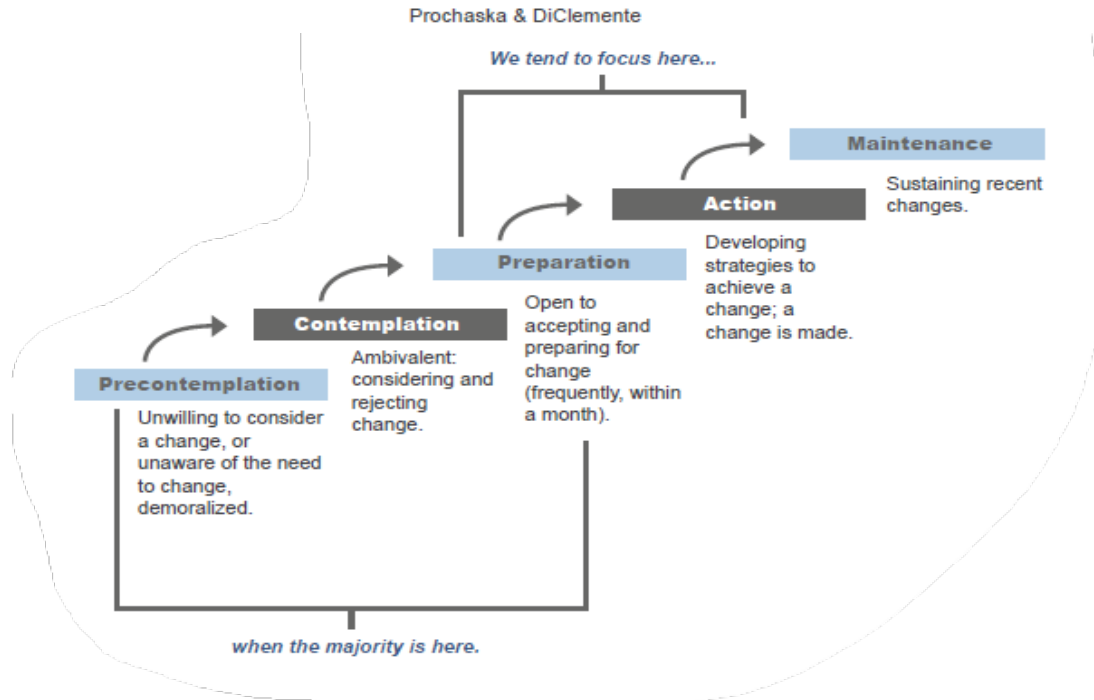


Figure 1¹

Strategies to Consider for Each Stage

Precontemplation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Validate lack of readiness (“I understand that you may not be ready yet.”) • Clarify that the decision is theirs (“I realize that this is your decision.”)
Contemplation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Validate lack of readiness • Clarify that the decision is theirs • Encourage evaluation of pros and cons • Identify and promote positive outcome
Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and assist person in problem solving regarding obstacles • Help identify social support • Encourage small initial steps
Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on support • Bolster self-efficacy for dealing with obstacles • Combat feelings of loss and look at long-term benefits • Provide positive affirmations
Maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan for follow-up support • Reinforce internal rewards

¹ Northeast and Caribbean Addiction Technology Transfer Center. (February, 2021). The Transtheoretical Model of Change: A Model for the Treatment of Substance Use Disorders. Institute for Research, Education and Services in Addiction, Universidad Central del Caribe, Bayamón, PR

Tips for Parent/Family Conversations

Strategies for **hesitant or conflicted parent/guardian** (not at the action stage)

- Use statements like:
 - I hear hesitation in your voice – are there things about this that concern you?
- Be prepared for concerns over logistics, transportation, childcare, insurance, school/parent conflict, family concerns, privacy concerns

Strategies for **angry or frustrated parent/guardian** (not at the action stage)

- Make sure you are grounded and take care of yourself (deep breaths)
- Remember this isn't about your call (they may be responding to past trauma, fear, etc.)
- Give space and allow the parent to vent – hear their perspective
- See if there are any areas you can work together to move forward
- It's ok to continue the conversation later and come back to this ("It sounds like... - is there a better day or time to discuss this? I can call tomorrow?") – give them options
- Be patient – change will happen as the parent/guardian are ready

Strategies for **unresponsive parent/guardian** (those who have been unable to be reached)

- Have school staff ask the student for alternative ways to contact the parent/guardians
- Use school staff/resources with ways to reach out to homes or make home visits

Other Strategies

- Remember to **address language barriers** and have a plan to communicate in a way that is understandable and preferred by families – be prepared with translators or other resources
- **Validate and empathize** with their struggles
- **Don't challenge or blame** but try to speak to their intentions
 - "I know you care about your child and you're trying hard to help him/her – We believe SAP could offer supports to help him/her be more successful."
 - "Do you have any suggestions for us when (insert child's name) is struggling with challenges at school?"
 - "What supports can we help you with right now?"
- Parents/guardians may ask who referred their child or why they were referred
 - Let them know students can be referred by teachers, other school personnel, peers, or themselves – Students are referred because someone is concerned about the child
 - Use any observable data collected to explain the school's concerns – share data about the referral reason/concerns but also share strengths identified
- Parents/guardians may ask for time to think about it or talk it over with their spouse/partner
 - Make a plan to follow-up and ask for the best time and method to communicate
 - Normalize the need to ask questions later and offer ways for them to reach out via phone/email
 - Invite ongoing communication and let them know they will be engaged throughout the process
 - Thank them for their time