

Change Talk in Nursing

Precontemplation

Contemplation

Preparation

Action

Maintenance

	Precontemplation	Contemplation	Preparation	Action	Maintenance
Definition:	Not ready to change	Considering a change	Preparing to act	Implementing the behavior	Maintaining the behavior
Language to look for:	"I won't..." "I can't..."	"I may..." "I'm thinking about..."	"I will..." "I'm planning to..."	"I am..."	"I still am..." "I have been..."
Patient actions taken:	Justifying barriers	Talking about it with peers, learning about it	Planning how it will happen by creating goals, doing research, finding support...	Implementing, assessing, and adjusting the plan. Moving past barriers.	Behaviors become habit
What the nurse can say:	<p><i>Acknowledge barriers, feelings, and reasons NOT to make a change</i></p> <p>I hear what you're saying. You don't want to/can't ___ because ___ and that is a very real and valid feeling/reason.</p> <p>You do ___ (negative behavior) because ___ (benefit it provides them). What else ___ (provides similar benefit, feeling, outcome).</p> <p>If you could ___ (remove that barrier) what would that do for your life/health? What would that look like for you?</p>	<p><i>Identify motivators</i></p> <p>Is now an OK time to talk about ___?</p> <p>It sounds like ___ is something that you're open to.</p> <p>What is making you consider this change?</p> <p>What would life be like if you made this change?</p> <p>What are the pros and cons of taking the action?</p> <p>How will doing ___ help you prioritize what is really important in your life?</p>	<p><i>Create a SMART goal:</i> What would you like to be consistently doing in a few months?</p> <p><i>Create behavioral steps:</i> How can you break this down into smaller, achievable steps?</p> <p>How do you see this fitting into your day?</p> <p>When will you?</p> <p>What will you need for support or accountability?</p> <p>What are some concerns you have as you implement this? How will you work through these?</p>	<p><i>Celebrate successes!</i></p> <p>I noticed you did ___ today! How did it feel?</p> <p>What helped you be successful?</p> <p>What motivated you?</p> <p>What do you like about what you are doing?</p> <p>What made it difficult?</p> <p>How could you work around these challenges if they come up again?</p> <p>What have you learned from this?</p>	<p><i>May need to set new goals to get re-inspired</i></p> <p>What is next for you?</p> <p><i>*For a behavior that started in the hospital:</i> How might you keep this going after discharge?</p> <p><i>*For a new admission:</i> How can I support you to keep up your goals while you are here?</p> <p>What do you need to keep yourself accountable?</p> <p>What will you do when you get off course?</p> <p>How can you regain your inspiration and motivation?</p>
What the nurse should avoid:	Avoid judgment and overwhelming the client.	Avoid moving them ahead of where they are (don't push to planning too soon).	Avoid telling them what/how they should be doing.	Avoid viewing setbacks as failures. Instead, see them as learning opportunities.	Avoid judgment and telling them what to do.
Key points:	Respect the patient's readiness, emotions, needs, and autonomy over their choices. Look at challenges as possibilities.	Focus on values, vision, strengths, and how the change would impact their life.	Experiment with solutions and approaches to the goal. Help the patient navigate barriers. Make sure the action is reasonable!	Keep strengths and values in mind. Help them connect with social supports.	The patient is at risk for slipping back into old habits—help them prepare for when this happens!

Skills to Use

Above all, offer unconditional positive regard and a non-judgemental space!

Get on their level: Taking a seat and physically getting on the patient's eye-level allows space for an open conversation. This is a great way to help the patient feel heard.

Building rapport: Building trust and connection with the patient. This can also lead to change-talk in nutrition, movement, stress management, sleep, etc!

FAVE (First acknowledge, validate, and empathize): Before doing anything else, acknowledge the patient's experience, validate their experience and emotions, and express warm and empathetic understanding (via Michael Arloski, PhD, PCC, NBC-HWC).

Open-ended questions: Avoid questions with yes/no answers as these shut down conversation. Instead, get curious! Ask: How will you ___? When will you ___? What has worked for you in the past?

Active listening: Goal is to have the patient feel understood and validated. Examples:

- Paraphrasing/Restating – allows the patient's own words and beliefs to sink in
- Use of Silence – wait before responding – allows deepening impact of client statement
- Requesting Clarification – when you're unsure, ask for elaboration. Often allows client to deepen their thoughts
- Acknowledging – give the patient credit for accomplishments, notice every bit of success and celebrate it
- Summarization – periodically and then at end of conversation

Assessing what is important to the patient (their vision): What would you like your health to look like? How would you like to manage your diabetes? Explore how patients want to take control of their health... strategies for disease management, treatment, etc.

Reframing: Frame patient's negative experience into positive terms. Reframing to a positive perspective can make it easier to brainstorm, action plan, and have forward movement.

Utilize a whole-person approach: Patients are more than just their diagnoses and medications – what else is impacting the person's health and wellbeing? Use open-ended questions and active listening to explore other barriers such as social, stress, sleep, environmental, etc.

Summarize the conversation: Ask the patient for takeaways and learnings. Use nursing judgment for when to implement. In some cases, the nurse can summarize instead (especially in "I won't" phase).

When to use change talk

Discharge education: What questions do you have about these instructions? How do you see yourself fitting x into your day? When might you...? Discussions around patients taking medications as recommended.

- Explore barriers (Financial? Knowledge? Logistics such as picking up meds or remembering to take them? Side effects?)
- Empower patients to co-create solutions
- Ask open-ended questions to explore what issue might exist (What is your biggest struggle with this medication? When will you/ how will you: get meds into the house, set up med so you take them as recommended... Walk me through your day and how you best see yourself fitting your med in...

Ambulation and self-care while inpatient: Explore pros/cons (cons first, pros last). What do you know about the benefits of ambulating?