

Counseling for Behavioral Risks

Tailor counseling to your client's stage of change

Research shows that individuals adopt new behaviors in stages. Different counseling techniques are needed for each of the three stages presented below.

- a. Use your client's response to the Client Nutrition Assessment form to identify his/her stage of change.
 - 1-2 = Action
 - 3 = Contemplation
 - 4 = Precontemplation
- b. Use the following information about each stage of change to tailor counseling for your client.

Action

People in action, the desirable stage, are *doing something*. They may be participating in the behavior at less than the recommended level or they may be maintaining the behavior at an adequate level (e.g., "Yes, I exercise a couple of times per week and I enjoy it.").

Goal: Support the patient in continuing their behavior change.

How?

- Reward them with **praise**
- **Review** their current behavior pattern
- Have patient identify social **supporters**
- Have patient identify **barriers** to continuing the behavior activity (relapse prevention)
- Help patient **develop solutions** to barriers
- **Follow up** on their behavior change at future appointments

Precontemplation

Precontemplators may realize that a change is indicated, but are **not** willing to consider altering their health behavior (e.g., "I haven't been exercising, and I have no desire to start now.").

Goal: To encourage patients to **consider** making a change in behavior.

How?

- **Summarize benefits** of the behavior
- Relate benefits to **personal** health status
- **Patient lists** personal reasons to participate in the behavior
- Give **clear advice** to consider changing the behavior

Contemplation

Contemplators know that they need to change their behavior. They are *thinking about* making a health behavior change, but may not have the skills, knowledge, or incentive to do so (e.g., "I've been wanting to change my diet, but I don't know what foods to eat.").

Goal: Make a **specific plan** for changing the behavior.

How?

- Give **clear advice about how** to change the behavior in the near future
- Have **patient identify benefits** they hope to obtain from changing their behavior
- Have **patient choose** a preferred and appropriate activity
- **Praise** patient's **intentions**
- Have **patient identify** social supporters
- Have **patient identify** barriers to activity
- Have patient **rate confidence** in being able to make the behavior change
- **Follow up** on their behavior change at future appointments

Use the appropriate handouts to provide your client with a prescription and general health behavior information.

- Help the client identify successful behavior change strategies.
- Make note of the client's behavior change plan in the appropriate chart.