

# Stages of Change: Questions for the Court

## 1) PRECONTEMPLATION STAGE

"IT ISN'T THAT WE CAN'T SEE THE SOLUTION. IT IS THAT WE CAN'T SEE THE PROBLEM"

Precontemplators usually show up in therapy because of pressures from others spouses, employers, parents, and courts Resist change. When their problem comes up, they change the topic of conversation. They place responsibility for their problems on factors such as genetic makeup, addiction, family, society, destiny, the police, etc.

They feel the situation is HOPELESS.

### Questions to ask:

- How has your substance use contributed to you being in this program?
- Do you believe that you have a problem with substance abuse?
- If you were to change your substance abuse problem in what ways would you modify?

## 2) CONTEMPLATION STAGE

"I WANT TO STOP FEELING SO STUCK"

Contemplators acknowledge that they have a problem and begin to think about solving it.

Contemplators struggle to understand their problems, to see its causes, and wonder about possible solutions. Many contemplators have indefinite plans to take action within the next few months.

"YOU KNOW THE DESTINATION, AND EVEN HOW TO GET THERE, BUT YOU'RE NOT READY TO GO YET"

It is not uncommon for contemplators to tell themselves that some day they are going to change.

When contemplators transition to the preparation stage of change, their thinking is clearly marked by two changes. First, they begin to think more about the future than the past.

The end of contemplation stage is a time of ANTICIPATION, ACTIVITY, ANXIETY, and EXCITEMENT.

### Questions to ask:

- What behaviors do you think you need to do differently?
- What would you like to do differently when you have had a few drinks and need to get somewhere?

## 3) PREPARATION STAGE

Most people in the preparation stage are planning to take action and are making the final adjustments before they begin to change their behavior. Have not yet resolved their AMBIVALENCE. Still need a little convincing.

### Questions to ask:

- What steps to sobriety have you made?
- Do you have a plan to help you make this change?
- How will you know you have been successful in making this change?

## **4) ACTION STAGE**

Stage where people overtly modify their behavior and their surroundings. Make the move for which they have been preparing. Requires the greatest commitment of time and energy.

CHANGE IS MORE VISIBLE TO OTHERS.

**Questions to ask:**

- What behavior modifications are you working on now?
- How are you doing with this change?
- What are the things that are easy for you to change?
- What are the things that you've been finding to be a challenge?

## **5) MAINTENANCE STAGE**

Change never ends with action. Without a strong commitment to maintenance, there will surely be relapse, usually to precontemplation or contemplation stage.

MOST SUCCESSFUL SELF-CHANGERS GO THROUGH THE STAGES THREE OR FOUR TIMES BEFORE THEY MAKE IT THROUGH THE CYCLE OF CHANGE WITHOUT AT LEAST ONE SLIP. MOST WILL RETURN TO THE CONTEMPLATION STAGE OF CHANGE. SLIPS GIVE US THE OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN

**Questions to ask:**

- What are you doing to keep the change going?
- What helps you to be so successful in maintaining the change?
- On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the most confident and 1 not being confident at all, how confident are you that you will maintain this change over this next week?
- Does the change seem like it's permanent now? What makes you believe this?
- Do you still have to think about doing this the new way or does it feel pretty automatic, now?
- What are you doing to keep from going back to the old way of doing things?

## **6) RELAPSE**

**Questions to ask:**

- When was your last relapse? What led to the relapse and what are your plans for getting past it and avoiding another relapse?
- Has there been a time since your last relapse that you felt like relapsing but didn't. If there was, what kept you from using?
- What keeps you from having another relapse?