**Stages of Change [[1]](#footnote-1)**

1. **Pre-contemplation** (resisting change)
   1. How to Recognize: Avoiding the subject, ill-informed, defense mechanisms: denial (I don’t have a problem), rationalization (making excuses), intellectualization (avoids engaging emotionally), projection (others have the problem), displacement (blame on other people)
   2. How to Move on: think about subject, become well informed, take responsibility, become aware of defenses, coping: concentrate on problem, proper logical analysis, empathy, sublimation.
2. **Contemplation** (change on the horizon)
   1. How to Recognize: seriously thinking about doing something, may procrastinate about change, may insist on perfect solution before acting
   2. How to Move on: get emotional arousal, vividly imagine problem and bad effects it has, make decision using rational decision making process (pros/cons).
3. **Preparation** (getting ready)
   1. How to Recognize: have decided on action, making steps necessary to prepare for action
   2. How to Move on: commit to change, counter anxiety by taking small steps, setting a time frame, telling people about your decision and making an action plan
4. **Action** (time to move)
   1. How to Recognize: taking first steps required for change
   2. How to Move on: find healthy responses to cope with the benefits of the problem (e.g. if smoking reduces anxiety, find other ways to reduce anxiety), exercise, relax, control your environment
5. **Maintenance** (staying there)
   1. How to Recognize: this stage is entered after several months of action
   2. How to Move on: look out for social pressures, internal challenges, review list of negative aspects of problem regularly, avoid people/places that compromise change, make crisis card to help deal with occasions when tempted
6. **Termination** (if no relapse) **or Recycling** (learning from relapse)
   1. How to Recognize: New self image, no temptation OR relapse
   2. How to Move on: relapse is taking two steps forward, one step back. Learn the lessons of relapse: most people need more than one attempt, budget more time/energy/money, be prepared for complications, be aware of small decisions leading to large ones, be aware that distress precipitates relapse

1. Prochaska et al. <http://www.timlebon.com/stagesofchangemodelprochaska.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)