

Motivating change in ourselves and others

Healthy eating and regular exercise has become the “marching orders” for me as I follow the counsel of Carol, my health provider. Her approach to me has been patterned after some ideas in an article entitled, “Motivating Change With Motivational Interviewing” by Sharon Myoji Schnare. Quoting the work of two therapists, Jon Miller and Stephen Rolnick, the author suggests **five stages** which people go through during the change process. Whether encouraging change in ourselves or another, these ideas have been helpful in our home.

- 1) Pre-Contemplation Stage: In this stage, individuals have not yet considered there is even a need to change, probably due to a lack of knowledge. This is why health fairs and doctor’s visits are important; they move us out of this stage into the next one.
- 2) Contemplation Stage: This is where one starts to think about changing but hasn’t set a date or acted out a plan. After a discussion about my cholesterol levels and the dangers of heart disease, I moved into this stage. If you’re encouraging another person to change, it is recommended that you do as Carol did; she offered support but not advice. Making up your own goals and taking ownership of the decision to change is an important part of success.
- 3) Determination Stage: The individual is ready to proceed with a change and begins to take specific steps to achieve his or her goals. In my case, I bought a calorie book to monitor my caloric intake and developed an exercise plan which I could enjoy. Former failures to change became opportunities for me to learn from my experiences and avoid pitfalls.
- 4) Action Stage: I’m now in this stage and have lost five pounds over four weeks. Carol offers praise, support, and encouragement. When relapses occur, they are short lived and I bounce back quickly.
- 5) Maintenance Stage: I find that my diet and exercise are becoming entrenched behaviors which are forming a pattern for my life. I’m encouraged by my progress and hope others can benefit.

Submitted by Doug Ladle
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