

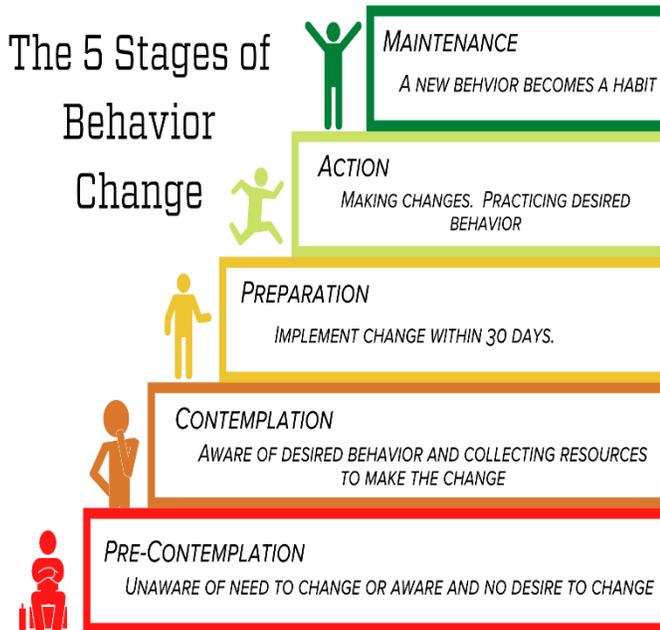


Tracking and Accountability

Whether this is your first or 100th time you've decided to follow a diet, improve your health, or make a change, you're probably feeling slightly overwhelmed with all the changes you've made. Or, maybe you've been doing everything right and you haven't seen any changes. Either way this can be extremely frustrating. A good starting point with any journey is to determine why you want to start. Are you being pressured by other people? Are you really wanting to make a change for yourself? How are you going to keep yourself accountable? In order to be successful in your health journey you need to learn more about yourself.

Am I ready to change?

In order to make lasting changes it is important to determine your current stage of change. There are 5 stages of change:



1. **Pre-Contemplation** – This is the very first stage and during this stage you are not looking to change. You may or may not be aware you should change a behavior, and you have no motivation or no desire to change.
2. **Contemplation** – This is when you are thinking about making a change. You are looking at options and support; but you are unsure and aren't ready to commit to changes.
3. **Preparation** – This stage is when you are ready to change. Usually, people in this stage are ready and planning to make changes within a month.
4. **Action** – In this stage you are making changes. You are following a plan and you are gathering confidence.
5. **Maintenance** – In this stage you have been

able to maintain those changes for at least 6 months and the change has become a part of your daily life

It's very common and normal to be at different stages during your journey. Many people move up and down before and after they reach the maintenance stage. You may even be in one stage for one behavior and another stage for a different behavior. For example, maybe you have taken action by increasing your exercise routine, but you are unwilling to change your diet in any way. This would put you in the action stage and the pre-contemplation stage.



Although many people can help support you in your journey, it is your journey! You need to decide where you're at, if you're ready for this change, and is it the right step for you? An easy way to see where your focus needs to be is to track your habits.

Tracking pros: Tracking your diet, your drinks, your exercise, and your thoughts related to these can be a big help in determining what is helping and what is keeping you from accomplishing your health goals. Try tracking for 3 days (2 weekdays and one weekend day) to 1 week. This should give you a good look into what choices you're making and help you make better choices. Many people experience a sense of achievement when they meet their goals. This positive reinforcement can continue to fuel your desire to make changes and become healthier.

Tracking cons: Tracking does take a lot of effort. Although it is a great tool, it shouldn't be your only tool. Some people become obsessed with tracking, which can become an unhealthy behavior. Remember, it's fine to go over your calorie goal once in a while or skip a workout because you aren't feeling right. You shouldn't punish yourself. Life can be unpredictable, and you don't want to miss out on activities because you are worried about your diet.

Tracking Apps

There are many ways to track. You can keep a journal with a pen and paper; or there are journals designed specifically for tracking exercise and food. If you want to use technology, there are many apps available.



MyFitnessPal – This app lets you track both your food and your exercise. If you have your phone with you or you use a fitness tracker, it will keep track of your activity. To track your food, it has a barcode scanner. So when you eat a food you can scan it and then select the correct portion size. If the food doesn't come with a barcode, then you can search their database and add the food in manually. There is a free version or you can also pay a fee for more benefits. This app also comes with a community. You can share stories, and cheer on others who are working towards their goals.



CalorieKing – This is a food data base. You can search for a certain food or you can browse food from different companies. It will tell you the total calories in the product and how it is broken down between protein, carbohydrates, and fats. They have a feature that allows you to compare up to 8 options. You can search for recipes based on categories, like breakfast or holiday, or you can specify you want recipes under so many calories, or you want high-fiber or gluten-free. CalorieKing's blog focuses mostly on food, cooking, and budgeting.



RunKeeper – This app is great for running and walking. It tracks your stats, so you can see your pace, your calories burned, and a few other things. If you want to pay for the premium option, you can have a personal coach send you a training plan and provide tips and insights to your workouts. It will also compare your runs or walks to show you the progress you make. Like MyFitnessPro and CalorieKing, RunKeeper provides you with a blog that discusses topics like fitness, nutrition, and health.

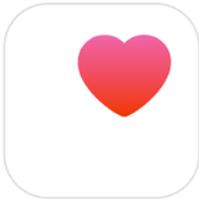




Samsung S Health – This is a free health app similar to Google Fit and Apple Health. It's compatible with Android devices. You can track your exercise habits by linking a fitness device to the app. If you carry your phone with you, it will track your exercise through the phone. You can select goals and it will work with you to accomplish those goals. You can track your food and beverage intake along with calories burned. You can also link this app to smart scales, so you don't need to input weight manually.



Google Fit – This app can be downloaded on both Apple and Android phones. There is a free version. You can connect a variety of fitness devices to the app to track exercise. If you carry your phone with you everywhere it will also track through the phone. It can provide you with activity reports, sleep reports, and has achievements you can sign up to complete. It also comes with a food diary, calorie and water tracker, and weight tracking.



Apple Health – This app is free and available for all iOS devices. You are able to track your exercise through fitness devices or by just carrying your phone with you. You are able to track your weight, but this app doesn't offer a food diary or calorie counter. You will need to download a different app to track this.

How social support can help you lose weight

Psychological research has found a group approach helps, at least in the short-term. It's easier to stick with a weight loss plan when you have support, can share tips on diet and exercise and have an exercise buddy, say researchers.

A Healthier Weigh challenge uses social support of a team or partner. Research suggests enlisting family and friends in the effort may help with initial success in weight loss and in keeping the weight off.

In a recent study, participants who enrolled in a weight-loss program with friends did a better job of keeping their weight off. Two-thirds of those who enrolled with friends had kept their weight off six months after the meetings ended. In contrast, only a quarter of those who attended on their own had achieved that same success.

The American Society of Training and Development (ASTD) did a study on accountability and found you have a 65% goal completion if you commit to someone. And if you have a specific accountability appointment with a person you've committed, you will increase your chance of success by up to 95%.

Resources:

Pros and Cons of Fitness Trackers

<https://wellnessinstitute.ca/fitness-trackers-the-pros-and-cons/>

Stages of Change

<https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/toolkits/health-promotion/2/theories-and-models/stages-of-change>



Weekly Tracker

	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY
WATER	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	BEHAVIORS TO CHANGE
WATER	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	TOTAL
CARDIO								
STRENGTH								
MIN/DAY								





Applying the Lesson

Option 1: Track your food and exercise for 3 days (2 weekdays and 1 weekend day) or full week. You can use an app on your phone or write everything down in a journal. What did you learn about your habits? Was there a behavior change you were unaware of until you tracked it?

Option 2: Go through the 5 stages of behavior change. Do you have a behavior that lies in each category: pre-contemplation, contemplation, preparation, action, or maintenance?

Option 3: Identify two things that support you in reaching your goals.

