

# Stages of Change

We are often asked questions about change (e.g. how to change one's behavior or how to change the behavior of another). As the old saying goes "The Only Constant in the Universe is Change." Thus it is important to constantly evaluate our views and awareness as to how open we are to change in our own lives and relationships.

How open we are to making changes inevitably effects all areas of our lives from our emotional and physical health, to our careers and our relationships. James Prochaska Ph.D., psychology professor at the University of Rhode Island constructed the following model of the stages of change which has been used in the field of psychology for over 30 years:

## ***Pre-Contemplation***

In this stage, the person is not aware there is a problem and may use denial if confronted. The person may feel that the problem lies outside of him/herself (the belief that someone else caused the problem and is responsible for fixing it) and is not considering making any kind of change or taking personal responsibility.

## ***Contemplation***

In this stage, the person has become aware (often through consequences such as a run-in with the law or being threatened with a divorce) that changes need to be made. These people are "contemplating" making changes.

## ***Preparation***

The person begins to prepare for changes that need to be made. They take a personal account of what needs to be done and plan their map for change.

## ***Action***

The person is taking the necessary actions and making the appropriate changes in his/her life.

## ***Maintenance***

The process of maintaining the desired behavior change over time. This is important to continue to take personal accountability to avoid relapse into old behavior patterns.

## ***Relapse***

This is a stage often experienced by many people in the change process. The person in this stage will "go back" to old behavior patterns. However, they often re-enter at the contemplation stage and regain insight into the causes of the relapse and pick up the pieces again and continue along the path to lasting change.

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## GARY BREUER, MA, LPC



My private practice is located in North Scottsdale, within the offices of PsychArizona. I work with children (ages 6 and older), pre-teens, adolescents and adults. I work with individuals, couples and families with issues of anxiety, depression, trauma, grief and loss, career, academic and workplace issues, relationship issues, LGBT concerns, personal growth and spirituality.

I use various therapeutic approaches depending on the needs of the client. These approaches include developmental, humanistic, cognitive-behavioral, existential, family-systems, mindfulness-based, transpersonal, and EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing). EMDR is a model used for the treatment of trauma, and has also been found to be successful in the treatment of various other disorders as well.

I have experience providing professional counseling in clinical, business, and school settings.

Apart from my private practice, I am also a Reiki Master and have a great appreciation and respect for alternative as well as conventional treatment approaches.

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