

Can You Get Off The Couch and Commit to an Active Lifestyle?

Are you even ready to begin an active lifestyle? Change does not occur as a single event; rather, it is a process that develops over time. The American Council on Exercise (ACE), America's Authority on Fitness, recommends understanding where you are in the stages-of-change model and looking to a personal trainer to guide you through the process.

“We all go through noticeable, obvious phases when making decisions to change habits, said Dr. Cedric Bryant, ACE chief science officer. “By taking the time to evaluate if you are ready to start exercising, you've thoughtfully planted yourself on the path to better health and fitness.”

Created by Prochaska, DiClemente, and Norcross in 1991, the stages-of-change model includes:

Precontemplation: You are in denial. You are not intending to change anytime soon (that is, within six months). You are unaware of and/or denying the need for lifestyle change. You're pessimistic, especially about your ability to change or the real benefits of becoming more active and modifying your diet.

Contemplation: You're considering it. Weighing the costs, effort, treatment and time commitment, you mull over joining a fitness or weight-loss program in the near future. This stage is often characterized by ambivalence. You may remain in this stage for months or even years.

Preparation: You've made the first move. You've scheduled an appointment with a personal trainer, you've started to limit your consumption of junk food or you have joined a gym and are exercising periodically.

Action: You are changing your behavior. You're going to your yoga class, walking regularly, planning meals and/or keeping a diet record. Unfortunately, during the action stage, you are at greatest risk for relapse.

Maintenance: You've done it. You have successfully sustained lifestyle modification. You continue to actively utilize methods to monitor and control your behavior. You may even be avoiding situations that would increase the probability of slips and relapse.