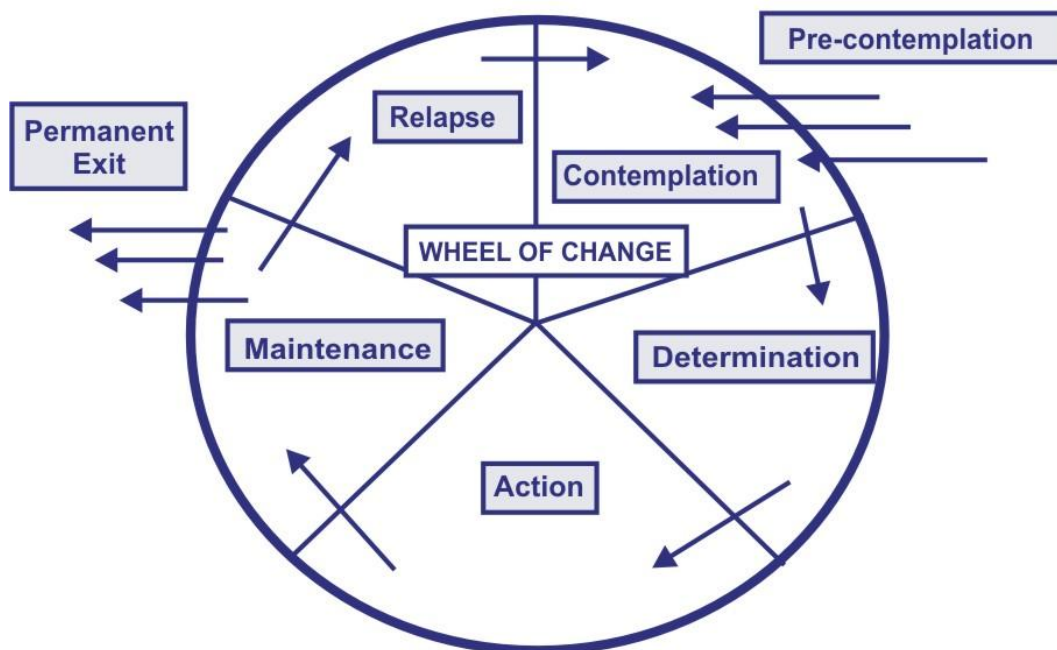


Additional Resource: Motivational Strategies

This handout provides some suggestions for motivational strategies that child welfare professionals can use with parents at different stages throughout the change process. This is not intended to be a comprehensive listing, but merely some examples to help you think about how to approach motivating parents toward treatment and recovery. For more information on Motivational Interviewing and training, please contact or visit <http://www.motivationalinterview.org>

Remember: Motivation to change and motivational interventions go hand in hand with readiness to change and the change process. As illustrated below, the stages of change can be understood as a wheel made up of wedges. Change often begins at the Precontemplation Stage and continues through Contemplation, Preparation, Action, and Maintenance Stages. The change process is cyclical. Individuals typically move back and forth between the different stages. Different people will move through the stages at different rates. It is uncommon for people to linger in the early stages. During the change process, it is normal to fluctuate between stages.

Six Stages of Change



Motivational Strategies for the Precontemplation Stage

When parents are in the Precontemplation Stage on a specific issue, child welfare professionals can use the following motivational strategies to help move them to the next stage:

- Establish rapport and build trust.
- Raise concerns about a parent's substance-related risk behaviors to self and children.
- Elicit the parents' perceptions of their level of risk.
- Elicit the parents' perceptions of their children's level of risk with respect to safety, well-being, and health.
- Explore the benefits and risks of risky behaviors and treatment, including the timetable of the dependency court.
- Express concern and remain available.

Motivational Strategies for the Contemplation Stage

When parents are in the Contemplation Stage on a specific issue, child welfare professionals can use the following motivational strategies to help move them to the next stage:

- Help parents understand that ambivalence about change is normal.
- Elicit and weigh their reasons to change and not to change, including the consequences for the child if the parent does not meet the requirements of the dependency court.
- Emphasize parents' free choice, responsibility, and self-efficacy for change.
- Elicit self-motivational statements of intent and commitment from parents.
- Elicit ideas regarding parents' perceived self-efficacy and expectations.
- Summarize self-motivational statements.
- Elicit ideas for the child's well-being and safety.

Motivational Strategies for the Preparation Stage

When parents are in the Preparation Stage on a specific issue, child welfare professionals can use the following motivational strategies to help move them to the next stage:

- Clarify the parents' own goals and strategies for change.
- Offer a menu of options for change or treatment.
- Offer expertise and specific guidance, with permission.
- Make sure that parents follow through on referrals for treatment assessment.
- Help negotiate a change or treatment plan and behavior agreement.
- Consider how to help parents lower their barriers to change.
- Help parents enlist social support.
- Explore the parent's treatment expectations.
- Elicit from the parent what has or has not worked in the past.
- Have the parent publicly announce plans to change.
- Explore legal and social consequences to the parent and the child.
- Help parents make plans for dependent children.

Motivational Strategies for the Action Stage

When parents are in the Action Stage on a specific issue, child welfare professionals can use the following motivational strategies to help move them to the next stage:

- Support a realistic view of change through small steps.
- Acknowledge difficulties for the parent in early stages of change.
- Help the parent find new reinforcers of positive change.

- Help parents assess whether they have strong family and social supports, and how these can be used to support child safety and well-being.
- Help parents engage community supports.
- Reflect on appropriate legal and social interactions and gains.
- Social workers should be honest with parents about the ASFA timelines. They should inform parents about what lies ahead in relation to the court process. Learning about substance use treatment and developing relationships with treatment providers can improve social workers' understanding of treatment options and ways to advocate for optimal and individualized treatment for their families.

Motivational Strategies for the Maintenance Stage

When parents are in the Maintenance Stage on a specific issue, child welfare professionals can use the following motivational strategies to help them sustain the benefits that they have achieved:

- Support parents' lifestyle changes.
- Affirm parents' resolve and self-efficacy.
- Support parents' use of new communication or coping strategies.
- Maintain supportive contact and availability.
- Sustain parents' resolve to meet statutory timetables.
- Review long-term goals with parents.
- Advocate for legal and community supports and rewards.
- Help parents make plans for dependent children.
- Help parents, kin caregivers, and children recognize risk factors and behaviors involved with substance abuse.

Motivational Strategies for the Relapse Stage

Many parents may not immediately sustain new changes they are attempting to make. Substance use after a period of abstinence may be common in early recovery. Persons may go through several cycles of the stages of change to achieve long-term recovery. Relapse should not be interpreted as treatment failure or that the individual has abandoned a commitment to change. With support, these experiences can provide information that can facilitate subsequent progression through the stages of change and identify new areas in which treatment and case plans can be enhanced. When parents lapse or relapse, child welfare professionals have an especially important role helping parents to reengage by using the following strategies:

- Help parents to reenter the change cycle.
- Explore the meaning of relapse as a learning opportunity.
- Maintain nonjudgmental, supportive contact.
- Help parents find alternative coping strategies.
- Keep parents' attention focused on the social and legal consequences of relapse for themselves and for their children.