

Cycle of Change

The Cycle of Change is a useful way to try and understand how we can make changes. Each circle suggests that change is carried out in a number of steps or stages. Before a person can sustain a lasting change they must progress through all of the steps although there is no time frame in which people can spend in any one phase. Sometimes people move through the stages really quickly. It can also take several attempts at trying to make change before it is ever fully achieved.

Looking at change in this way does not mean that it will be easy making a decision about stopping smoking. It requires you to take a good look at the reasons why you smoke. What does it do for you and how it is affecting your life (not just your health)? You need to weigh it all up and be honest with yourself.

Here are the stages:

- **Pre-contemplation** – I do not have a problem
- **Contemplation** – I think I have a problem
- **Preparation** – Getting ready to make changes
- **Action** – Starting to do something to make the change, such as putting in controls, reducing or ceasing use seeking help and support
- **Maintenance** – Keeping changes over time
- **Lapse** - Return to use, but identifies and quickly returns to 'Action' does not mean they have gone back to old levels and frequencies of usage
- **Relapse** – Returned to use and pre-contemplative stages

(Cycle of Change. Prochaska and DiClemente, 1992)

