

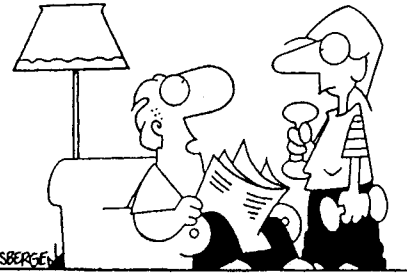
## PROVIDING SUPPORT according to the STAGES OF CHANGE

### PRECONTEMPLATION (stage 1)

People in this group might not be aware of the risks associated with being sedentary. In the past, they might have tried to be active and failed.

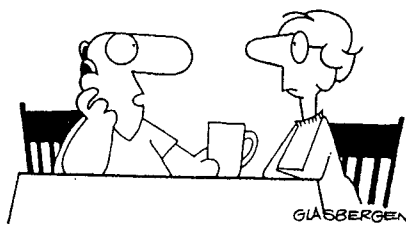
A person in this group might benefit from a discussion about the benefits of physical activity (for them, personally), what was learned from trying to be active in the past, and a discussion about the change process (e.g., many people try to be active and have trouble keeping up a regular program). Like trying any new thing, such as a diet or quitting smoking, it often takes many tries to succeed.

If you are trying to help a person in this stage, **don't assume that the person is actually ready to start doing some activity right away**. If you are asked for advice, be sure to **give a menu of recommendations** that have a chance of success. For example, "one of the things that might help is to make a list of the benefits you hope to get if you start being more physically active and another thing might be to make a list of the benefits that your family might have if you were more active." "It sounds like you're not sure what you'd like to do at this point. Some people have found it helpful to start with just a 2-minute walk sometime during the day, or to park a little away from the store when you do your shopping." This might not be the type of activity you want the person to be doing, but it is a start in the right direction.



GLASBERGEN

"I got plenty of exercise today!  
I ran up a phone bill, jumped to a  
conclusion, stretched my patience,  
and pushed my luck!"



GLASBERGEN

"Before I start an exercise program, I should talk to my doctor. I think I may have an overactive 'excuse gland.'"

### CONTEMPLATION (stage 2)

People in this group usually believe that the reasons for being inactive (i.e. I'm too tired, exercise takes too much time, I've never been athletic, I'm too old) are more important than the benefits of starting an exercise program. They have thought about being active and know that there are benefits, but they are very ambivalent about starting on an action plan.

To help a person in this stage, have the person **identify the benefits of exercise** and discuss ways to overcome the barriers. Use **problem-solving techniques** to help the person come up with solutions that will increase their self-confidence. At this stage, you can **encourage short-term goal setting** (e.g. "What do you think you might want to do in the next week or two?"). Be sure the goal is specific and that person is confident that he/she can complete the goal.

### **PREPARATION (stage 3)**

These people exercise irregularly. Reducing barriers and building self-confidence are important tasks at this stage.

If you are supporting someone in this stage, be sure to **reinforce all positive progress and discuss ways to slowly increase frequency, intensity, and time (FIT)** of exercise so that the person can gradually work up to levels that will benefit health.. **Help the person to monitor gains, find ways to reward themselves for progress, and look at lack of progress as an opportunity to discover what works and doesn't work for that individual** (e.g., "I can tell you've been working very hard to find some way to fit in more exercise, but it's been difficult to find the time to fit in a whole half hour of walking. Since accumulating activity throughout the day can still give you benefits, what could you do instead of a 30 minute walk?").

### **ACTION (stage 4)**

People who have recently started to exercise at levels that confer health benefits (i.e. 30 minutes of moderate activity most days of the week; strength training of major muscle groups 2 times each week) need information on how to avoid injury and overcome exercise boredom. **People at this stage are at the greatest risk for relapse.**

There are a number of important support role tasks when working with someone in this stage. First, **providing a supportive telephone call** ("How're you doing?) with lots of praise is an important contribution to help a person maintain activity. The other important task is to **help the person plan ahead for the inevitable situations which could lead to a lapse in activity** (i.e., illness, vacations, bad weather, family demands). It is crucial to help a person see that lapses are only a temporary situation and that exercise can be resumed once the situation has passed, especially if contingency plans have already been made. A lapse can be viewed as a learning situation rather than a failure.

### **MAINTENANCE (stage 5)**

People who have been exercising regularly for at least six months are considered to be in the maintenance stage, but they are still at risk for relapsing. The supportive phone call provides a way to check-in with the person at this stage. **Praise and feedback are still important** to help keep the person motivated. People at this stage may have settled into a comfortable routine or even be looking for new exercise challenges. Be prepared to offer information on community resources for those maintainers looking for variety in their routine. As in the ACTION stage, if a maintainer lapses, view the lapse as a learning situation that is a temporary problem (e.g., "You've worked hard to get this far. It's normal that your situation will sideline you temporarily, but I'm confident that you'll be able to resume your activity when the situation changes. I'd like you to know that I'm available to help you get back on track whenever you feel you're ready.").