

HEALTH Plus WEALTH

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Think you are ready to change?

As we return from our summer breaks and the children and young adults go back to school or college, September can feel a bit like January, in the sense of it being a fresh start to a new year. That's why I find it a useful time to reflect and think about any changes I want to make, going forward. How well I succeed in making any changes to my life, or to my lifestyle habits, can often be determined by how ready I am to make a change.

The 'Transtheoretical Model Theory' describes the various stages of behaviour we experience concerning our 'readiness to change'. According to this theory, there are key steps through which we all need to navigate our way for the journey to long-term change.

These include:

- **Not thinking** (pre-contemplation): you are unaware any changes are necessary. This applies to many aspects of life, including your spending or health habits. A good indicator can be people close to you in your life, who may notice and mention something contrary to your beliefs.
- **Thinking** (contemplation): you begin to think about some possible changes, or even ask "have those well-meaning friends got a point?"
- **Preparation**: you haven't yet changed anything, but are beginning to do so by telling others, getting help to set a budget, buying in the healthy food or dusting off the trainers.
- **Action**: you start making changes! Yay!
- **Relapse**: you fall off the wagon and revert back to old habits. This is normal and inevitable, but it's tempting to view a relapse as a failure and simply give up here.
- **Maintenance**: you persevere. This means you live with the change indefinitely until it becomes an unconscious habit.

Each readiness-to-change stage can progress at different rates, depending on the individual's character, the change taking place, the wider circumstances, the

environment or culture and previous experiences. It sounds so simple in a list form like this, so it can tempt us to think it doesn't work that way in real life! This may be because we forget that most change begins not with our actions, but with our thinking! We are actually transformed by the renewal of our minds.

"Whether you think you can, or whether you think you can't, you are right". (*Henry Ford*)

One of the biggest factors in a successful and sustainable change is not giving up after a relapse! After a relapse it is tempting to 'think you can't'.

However, the truth is you still have the choice to get up and try again. So, instead, why not accept that all the above stages are likely to happen. And remind yourself that Relapse is not the end of the journey!... remind yourself to 'think you can'!

Whether you want to make changes to your financial spending, saving or giving habits, or your physical, mental, emotional or spiritual health and wellbeing habits, why not join me in some reflection time to think about whether you would like your end of the year to be healthier and wealthier, and what you might think about changing to make that happen.

Changing alone is harder than having someone to share the journey with. It can be easier for someone else to see objectively past moments of relapse. They can help you remember and celebrate progress already made and support and encourage you to make adjustments along the way. They can help you to think you can and to try again, even after the inevitable relapse occurs!

If you already have your habits pretty sorted, did you know that there are huge benefits to your health from coming alongside others who could really benefit from some support and encouragement? So why not think about encouraging a change alongside someone else?

To let us know how you get on you can email **Niky Dix** *Intentional Health* | niky@intentionalhealth.uk