

Helping People Move through Individual Stages of Change Regarding Employment

David W Lynde, MSW
Mental Health Services Consultant

Stages of Change

Prochaska and DiClemente 1982, 1984, 1992

- Precontemplation
- Contemplation
- Preparation
- Action
- Maintenance

Stages of Change

- Most of us change in stages
- Most of us do not move through the stages in a simple linear fashion
- Most people move from one stage to the next stage, and sometimes back again

Stages of Change

- Most people are at different stages regarding different things they want to change
- Using SOC does not assess how successful a person will be, it provides a guide for how to be most helpful to the person with their change process

Stages of Change

- Using SOC requires that we constantly assess what SOC the person is at, so we can best understand how to help
- Effective strategies to assess SOC
 - Listen
 - Ask open-ended questions
 - Check your perceptions- summarize
 - Review stages regularly in supervision

Individual Stages of Change



Regarding Employment

Individual Stages of Change with Employment

1. Pre-contemplation
2. Contemplation
3. Preparation
4. Action
5. Maintenance (*or sustaining, owning, etc*)

Pre-Contemplation

Stages

- Precontemplation

- No clear intention to change employment status currently
- Not sure that being unemployed is a problem
- Not sure that being employed is a personal goal

People in Precontemplation Regarding Work

- What are your goals?
- Do you have goals related to employment or a career?
- What types of work have you done in the past?
- What types of hobbies do you enjoy?
- Have you thought about how employment may help you achieve some of your goals?

What helps?

GOAL: “I want to live independently and be able to be self-sufficient.”

1. Develop a vocational goal
2. Develop a vocational plan
3. Explore education and careers
4. Apply for disability income and entitlement programs

Precontemplation

What Helps?

- Developing a true strengths assessment (while keeping an eye open for work-related strengths)
- Cognitive Behavioral Reframing (exploring what coping skills the person already has in place)
- Providing Information about Employment Benefits

Cognitive Reframing

- Helping people that we work with to re-evaluate their experiences that they may view as “failures” to assess strengths, talents and abilities that will be helpful in a work environment
- Wondering together with the people that we work with about employment

Contemplation

Stages

- Contemplation

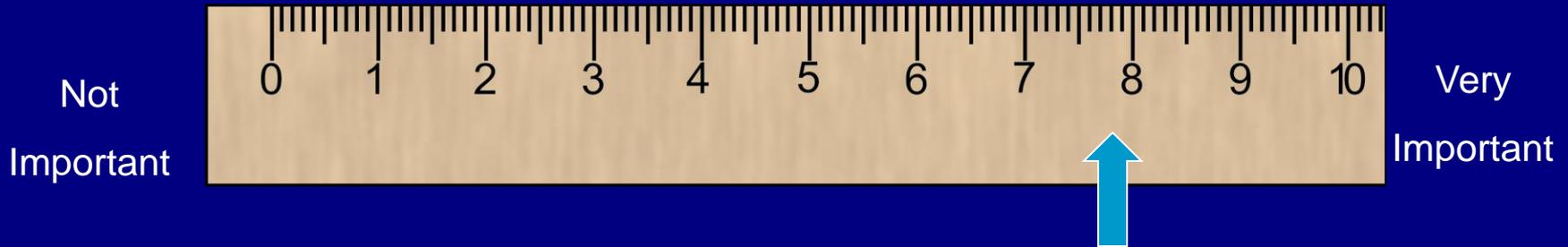
- Considering employment as a goal
- Thinking about the pros and cons of employment or unemployment
- Sometimes distressed about their employment decisions
- Ambivalent

Contemplation

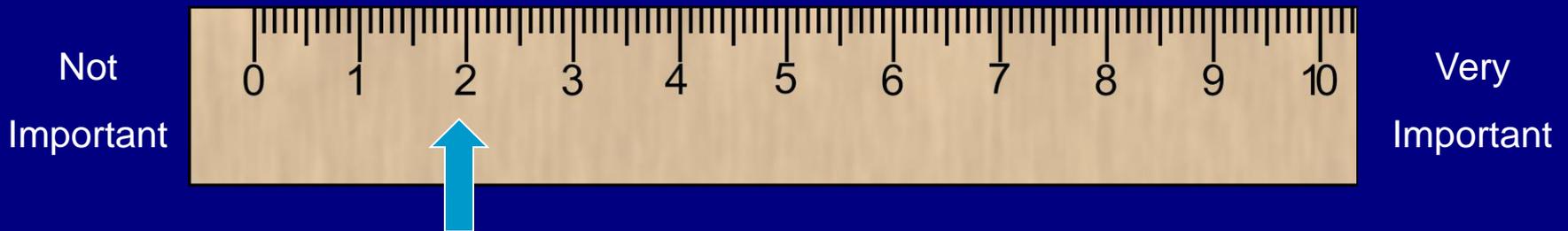
What Helps

- What are the potential benefits or drawbacks to employment for you?
- Do you know that people who have symptoms are able to work?
- Do you know that work actually helps reduce substance use?
- What concerns about work can I help you with?

How important is it for you to get a competitive job that you like?



How confident are you that you will be able to get a competitive job with our assistance?



Being Employed

Being Unemployed

Pros

More income

Keep my disability
income

Feel better
about myself

Cons

Worried about
benefits

Bored

Don't know
what to say to
co-workers

Don't like
relying so much
on others

People Access Individualized Work Incentive Planning

- People are empowered to make their own choices about benefits and are not directed to “earn less than SGA”
- What works best for the person is their “perfect choice”

People Access Individualized Work Incentive Planning

What Helps:

- Agency Understands SSDI & SSI are poverty income levels
- People access Certified Work Incentive Counselors for Individual Financial Planning
- Staying Under SGA is not the end game
- Good Partnerships with VR

Preparation

Stages

■ Preparation

- Attitude and behaviors consistent with starting employment
- Intending to change employment status in the near future
- Thinking about previous attempts at employment and what was challenging

People in Preparation Regarding Work

- Is there any part of your job search process that would be helpful for you to have some help with?
- Remind me again of some of the reasons that you want to work?
- Let's take a look at the progress you have made with your search so far.

People in Preparation Regarding Work

- Is there anything about the way you are job searching that you may want to consider doing differently?
- Review and understand community resources for employment including vocational rehabilitation services, work incentive programs, work incentive counseling, and supported employment programs

Explore Natural Supports for Work

- Be culturally competent!
- Evaluate the meanings of work for the person within the context of their culture, their community and their family
- Assess for people who are, or who may become, good natural supports for people related to employment

Action

Stages

■ Action

- Person has started employment
- Might need new skills to keep employment in place
- Might need assistance to prevent sudden job loss
- Person expressing and demonstrating commitment to work

People in Action Regarding Work

- Ask about how the job search process is going?
- Validate the stress and sometimes the anxiety of the job search process
- Ask the person if they would be interested in doing some role plays with you regarding employment interviews

People in Action Regarding Work

- Carefully assess for areas where coping strategies and skills may be useful for the person
- PLAN for the first day of work together, help the person identify and use structured problem-solving to work out seemingly “little” things

Maintenance

Stages

- Maintenance

- Stage begins after a few months of working
- Focus is on helping person to continue and extend benefits of employment, including new goals
- Person benefits from strategies to continue their employment without sudden interruption

People in Sustaining Regarding Work

Ask “different” questions about how work is going frequently

- Best parts of the job
- Lunch time or break time strategies
- Medications and side effects during work
- Stressful situations
- Being assertive with supervisors
- Where and how to seek support

People in Sustaining Regarding Work

- Develop a work specific plan for managing early warning signs & relapse prevention strategies
- Continue to ask about and help build natural supports
- Help the person to avoid loss of employment status in unplanned way

People in Sustaining Regarding Work

- Think like an “Employee Assistance Program” (or better)
- Watch for concerns that may affect employment
- Watch for “high-risk” situations in the work place
- Ask what the person is learning about their own *Working Life*

Recovery & Hope

“If people are treated as capable, they often surprise everyone and live up to expectations.”

- Ken Steele “The Day the Voices Stopped.”