

Stages of Change Regarding Employment

The Stages

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

Basic Characteristics of People at Each Stage

- Precontemplation
 - Not “thinking” much about employment as an important change
- Contemplation
 - “Thinking” about employment, highly ambivalent
- Preparation
 - Getting things in place to seek employment
- Action
 - Actively seeking employment
- Maintenance (*or sustaining, owning, etc*)
 - Working

Strategies for Each Stage

Precontemplation Strategies

- 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?
- 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

Contemplation Strategies

- 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?
- Importance and Confidence Rulers
- Pay-Off Matrix
- Consider informational interviews
- Consider community visits or exploration of places of employment or jobs

Preparation Strategies

- 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.
- Review and understand community resources for employment including vocational rehabilitation services, work incentive programs, work incentive counseling, and supported employment programs
- Ask about and review natural supports for employment outside of services
- Ask about and review supports for employment in services

Action Strategies

- 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
- 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 Strategies

- 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
- 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
- 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*