**Lesson 4:**

**Planning Part 1: Where do you want to go?**

The client has decided on an area of balance to improve, and a value to pursue or strength to develop in that area. The client has decided on a goal to pursue in order to live in line with that value or develop that strength.

**Goals tell us who we want to be** – so that we can do what we need to do in order to have what we want to have.

A goal is not a problem statement (I don’t like/want this..)

A goal is a solution statement (I want this instead of that)

You need a clear vision of the preferred alternative present in order to begin taking action. If the vision is not clear, you cannot properly prepare for the journey.

Some exercises to help you vision clearly:

Vision Boards

Miracle Question

Visioning questions

**The FIRST step on the road to change:**

**Accept Responsibility**

**Ten Two Letter Words to Live By:**

If It Is To Be, It Is Up To Me

**“Your problem is not the problem, your reaction is the problem.” –**

* No change will occur until you accept that you must make the change yourself. You cannot expect to take decisive action if you have not accepted that the action is your responsibility to take.
* I have some good news and some bad news… it’s the same news. Whether it is good or bad really depends on how you feel about knowing that you are responsible for the actions you take.
* “No one is coming to save you; no one is coming to make life right for you; no one is coming to solve your problems. If you don’t do something, nothing is going to get better. The dream of a rescuer who will deliver us may offer a kind of comfort, but it leaves us passive and powerless. We may feel if only I suffer long enough, if only I yearn desperately enough, somehow a miracle will happen, but this is the kind of self-deception one pays for with one’s life as it drains away into the abyss of unredeemable possibilities and irretrievable days, months, decades.”

― **Nathaniel Branden,**[**Six Pillars of Self-Esteem**](https://www.goodreads.com/work/quotes/76620)

This is a big, sometimes scary truth to accept. It is also one that people often resist, as it seems wildly unfair to be responsible to work hard to fix things you may not have broken on your own – or at all. The tendency is to place blame – elsewhere – for what is wrong and wish/want/insist that someone else fix the problem, since they caused it. While it may be perfectly true that the origin of your present problem was not of your creation, it is also true that you are responsible to move in the direction of your goals, regardless of how you got separated from them to begin with.

**Things that are outside of my control**

**Things I can influence**

**Things I can control**

**Acceptance**

**Give your best**

**Action**

**Circle of concern**

**Circle of influence**

**Circle of control**

**Discover your client’s strengths**

Strengths are the solid ground upon which we can build our castles. Our strengths also push us in the direction of our passions – they are related. We enjoy doing things that we are good at, things that put us in a flow state – where we are fully immersed in the moment.

Strengths can be innate, can be acquired, can be improved, can be abused, and can be lost. Strengths can be within us or outside of us.

**STRENGTH INTERVIEWING GUIDELINES**

**TYPE OF TOOL –** Advice

**ESTIMATED TIME –** N/A

**DESIGNED FOR –** Practitioner

**BACKGROUND**

This tool was designed to clarify some essential guidelines that can be used to guide an effective strengths interview.

**GOAL**

The goal of the present guidelines is to help the practitioner guide a strengths interview more effectively.

**ADVICE**

Practice makes perfect. The aim of these guidelines is not to provide a complete overview of all the aspects that one should take into account during strengths interviewing, but rather an attempt to increase awareness of some common factors that are often forgotten or neglected during the interview.

**INSTRUCTIONS**

When working with a client on strengths finding, it is helpful to be aware of the following:

1. **ALWAYS ACKNOWLEDGE PROBLEMS AND PAINFUL EXPERIENCES**

Often clients have a need to express what is troubling them. Do not let this inhibit you from helping your client find his/her strengths. The act of confirming your client’s difficulties will likely increase the probability that he/she will be willing to discuss strengths later. Assessing strengths too early may result in the client feeling rejected.

1. **OVERCOME THE RELUCTANCE OF THE CLIENT TO TALK ABOUT STRENGTHS**

Many clients are reluctant to engage fully with the strengths introduction. They have learned to be humble and modest and feel uncomfortable when the practitioner addresses their positive qualities. It is often easy to overcome this reluctance: simply inform your client that this exercise is not about impression management. The goal is not about bragging or proving that the client is better than other people. Every human being possesses strengths. In this exercise, the strengths of your client will be addressed.

1. **BE AWARE OF VERBAL CUES**

Listen to how the client is talking. Is his/her voice stronger and more assertive? Does he/she have improved vocabulary? Does he/she use strengths words more frequently? The client’s rate of speech may change, signifying different strengths. For example, if a client speaks slowly and methodically, he/she may be demonstrating the strength of relaxed confidence.

1. **BE AWARE OF NON-VERBAL SIGNS**

Be aware of non-verbal expressions of strengths. Examples of non-verbal cues include straightened posture, increased smiles and laughter, better eye contact, and expressed joy, hope, and excitement. But please note: not everyone expresses their strengths in the same way: cues may be subjective. So be attuned to the fact that any client may respond to something completely differently than another client.

1. **REMEMBER THE MOST IMPORTANT SIGNS OF STRENGTHS USE**

When interacting with clients, look for the following signs that they are using strengths:

1. When using strengths, the client expresses engagement and excitement.
2. The client may feel time flies when conducting the activity.
3. The client quickly learns something new, and has an attuned interest in learning about his/her strengths.
4. The client has continual successes and exceptional performance when given the opportunity to apply his/her strengths.
5. The client has an interest in getting tasks completed first that use his/her strengths.
6. The client wants to use strengths, especially after not being able to use it/them for a while.
7. Even when not feeling well (tired, stressed, or disengaged), the client is drawn to activities that use strengths.
8. **BE AWARE THAT STRENGTHS ARE MANIFESTED IN MANY DIFFERENT WAYS**

People can have a similar pattern of strengths, but a completely different way of displaying their strengths. Therefore, when identifying people’s strengths, it is important to maintain an open mindset: a mindset that is able to see the many different ways strengths can be displayed. This is especially relevant for strengths that evoke a stereotypical image, for instance creativity, honesty or bravery. Take creativity, for example. Creativity is a concept that is expressed beyond traditional and stereotypical manifestations, like painting or writing music.

For instance, some people are very creative in finding solutions for complex commercial problems, others may be creative in formulating novel and interesting research ideas, etc...

1. **TUNE IN TO THE EXPERIENCE AND WORLDVIEW OF THE CLIENT**

Some strengths are associated with strong stereotypical images. It may feel that, in order to truly own this strength, there must be a high level of consistency or intensity of expression. A good example of such a strength is bravery. When we hear the word bravery, we may think of heroes, people who have achieved great things and overcome their darkest fears. We may even see images of historical figures, superheroes, and so on. Many people do not perceive themselves as brave.

Bravery is not the absence of fear. It is the ability to continue forward in the face of fear. If there is no fear to be overcome then no bravery is required. Bravery, then, is a subjective concept that is strongly determined by personal experiences and emotions.

Recall that the human brain prefers safety and routine in its work to ensure survival, For a person is able to leave his/her comfort zone and enter the unknown, bravery is required. The unknown is different for all of us. It may be a new relationship, a new job, an oral presentation, etc...

This is why strengths spotting is a very personal process. The coach must move beyond his/her own ideas of a strength and tune in to the experience and worldview of the client. In this way, strengths potting becomes more personal and accurate. This also brings to light an interesting downside of only using questionnaires when identifying strengths. Questionnaires are based on statements that are perceived as typical for certain strengths. If you only use questionnaires to assess strengths, you may fail to ask a question that will evoke your client’s particular strengths.

1. **EVALUATE STRENGTHS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE OTHER AND THE SELF**

We live in a social world, dealing with others on a daily basis. Some strengths, especially those who are most visible in a social context, like honesty, kindness and fairness, are predominantly evaluated from the perspective of the other. An honest person treats others honestly and a kind person is kind to other people. However, the strength honesty is not only displayed in our relationship with others, but also in our relationship with ourselves. Some individuals are honest when dealing with other people, but not really honest with themselves. Deep inside, they know that they were unhappy at their job or feeling dissatisfied about their marriage, but they choose to ignore these feelings, pretending it they are not there. Suppressing these feelings is everything but honest.

In a similar way, many individuals are kind, forgiving and compassionate with other people. Interestingly, these strengths can be shockingly absent when considering how they treat themselves when things go wrong. Evoking awareness of the discrepancy that can exist between how strengths are used with others and with the self can be a very important step towards cultivating a better relationship with the self. In addition, it also helps to promote more balanced strengths use.

1. **EXPRESS GRATITUDE**

Giving and receiving feedback can be a challenge, whether addressing strengths or improvement opportunities. It can be helpful for clients to practice giving and receiving gratitude for observed strengths and behaviors. Practice with clients and help them re-word their gratitude. For example, it can be helpful to say, “I really appreciate the way you are careful in thinking through all the risks” instead of “I really appreciate your prudence” as the first is more specific, describing behavior, and is in line with the VIA Classification language.

**Character Strengths Exercise**

**FIRST SESSION**

**Strengths**

Despite life’s struggles, all persons possess strengths that can be identified and used to improve self-regulation and enhance wellbeing. In addition, client motivation is increased by a consistent emphasis on strengths.

Explain to your client what strengths are:

“Strengths are the things you are naturally good at. When people use their strengths, they feel energized and engaged. Strengths allow us to feel and perform at our best. Strengths can also help us to deal with difficult times.”

Examples of strengths are “persistence,” “creativity,” and “gratitude”.

**Character Strengths**

Strengths are the psychological characteristics through which we honor and express what we value in our life. It’s how we integrate who we are with what we value.

The character strength is how we express what we value and need emotionally in our life: “values in action” (VIA)

Your values are the things that you believe are important in the way you live and work.

***When our strengths AND what we value are in harmony, we are our true selves.***

Knowing that what you do in life matters, or at least has some purpose if only in a small way, will give fulfillment and richness in your life.

Martin Seligman, a Positive Psychologist, believes we can only really flourish when we are using our signature character strengths.

According to Seligman, you are using a character strength when:

* It feels authentic and gives you a sense of your real self.
* You feel excited.
* There is and has been a rapid learning curve involved.
* It offers new ways to use existing skills.
* You yearn to do/be this.
* There is an inevitability about doing this, and you feel unable to stop yourself from doing it.
* You feel invigorated rather than depleted doing this.
* You find yourself engaging in activities and projects that require you to be this way.
* You feel joy and enthusiasm.

Research has shown that people who use their character strengths to achieve their goals feel more fulfilled and happy.

**There are 24 VIA (Values in Action) Character Strengths**

1. **Creativity (originality, ingenuity):** Thinking of novel and productive ways to conceptualize and do things.
2. **Curiosity (interest, novelty-seeking, openness to experience):** Taking an interest in ongoing experiences for their own sake; exploring and discovering.
3. **Open-mindedness (judgment, critical thinking):** Thinking things through and examining them from all sides; weighing all evidence fairly.
4. **Love of learning:** Mastering new skills, topics, and bodies of knowledge, whether on one’s own or formally.
5. **Perspective (wisdom):** Being able to provide wise counsel to others; having ways of looking at the world that make sense to oneself and to other people.
6. **Bravery (valor**): Not shrinking from threat, challenge, difficulty or pain; acting on convictions even if unpopular.
7. **Persistence (perseverance, industriousness):** Finishing what one starts; persisting in a course of action in spite of obstacles.
8. **Integrity (authenticity, honesty):** Presenting oneself in a genuine way; taking responsibility for one’s feelings and actions.
9. **Vitality (zest, enthusiasm, vigor, energy):** Approaching life with excitement and energy; feeling alive and activated.
10. **Love:** Valuing close relations with others, particularly those in which sharing and caring are reciprocated.
11. **Kindness (generosity, nurturance, care, compassion, altruistic love, “niceness”):** Doing favors and good deeds for others.
12. **Social intelligence (emotional intelligence, personal intelligence):** Being aware of the motives and feelings of other people and oneself.
13. **Citizenship (social responsibility, loyalty, teamwork):** Working well as a member of a group or team; being loyal to the group.
14. **Fairness:** Treating all people the same according to notions of fairness and justice; not letting personal feelings bias decisions about others.
15. **Leadership:** Encouraging a group of which one is a member to get things done and at the same maintain time good relations within the group.
16. **Forgiveness and mercy:** Forgiving those who have done wrong; accepting the shortcomings of others; giving people a second chance; not being vengeful.
17. **Humility / Modesty:** Letting one’s accomplishments speak for themselves; not regarding oneself as more special than one is.
18. **Prudence:** Being careful about one’s choices; not taking undue risks; not saying or doing things that might later be regretted.
19. **Self-regulation (self-control):** Regulating what one feels and does; being disciplined; controlling one’s appetites and emotions.
20. **Appreciation of beauty and excellence (awe, wonder, elevation):** Appreciating beauty, excellence, and/or skilled performance in various domains of life.
21. **Gratitude:** Being aware of and thankful of the good things that happen; taking time to express thanks.
22. **Hope (optimism, future-mindedness, future orientation):** Expecting the best in the future and working to achieve it.
23. **Humor (playfulness):** Liking to laugh and tease; bringing smiles to other people; seeing the light side.
24. **Spirituality (religiousness, faith, purpose):** Having coherent beliefs about the higher purpose, the meaning of life, and the meaning of the universe.

**Homework**

1. Ask your client to take a look at the list of 24 VIA strengths and select 5 strengths that he/she thinks characterize him/her best.

2. Ask your client to ask three other persons, preferably a friend and a family member, to assess his strengths. Your client should use the two homework forms with strength-related questions and ask others to select 5 (not more or less) strengths that they believe are characterizing him/her. Ask him/her to bring this list to the next session. Important: If possible, the client should ask why others believe he/ she possesses certain strengths.

3. Ask your client to pay attention to feelings of energy, enthusiasm, and passion. You can ask him/her to write down what he/she is doing, who is with him/her, and/or if any strengths are at play.

4. Ask your client to complete the VIA questionnaire online:

<https://www.viacharacter.org/www/Character-Strengths-Survey>

**SECOND SESSION**

The goals of the second session are to:

* Further, clarify the strengths of the client
* Start by making concrete plans for behavioral change

**Evaluation**

Evaluate the experiences of the client between this session and the first session.

**Ask the client:**

* Did you pay attention to feelings of energy, enthusiasm, and passion during the last week?

Discuss what your client noticed and how these experiences may be related to strength use or valued behavior.

Evaluate the experiences of the client between this session and the first session.

**Spotting Your Client’s Strengths**

At this point, it’s time to dig into the strength’s homework from the first session. But before you do, you as the coach will note the strengths you notice in your client to add to what the client has already brought in from the strengths homework exercise. The best way to do this is to use the At Your Best Strengths Exercise.

**At Your Best Strengths Exercise**

Invite your client to identify two occasions when they have been at their best (when they felt at their best or performed at their best). The occasions can be of any duration from a few minutes to a year.

(It is important that being ‘at your best’ is meaningful to your client, not an attempt to impress or conform to what others think).

1. Get him or her to talk about the experience, re-living it as vividly as possible as they go.

2. Note down every example of a possible strength they display as they talk.

3. After they have talked about the events, invite them to consider the list you have noted down.

**Scoring Strengths**

Put the 5 top strengths of the VIA questionnaire, the peer-assessed strengths, and your own assessed strengths in the table on the next page.

▪ Column 1 (Self): Record the five positive character attributes the client identified.

▪ Column 2 (Coach): Record the five positive character attributes the coach identified. Place a checkmark inside the box that corresponds to the attribute the coach thought most characterized the client.

▪ Column 3 (VIA): Record the top 5 strengths as evidenced by the VIA Signature Strengths Questionnaire online.

▪ Column 4, 5 & 6 (Family): Record the attributes that others identified and thought best described your client.

▪ Column 7 (Composite): Add the number of times that each attribute was checked in the previous columns.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | STRENGTH | Self | Coach | VIA | Other 1 | Other 2 | Other 3 | TOTAL |
| wisdom & knowledge | 1 | Creativity |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2 | Curiosity |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 3 | Open-mindedness |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 4 | Love of learning |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 5 | Perspective |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| courage | 6 | Bravery |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 7 | Persistence |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 8 | Integrity |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 9 | Vitality |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| humanity | 10 | Love |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 11 | Kindness |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 12 | Social intelligence |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| justice | 13 | Citizenship |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 14 | Fairness |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 15 | Leadership |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| temperance | 16 | Forgiveness and mercy |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 17 | Humility / Modesty |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 18 | Prudence |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 19 | Self-regulation |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| transcendence | 20 | Appreciation of beauty |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 21 | Gratitude |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 22 | Hope |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 23 | Humor |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 24 | Spirituality |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

**Evaluate Scoring Form**

Ask the client:

* What do you notice when looking at the scoring form?
* To which extent do you recognize yourself in the most frequently identified strengths?

Note your client's 5 most important signature strengths

**Linking Strengths and Goals**

In the last session, your client generated several goals. Discuss with the client:

* Are there strengths that are currently being underused (used not often enough)?
* Would you like to use these strengths more? If so, what could you do to use these strengths more?
* Are there strengths that are currently being overused (used too often)?
* Would you like to use these strengths less? If so, what could you do to use these strengths less frequently?
* Are there strengths that can be used to move closer to the personal goals? How can they be used for this purpose?
* Are there strengths that can be used to overcome potential obstacles? How can they be used?

100 Powerful Questions for Your Coaching Sessions

# First Session Questions

1. Do you know what coaching is?
2. What brings you to us today?
3. How do you think coaching can help you?
4. What do you want to change in your life? Why?
5. What will happen if you do not make any changes?
6. How does Tuesday work for your first session?
7. How does Tuesday work for a follow up consultation? (Use this is they are reluctant to sign up.)
8. How will you be paying for this?
9. What is hindering you from working with a coach?
10. Do you mind me asking, if money was not an issue, would you work with a coach?
11. How about we brainstorm some ideas about how we could make this work financially for you?
12. Great news- for registering today you receive, how does that sound?
13. Now that you are a client you have access to special material, does that sound like something you may be interested in?

# Prior to the First Session

1. Have you had a chance to read through and sign the client agreement form?

# Gathering Background Information

After you have signed up your client you will need to collect some background information. This can be done in questionnaire format and turned back into you prior to your firs official session.

1. What are some signs you are losing motivation?
2. What motivates you?
3. How can I most impact your life in the next 30 days?
4. Who supports your dreams?
5. How many people live in your household?
6. Who is your best friend?
7. Why?
8. What is one goal you would be thrilled to accomplish?
9. What drives you in life?
10. What are the 4 values that mean the most to you? (Honesty, integrity.)
11. Who or what inspires you?
12. Why did you sign up for coaching

# Creating a Vision

After you have an idea of their ideal life you can then easily set goals.

1. One year from now, what do you want your life to look like?
2. What did you want to do when you were 3?
3. If you had all the support you needed, what dream would you pursue?
4. If you had all the money in the world, what would your days look like?
5. What is your favorite way to spend the day?
6. What is your ideal career? Why?
7. What do you want?
8. No, what do you really want?
9. What goal have you always dreamed of but been afraid to try for?
10. If you had 6 months to live what would you try for?
11. If you knew you could not fail, what dreams would you pursue?
12. If you had 30 days to live, what would you do differently?
13. From the time you wake up in the morning until the time you go to sleep, what does your ideal day consist of?
14. What do you like in your life?
15. What makes you smile?
16. When do you feel completely at peace?
17. When do you feel at your best?
18. What people do you treasure and want to spend more time with?
19. If you could change anything about your life, what would that be?
20. If you could have anything in life, what would you want?
21. Who is present in your ideal life?

# Running Your Sessions

Where would you like to begin today?

1. Where do you want this session to go?
2. How did the plan we set up last week go?
3. Did you learn anything?
4. Would you do anything different for next week?
5. What actions can you take this week to get you one step closer to your goals?
6. What are some possible actions you could take this coming week?
7. Can you think of any potential obstacles to completing these actions?
8. Would you like to brainstorm some possible solutions?
9. When you get afraid of making new changes, what are some ideas about how you will cope with the fear until it passes?
10. Are you 100% committed to attaining these goals?
11. What has to happen in your life in order for you to be 100% committed?
12. How will I know when you have completed these actions?
13. How are you going to enjoy your life this coming week?

Passion Related Questions

For more passion related questions.

1. What inspires you?
2. What empowers you?
3. What motivates you?
4. What drives you?
5. What makes you smile?
6. What can you not live without?
7. What would you do for free?

# Roadblocks to Success

1. Who is stopping you from being the success you dream of? How?
2. What habits do you have that are not helpful?
3. What incorrect beliefs do you have?
4. What negative people do you have in your life that bring you down?
5. Do you have a role model?
6. Are you committed to changing your life?
7. What stresses you out?

# When Faced With Problems or Stressors

When your clients are faced with a problem or obstacle, often looking at the problem from a different angle will help. These questions are known as reframing questions as they help the client view the question in a different light.

1. Does the problem lie in the task itself, or the way you feel about the task?
2. What "rules" do you have for yourself that could be changed?
3. What is the positive in this experience?
4. If you were already a successful businessman, how would you go about this?
5. What would your role model do in this situation?
6. What would your coach say about this situation?
7. What resources do you have to assist you here?
8. What else could this situation mean?
9. How can you learn from this?
10. What did you learn from this?
11. What other ways could you look at this?
12. What will this help you accomplish in the future?
13. What would your best friend do in this situation?
14. What else have I been afraid of but accomplished anyway?
15. What is another way to go about this?
16. What could you do differently?
17. Who would help you with this?
18. What is one small thing you could do right now?
19. How can I communicate this differently?
20. How can a cool company find me to work for them?
21. How has this helped you to move closer to your desired outcome?
22. If your best friend was in this situation, what would you advise her to do?
23. How you make this task/event/situation fun?
24. What other direction can you now try?
25. So what now?
26. I know you do not know, but if you did?

# Miracle Question (Bonus)

“Suppose that tonight you go to bed and go to sleep as usual. And during the night a miracle happens. And the problem vanishes. And the issues that concern you are resolved, but you’re still asleep. Therefore, you don’t know that the miracle has happened. When you wake up tomorrow what will be the first things that will tell you that the miracle has happened? How will you know that the transformation has occurred?”

* + What will you be doing?
  + What will you be saying?
  + Who will be in the room?
  + What will be the nature of the activity?”
  + How will others know the future perfect has happened?
  + What will they notice is different about you?
  + How will your children know the future perfect has happened?
  + How will your client know?

**Breaking Through Inertia:**

In physics, "inertia" refers to the tendency of an object to resist any change in its state of motion, meaning an object at rest wants to stay at rest and an object in motion wants to continue moving in a straight line at a constant speed unless acted upon by an external force; essentially, it's the property of matter that opposes changes in motion and is directly related to an object's mass.

**Key points about inertia:**

**Newton's First Law:**

Inertia is directly described by Newton's First Law of Motion, which states that an object will remain at rest or in uniform motion unless acted upon by an external force.

**Mass and Inertia:**

An object's inertia is directly proportional to its mass, meaning a more massive object has greater inertia and is harder to change its motion.

**Change in habits and Inertia:**

Whether we decide to begin a new behavior or end an old one, the start of the change process will require much more effort than the middle. *Breaking through inertia* is as difficult in behavior change as it is in physics. We need to act with enough effort (force) to push ourselves into motion (action) if we have not been moving (acting). Once we get going, it is easier to continue, and the effort required to continue the behavior will be less than what was needed to get started.   
The same is true for stopping a behavior. Once we are in motion, continuing is easy. Stopping takes more work than continuing.

The bigger a change we need to make, the bigger the effort required. This makes perfect sense to us in the physical world, yet we find ourselves confused by it in the behavioral world. When we encounter difficulty in starting or stopping, we judge ourselves or lose faith in the process, rather than expecting the strain and relaxing into it.

We like instant progress, instant gratification, and overnight success. We are surrounded by messaging that supports the nonsense notion that things should come easy. Everything from food to beauty products, from movie plots to medicine – is sold to us with the bogus idea that what we want/need should come easy. It does not.

If we prepared for the beginning of a change process by recognizing that it is going to be difficult, and that this difficulty is natural, appropriate, expected AND temporary – we would stand a better chance of sticking with the process.

If we understood that, eventually, we would be on our way – and then it would be easier to continue than to quit – we would be more willing to struggle.

**Consider the following examples:**

Getting the spinning playground ride to start/stop.

Swinging on a swing set

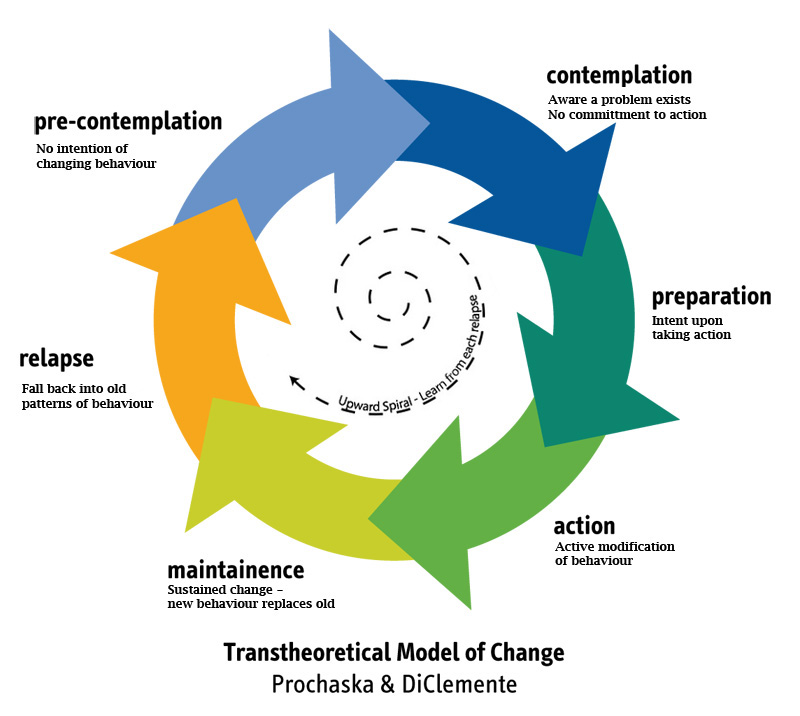
 

Accelerating/Decelerating a car





**Stages of change model: 6 stages**



* **Pre-contemplation:** The individual has no intention of taking action. They often ignore or deny the problem. They have no plan of taking action in the foreseeable future (next 6 months). They are either unaware that their behavior is problematic or that it produces negative consequences. They often underestimate the pros of changing and place too much emphasis on the cons of changing behavior. Why should I do this? Sustain talk.
* **Contemplation:** The individual intends to take action and a plan to do so in the near future (within the next 6 months). They recognize that the behavior may be a problem, and a more thoughtful and practical consideration of the pros and cons begins to take place, with equal emphasis placed on both (ambivalence). How would I do this? Equal Change and Sustain Talk
* **Preparation (Determination):** There is intention to take action and some steps have been taken. They decide what they will do to make the change. They are ready to take action within the next 30 days. They start to take small steps toward the behavior change, and they believe that making the change will result in a healthier/more desirable outcome. More Change Talk than Sustain Talk. Here’s how I can do this…
* **Action:** The individual is taking steps toward their goal. The first steps of behavior change have been in effect for a short period of time (within the last 6 months). They may modify their problem behaviors or acquire new healthy behaviors. Mostly Change Talk. I am doing this!
* **Maintenance:** The individual has changed their behavior and sustained the change for a while (more than 6 months). They intend to maintain this change going forward for the long-term. They work to prevent relapse to early stages. Change Talk – trying to avoid slipping backwards when frustration, fatigue, or overconfidence sets in. In this stage, the individual may, after a time, stop active coaching. The time comes when they must take over unassisted.
* **Termination:** The individual has no desire to return to prior unhealthy/unhelpful behaviors. With ending habits, this stage is rarely reached. People tend to remain in the maintenance stage. Habits can be broken with active effort, but the habit loop remains available (like an item placed in storage). The habit loop can be restarted if the circumstance, environment, cues, etc. bring it back on line. (You never forget how to ride a bike…)
* **Relapse:** This is where mistakes and setbacks happen, and people must decide whether to keep going.

**The processes of change**

This is the work a person does to progress through the stages of change. This is where the person’s motivations to change become actions on the way to lasting change. Every action is a vote the individual is casting for their new identity.

**Commitments:** Making a commitment to change is a public statement of your willingness to choose different behavior. Commitments also represents a belief in yourself — that you *will* change and maintain that change. Claiming your goal publicly is an important step in the process. It removes the safety net of privacy.

**Counter-conditioning:** This is switching out unhealthy behaviors for healthy ones. For example, if you’re committed to stop smoking, you may call a friend instead of smoking a cigarette when you go for out for a walk.

**Rewards:** Treat yourself for following through with healthy habits. For example, each day you choose healthy meals, you might snap a happy selfie or make an X in highlighter on your calendar, or move a paper clip, marble, or poker chip from one container to another.

**Environmental controls:** It’s easier to refuse a temptation that isn’t there. It is easier to control your environment than your behavior. You might try to avoid the people, places, and things that will trigger the behavior you’re trying to change, and find the ones that encourage your new, healthy behaviors.

For example, if you’re trying to stop drinking, that could mean not going to a favorite neighborhood bar or restaurant that serves alcohol, and trying a new juice bar or coffee shop instead.

To set yourself up for success, it is also helpful to make adjustments to your home environment – so that it is full of cues and resources that contribute to your mental health and well-being.

**Support:** You can surround yourself with people who support the changes you are making as well. It can also help to observe how the modifications you’re making affect the people around you. Spend more time with the people who react positively to your behavior changes.

**Solution Focused Coaching Model Summary**

**GOAL**

# Step 1 – Discover the Goal Discover the What

Q. What do you want to achieve? What do you want to work on?

# Discover the Why

Q. If you were to accomplish that, what difference would that make?

# How will we know progress is being made? (How can I best help them?)

Q. How will you know later that this session has been helpful? How can I best help you within the next 90 days?

**REALITY**

# Encourage Problem-Free talk (what’s going well)?

*I know a little about your problem, but before we discuss it further, I would like to find out a bit more about you as a person. What are your interests & hobbies? Tell me about your family.*

Solution Talk

* Tell me about the times when this problem was a little bit better?
* How did you do it?
* What were you doing differently during those times when things were a little bit better?
* How confident are you that something can be done about this?
* When you have tackled this kind of problem before and what was the most helpful?
* What skills and resources did you discover then?

# Step 2

***Miracle Question:***

*“Suppose that tonight you go to bed and go to sleep, as usual. During the night a miracle happens, and your problem vanishes. The issues that concern you are resolved, but since you are still asleep, you don’t know that the miracle has happened.*

*When you wake up tomorrow, what will be the first things that will tell you that the miracle has happened? How will you know that the transformation has occurred?”*

According to You (Client):

* How will you know it occurred? What’s different?
* What are you doing?
* What will you be saying?
* Who will be in the room?
* What will be the nature of the activity?

According to Others:

* How will others know? What are they doing?
* What will they notice is different about you?
* How will your children know the future perfect has happened?
* What else is happening?
* How are people responding?
* What are you doing?
* What are others doing?
* What else is happening?
* How are people responding?

**REALITY/OPTIONS**

# Step 3 – Discover what’s Already Working

Q. When does the future perfect happen? Even a little bit?

# Exception Questions

* Can you think of any other times, either in the past or in recent weeks, when you didn’t have the problem?
* What’s different about the times when the problem doesn’t occur?
* What would you say you are doing differently during those times?
* What would have to happen for that to occur more often?

**Coping Question** (Use if client cannot find a time when problem was less severe)

With all that has been happening in your life lately, I’m wondering how you’ve managed to get through it each day?

# Step 4 – Discover Where the Client is Now Scaling

Q. On a scale of 0-10, with 10 being the overall outcome or future perfect and 0 being absolutely no change at all, where would you say you are?

What have you done so far to get to that number? Or why did you say 3 rather than 0-2? If your client is sensitive to “why” questions, you could alternately ask: “What makes your present functioning a three and not a two?”

# Recent Successes

* What is the highest position on the scale in which you have been recently? or
* When has it ever been higher?
* What was different then? or
* What did you do differently?
* What worked well in what you did?
* Describe the different changes you will notice as you move up each number on the scale.

# If Zero or 1 on the Scale

If 0, tell me when it has been a bit higher? …Follow this up with coping questions, such as:

How do you cope when things are so difficult?

You can also affirm and empower the client with statements such as: “I look at how well you are doing in the face of this challenge and I really admire how resilient you are.”

**WRAP-UP / WAY FORWARD**

# Step 5 – Affirm, Acknowledge, and Empower

Summarize and affirm what’s going well for the client

# Step 6 – Goal Setting and Action Planning Confirm Goal

Q. Now that you have a clearer vision, what would you say your overall goal is?

# Action Planning

Q. What’s one thing you can do this week to move you toward your goal?

# Ways of Being to assist in achieving the goal

Q. Who do you need to be to achieve your goal?

Q. What does this quality or characteristic look like to you?

# Identify facilitators (support system, resources, etc.) to assist the client on his/her journey

Q. Who or what can you use as leverage to ensure you follow through on your commitment?

# Step 7 – Obstacles

**Identify obstacles to achieving the upcoming tasks or starting a new habit**

Q. What do you see as a possible obstacle to achieving your upcoming tasks for the week? Or what you see as a possible obstacle to starting this new behavior/habit? (If needed, help client with a step or plan to combat that obstacle.)

# Step 8 – Create Commitment

**Use the scale and assess the commitment level**

Q. On a scale of 1 to 10, how committed are you to starting this new behavior or tasks this week? If client says anything below a 10 ask “What would it take for you to move up to a \_\_?”

# Create affirmations

Q. What’s one statement you can affirm and confirm daily that will move you toward your goal?