

# Are You Ready to Change?

Permafold: What You Need To Know



## Five Stages of Change

1. Not Yet Ready to Make a Change
2. Thinking About Making a Change
3. Preparing to Make a Change
4. Taking Action
5. Making the Change Last



At the start of a race, you hear:

On your mark ...  
Get ready ...  
Get set ...  
Go ...

Training for a race gets you ready for it. Being ready is important, too, when you want to make healthy changes in your life. When you are ready to make a change, you are more likely to do it. And when you see the benefits of the change, you are more likely to make it part of your lifestyle.

This Permafold can help you decide if you are ready to make healthy changes and what to do when you are. This step-by-step method has helped many people and is called the **five stages of change**:

1. Not yet ready to make a change.
2. Thinking about making a change.
3. Preparing to make a change.
4. Taking action.
5. Making the change last.

Chances are, you will be more successful at making a healthy change if you:

- Know which stage of change you are in.
- Take steps best suited for that stage before you go on to the next one. In time, the change will be part of your regular habits.



## Which Stage of Change Are You In?

*“The only reason for time is so that things don’t happen at once.”*

– Albert Einstein

*List a change that you would like to make.*

Common examples are listed below.

## Examples of Healthy Changes

- Stop using tobacco.
- Lose weight.
- Get fit.
- Eat more fruits and vegetables.
- Deal with a substance abuse problem.
- Follow your treatment plan to better control your blood pressure, diabetes or other health condition.
- Take medicines as advised.

Then, decide which one of the following statements applies to you, if at all.

- 1. I have no plans to make this change in the next six months.
- 2. I am planning to make this change in the next six months.
- 3. I am planning to make this change in the next four weeks.
- 4. I have been making this change for less than six months.
- 5. I have been making this change for longer than six months.



If you chose:

**#1:** You are in Stage 1: Not yet ready to make a change.



To learn about steps best suited for this stage, go to Panel 5.

**#2:** You are in Stage 2: Thinking about making a change.



To learn about steps best suited for this stage, go to Panel 6.

**#3:** You are in Stage 3: Preparing to make a change. To learn about steps best suited for this stage, go to Panel 8.

**#4:** You are in Stage 4: Taking action. To learn about steps best suited for this stage, go to Panel 10.

**#5:** You are in Stage 5: Making the change last.



To learn about steps best suited for this stage, go to Panel 11.

## Stage 1. Not Yet Ready To Make a Change

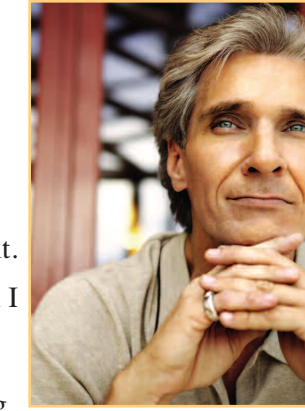
*Examples of Common Thoughts for Stage 1*

- I have no desire to stop smoking. I feel healthy.
- I have no plans to lose weight. I like to eat.
- I’m not even thinking about doing regular exercise. I don’t enjoy it.
- I feel fine. I don’t think I need to get regular checkups. I wish my wife would stop nagging me about it.
- I’ve tried to stop drinking in the past, but I failed. I give up.
- Making a change is more hassle than it’s worth.
- I do not know how this change will help me.

*Steps Best Suited for Stage 1*

*You may not be ready to make a healthy change, but start to think about how it could benefit you. Find out how the same behavior change has helped people you know.*

- For example, persons who do regular exercise say they have more energy to get things done during the day and they sleep better at night. Others say they have lost weight and their blood pressure has been lower since they started to exercise every day.
- Taking steps in stage 1 gets you closer to stage 2 – Thinking about Making a Change. What would it take for you to move to stage 2? Focus on this.



## Stage 2. Thinking about Making a Change

*Examples of Common Thoughts for Stage 2*

- I think it would be good for me and my family if I stopped smoking, but I’m not sure how to do it and if I can.
- I think I should lose weight because my clothes are getting tight.
- I keep hearing about how healthy it is to eat fruits, vegetables and wholegrains. I think I should be eating more of these foods.

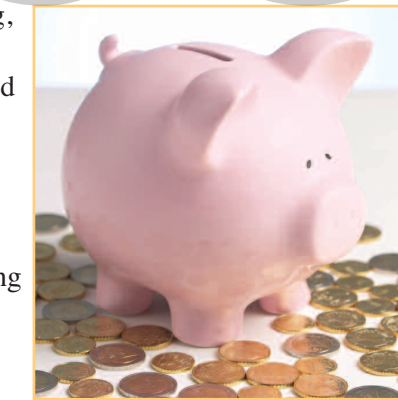
*Steps Best Suited for Stage 2*

*Make a list of things (cons) that keep you from making a change. Examples are:*

- I’ll gain weight if I stop smoking.
- I don’t have time to exercise.
- I feel fine. Why should I be concerned about my blood pressure?
- I don’t like cooked vegetables and whole-wheat bread.

*Look at the pros, not just the cons for making a change. Examples are:*

- If I stop smoking, I will save about \$250 a month and I will be able to breathe better.
- Walking with a friend 3 times a week is something I can do and would look forward to.
- If I lose weight, not only will my clothes fit better; I will lower my risk of getting type 2 diabetes.
- Eating more fruits, vegetables and wholegrains will prevent constipation.



## Stage 2: Thinking about Making a Change, continued

*Make a pledge or commitment to prepare to make a change.* Write this down. Post it in a place where you can see it often. This will remind you of your commitment.

*Find out about ways to help you make the change.*

For example:

- Get help to stop smoking from 1-800-QUIT-NOW (748-8669) or [www.smokefree.gov](http://www.smokefree.gov).
- Find out about healthy eating from [www.mypyramid.gov](http://www.mypyramid.gov).

Let friends and coworkers know that you are thinking about walking three times a week and would like to do this with someone. You may learn that a friend is already walking three times a week or is doing another fitness activity you would like to try.



Taking steps in stage 2 gets you closer to stage 3 – Preparing to Make a Change. What would it take for you to move to stage 3? Focus on this.

*“Our destiny changes with our thought; we shall become what we wish to become; do what we wish to do, when our habitual thought corresponds with our desire.”*

– Denis Waitley

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## Stage 3: Preparing to Make a Change

*“If you don’t know where you are going, you might wind up somewhere else.”*

– Yogi Berra

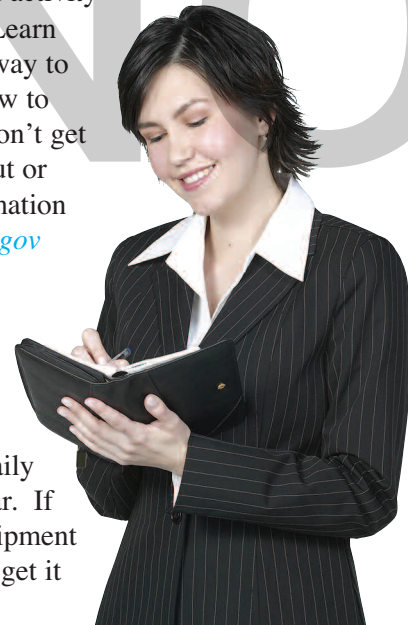
### Examples of Common Thoughts for Stage 3

- I want to stop smoking.
- I am ready to do regular exercise.
- I am determined to get my blood sugar under control.

### Steps Best Suited for Stage 3

*Make an action plan for the change you want to start making.* For example:

- Talk to your physician or health care professional about prescribed and over-the-counter medicines to help you stop smoking. Find out, too, about tobacco cessation programs. Set a quit date.
- Choose a physical activity you want to do. Learn about the proper way to get started and how to progress so you don’t get injured, burned-out or bored. Get information from [www.fitness.gov](http://www.fitness.gov) and the American College of Sports Medicine at [www.acsm.org](http://www.acsm.org).
- Schedule the activity in your daily or weekly calendar. If you need any equipment to do the activity, get it ready.



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## Stage 3: Preparing to Make a Change, continued

- Get your blood sugar checked. Find out (or review) things you need to do to keep your blood sugar under control. These include an eating plan, an exercise plan and medication, if needed.



### Tell family members and friends about your plan.

- Doing this reinforces your commitment to change. Let them know if you need their support.

### Have a backup plan for times when your first plan doesn’t pan out.

- *Set a short term goal.* Make sure the goal is one that is clear, measurable and achievable. Write down your goal. An example is, “I want to be able to walk three miles in three weeks.”

Taking steps in stage 3 gets you closer to stage 4 – Taking Action. What would it take for you to move to stage 4? Focus on this.



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## Stage 4: Taking Action

*“One way to get started is to quit talking and begin doing.”*

– Walt Disney

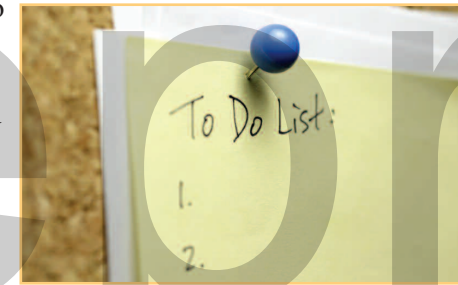
### Examples of Common Thoughts for Stage 4

- I can fit 15 minutes of walking in the morning in my daily activities.
- I believe I can live without smoking cigars. I was able to do this before. I can make it stick this time.

### Steps Best Suited for Stage 4

*Post notes. Give yourself reminders.* For example:

- Post a list of healthy foods on the refrigerator.
- Put a note by the TV that states, “Move, don’t sit when I watch you.”
- Make a “To Do List.” Feel empowered when you check off items you complete.



*Keep a log of the steps you are taking and the benefits you notice.* Doing this helps you see the positive steps you are making in the process of change. It lets you read what you have done and can be proud of. Give yourself rewards for small achievements.

*Review your backup plan.* Use it if needed. If this does not bring desired results, use another plan.

Keep talking to and being with people who support your efforts at making a change. Let them know what they can do to help.

Taking steps in stage 4 gets you closer to stage 5 – Making the Change Last. What would it take for you to move to stage 5? Focus on this.

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## Stage 5: Making the Change Last

*“We must become the change we want to see.”*

– Gandhi

### Examples of Common Thoughts for Stage 5

- Since I stopped smoking, I can climb stairs without getting out of breath.
- I have more energy than I did before doing yoga on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.
- I look forward to my morning walks.

### Steps Best Suited for Stage 5

*Keep reminding yourself of the benefits from making the change that has started to become a habit. Figure out ways to prevent relapse.* For example:

- Set an upper limit of what you are willing to weigh or what clothing size you do not want to exceed. If you find that you are getting closer and closer to these limits, be more mindful of portion sizes and/or kick your activity level up a notch.
- Control your environment to avoid past relapse triggers. If you have become sober, avoid “Happy Hour” at the bar with coworkers. Plan an activity with coworkers, family or friends which does not involve alcohol.
- Manage stress. Do physical exercise. Do a relaxation exercise, such as deep breathing or meditation.



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*“What you get by achieving your goal is not as important as what you become by achieving your goal.”*

– Zig Zigler

## Summary

Moving from one stage to the next is a process.

It may not be as simple as going from:  
stage 1 → stage 2 → stage 3 → stage 4 → stage 5

You may go back and forth through the stages:  
stage 1 ⇌ stage 2 ⇌ stage 3 ⇌ stage 4 ⇌ stage 5

This is normal. It does not mean you have failed.

- It’s okay if you slip up. Don’t dwell on this. Just get back on track.
- Success starts with knowing which stage of change you are currently in, taking steps best suited for that stage and then moving on to the next one.
- When you feel successful, you build momentum to advance.



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