

DREAM FOR OTHERS® | EP #11: READINESS FOR CHANGE



You are listening to the Dream For Others® podcast with Naomi Arnold, Episode 11.

Dream For Me, Dream For You, Dream For Others®. And now your host, award-winning life and business coach, Naomi Arnold...

Hi there!

In the last episode of the podcast, we spoke about this whole idea of ['finding motivation'](#) - and how motivation doesn't necessarily stimulate action, but action stimulates motivation.

If you didn't listen to that episode, and you want to tweak your perspective on motivation in a way that might actually help you find motivation, you might like to go find that one and listen to it now.

In this episode, we're going to be looking at motivation from another angle. We're going to learn about the stages of readiness which is a theory that can be really useful in examining behaviour change.

Having an understand of the stages of readiness can be really helpful for those who manage staff or who work in helping professions, like coaches, psychologists, counsellors, personal trainers for example. It can help you pinpoint where a client or a patient or a staff member might be situated on the stages of readiness and can inform your approach when it comes to more effectively working with them (or perhaps not working with them if there is that option).

The stages of readiness theory can also be useful for us to use ourselves. We can look at it and attempt to pinpoint where we might be situated in the stages of readiness around a particular area where we are trying to instigate change and work with this awareness when it comes to moving forward there.

Now the [stages of change model](#) was developed by Psychology Professors James Prochaska and Carlo DiClemente. I'll pop some references in the show notes for those who are interested.

The five stages are:

1. Precontemplation
2. Contemplation
3. Preparation
4. Action
5. Maintenance

We'll go through each of these now and I'll try to use an example from my life to illustrate that point.

First, the **precontemplation** stage. In this stage, the person might be aware of something that they would like to or think they should change - but they have no immediate intention to do so.

Now let's use me as an example. The example I am going to use is not going to be one that is typically associated with this model. They will often use behaviour change like quitting smoking as an example. But I wanted to give one that was a bit different to what one would normally associate with the model so that you could see how you can use your critical thinking to imagine how you can put different changes or different goals to this model as well in a way that might be helpful.

So the example I'm going to use is the process I underwent to change careers from a public servant working for the Australian Government Department of Health to starting my own business.

I knew even when I first accepted that role that it wasn't my forever job. I remember telling my boyfriend now husband Dusty at the time that I was just going to go for a year and then I'd be back. I stayed for 8 years. I knew that I didn't want to be there forever, but I didn't truly have an immediate intention to change this for what ended up being a very long time.

If you are coach like me, from a potential client's perspective, this might be when a client recognises that they want to change an area of their life, but they certainly don't plan to make immediate changes or to hire a coach to help them do so.

The next stage is contemplation. In this stage the person is starting to feel a desire to make a change, but they are contemplating doing it in the future.

So for me, even though I had said I was only going to be in that government role for one year, I kept applying for and accepting promotions when the year ended. I did this for at least a couple of years, until I started to begin contemplating to make this change. But I wasn't in a rush to do so. I was earning good money, we were able to take good leave, I could go on holidays, there were lots of reasons to not make a change right now.

So at this stage, again using coaches as an example - this is where a potential client might start to contemplate on whether hiring a coach might be useful but they don't plan to do so yet. For whatever reasons, they do not feel ready.

The third stage is **preparation**. This is where the person starts to take some initial steps to begin moving toward creating change.

Again, using me as an example. I started to research my options, to apply for external jobs that might be related to an area that could be the career for me. I still wasn't convinced, but I was starting to research, to explore.

In this stage, potential coaching clients, might begin to research coaches, maybe book some discovery calls, maybe examine their options, or start taking small steps to move toward their goals.

The fourth stage is **Action**. This is where the person has started to create.

They're taking action. They're moving toward their goal and they perhaps achieve their goal.

In this stage, I was enrolling in B-School, enrolling in life coaching school, building a website, working with a coach, and making time for this goal to create a business I love.

In this stage, the client is ready to book a coach, to work with a coach, to take action in between sessions, and to be moving forward.

The final stage is **Maintenance**. This is where you have achieved your goal or made the behaviour change and are now in maintenance mode. Depending on the goal or change you might be focusing on avoiding relapse or on implementing coping strategies to ensure you can main the change or the goal in a sustainable way.

In this stage, I had launched my business and was trying to build momentum and ensure it was a success, so I didn't have to return to the confused-what-do-i-do-now state that I was previously in.

In this stage, as a coach, your clients might feel ready to leave and go about implementation and maintenance on their own.

Finally, as time passes and the change has been cemented or the behaviour change you've been trying to make is well and truly made, you might then transition in a stage called **termination** - essentially meaning it's all done and dusted.

So an example of this might be that if you had a goal that you wanted to write a book, and the book has been written, is now published, launched, getting great PR, and not requiring any more work - this might reach the termination stage.

If you planned to quit smoking and you've moved through the stages, have maintained this for years, and are no longer concerned that you'll be re-tempted to smoke again, you might have reached the **termination** stage.

Now obviously we don't always transition through these stages in a linear way. We sometimes bounce around them depending on the goal or the behaviour we are trying to change.

There will be times when we are in action or in maintenance and we bounce back to contemplation or precontemplation.

For example, at some point on my journey and I can't remember when exactly, when I moved from pre-contemplation to contemplation and into action, I got a job as an intern psychologist at an occupational rehab firm thinking that this would put me on the path to becoming a clinical psychologist, which I thought at the time might be my career path given I had a psychology degree. I got leave without pay from my government job to make this transition. At the six month mark, I realised it wasn't the path for me, quit, and returned to my government role.

When I did this, I went through another round of pre-contemplation and contemplation and action. I did the same again when I went through the process of applying for the Australian Federal Police, only realising when I got the job offer, that nope that wasn't what I wanted either.

I went through the cycle again, until I was pregnant with Daniel and realised that now was the time and I would enter the world of business, and contemplated making the big shift while I was on maternity leave.

So I jumped back and forth between those early stages before making the big change and entering the maintenance stage.

I wonder if you look back on your life whether you can think of examples of how you went through these stages when attempting to change a behaviour or create change or pursue a goal too?

And I wonder if there is an area that you are trying to change now, and whether you can pinpoint where you are currently situated on the stages of readiness model when it comes to this area?

Are you satisfied with where you are currently situated? Or do you want to nudge yourself along to the next stage? What can you do to do that? What is **one thing** you can do in the next 24-48 hours to move toward the next stage?

And if you are managing staff, where do you feel a specific staff member might be on the stages of readiness when it comes to a project you're working on? If you are a health professional seeing a client or patient and you're getting frustrated about their commitment or progress, where are they situated on the model? Do you wish for them to be somewhere else? Would knowing where they are situated impact or influence your approach to possibly nudging them along to the next stage?

If you're in a helping profession like coaching and you have some control over where people are at along the stages of readiness - where do you want them to be when they start working with you?

For me, for example, I want them to be transition from the preparation stage to the action stage.

I want them to be ready to start taking action - even if they are still unclear and confused about what they want or how to get it - I want them to be ready to answer my millions of questions that will help them find that clarity, I want them to be ready to do the homework in between sessions.

And if this is the case, what can you do to ensure they are at that stage or are at least at that stage by the time you begin together? For me, I have a comprehensive intake form that those who aren't ready to do the work will likely not want to complete. But if they are ready to be in the action stage, they usually will. I have free discovery calls where if that person shows up and is ready to talk about the themes that came up in their intake form and to discuss the possibility of investing in working with a coach like me, it's generally a sign that they are ready to be in the action stage.

I wonder what this might look like in your context though?

Another thought that's worth keeping in mind is one that I read in one of my favourite psychology books called [On Becoming A Person by Dr Carl Rogers](#): "In this process it is not necessary for the therapist to "motivate" the client or to supply the energy which brings about the change."

So Rogers is obviously speaking from the context of therapy, but I think this message can apply to other professions too.

Let's again use the example of a coach or a helping professional. So in this example it might not be our role to supply the motivation for the client.

Their change isn't contingent on how motivated we are for them to succeed. Their success won't happen by us wanting it more than them. They need to progress along those stages of readiness themselves. They need to be the ones who are taking the action.

And I think this can also be helpful to consider in other contexts too - so if we're managing staff or if we're keeping in mind a friend or ourselves too. It can be very hard if not impossible for us to supply motivation, it usually needs to come from that person themselves and they need to be the one moving along the stages of readiness.

But I think it can be useful for us to be aware of where they might be situated on the stages of readiness as that can inform our approach and it can assist us with meeting them where they are at.

The questions I will ask as a coach, for example, to someone who is in the contemplation phase would be very different to the questions I would ask of someone who might be in the action or maintenance stage.

It is no point me focusing on the latter if they're situated in the former.

I hope this episode has been useful to you. I would love if you would head on over to the comments section in the show notes or tag me on social media @NaomiLArnold #DreamForOthers and let me know what you're taking away from it. Maybe it's something pertaining to yourself and what insight it might have brought to an area you're hoping to change. Or maybe it's something around what you're going to do when it comes to a relationship with another. I would love, love, love to hear from you.

Thank you and talk to you again soon!

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