



CHANGE MANAGEMENT PLANNING

One way to cope with the uncomfortable feeling of being overwhelmed with the thought of change is to instead look at the process in small incremental steps. Small steps are much easier to mentally grasp with much less anxiety and stress. For example, if the thought of moving a thousand pounds is way too much, a better objective may be to plan to move ten or twenty pounds a day instead. The following exercise can help you to think about increasing your readiness for action by taking small steps:

Substance Use Change Planning – *Check all that apply to you.* First, keep in mind if you are mandated to be abstinent, this should be a factor in your decision making. If this is done in a group it may be best to discuss each option including the pros and cons of each. You may choose more than one option based on your situation.

- Abstinence (Mandated)**– I am required by _____ to be abstinent so I will try not to use anything for the next _____ (time period)

(Pick a time period that is enough to try to get yourself started in the right direction. For example, if you say “one week” that does not mean that you are planning to use in a week just that for now you are going to set a short term goal to remain abstinent for at least the next week and see where it goes from there)

- Abstinence (by Choice)** – I want to try to remain abstinent on my own. I currently have not used in _____ (time period clean). A reasonable goal for me right now is to try to continue to remain abstinent for at least _____ (time period)

(Pick a time period that is not too overwhelming. You are just setting a short term goal to strive for just for now)

- Harm Reduction (Substitution)** – (This may not be an option if you are mandated) – I am willing to completely stop using _____ (substance) for now, but I am not yet willing to stop using _____ (Less harmful substance)

- Harm Reduction (Decrease)** – (Again, this may not be an option if you are mandated) – I am not willing to stop completely using _____ (substance) for now, but I am decreasing the frequency of my use to _____ (describe your plan to cut back on using)

- Harm Reduction (Medication Assisted Treatment)** – I am currently on _____ (MAT such as Suboxone) and I will continue to take it properly and not use – **or** – I am not yet on _____ (MAT) but I will find a provider and sign up to start taking MAT by _____ (time frame)

DISCUSS - Keep in mind, that quite often, despite people’s best intentions, it can be impossible to successfully substitute or cut back when it comes to substance use. That is what addiction is all about: *Not being able to control use*. Still, if abstinence is not an option for you right now, reducing use is still better than giving up so you will have to see what happens and then learn from that experience. **Discuss this important subject now with your counselor and group***

*Do not forget to consider any health risks or other safety concerns that may be involved. (For example a serious medical condition or psychiatric issue should always be taken into account with these decisions)



Other Change Planning Suggestions – Check which steps you are willing to start in order to steadily make progress in the right direction:

- I will try to attend a support group (such as a 12 step group or other equivalent)
- I am already attending 12 step meetings but I will improve my commitment by agreeing to attend _____ (say how often you plan to attend)
- I will clear out my house of all substances **or** I will get rid of _____(paraphernalia)
- I will delete all drug related phone numbers and dealers from my phone
- I will stop associating with the following people that I know are probably still getting high:

- I will get involved with more counseling (individual therapy, family therapy, more groups)
- I will stop going to (High risk place) _____
- I will start to see a psychiatrist and consider taking medication for (mental health issue/symptom) _____ **or** I will start properly taking the medication I already have)
- I will start getting involved with the following positive activity/hobby:_____
- I will increase my commitment and involvement with the following responsibilities (for example: going to school, doing homework, working, cleaning the house, etc.) _____

Your Own Ideas – What are you willing to start doing now in order to increase your progress? Remember, the idea is to look at smaller steps you can take instead of getting yourself overwhelmed by drastic changes. Be hopeful and optimistic, yet realistic:

- Example 1 – *“Instead of spending so much time sitting around I will start working for my uncle’s landscaping business a few days per week”*
- Example 2 – *“I will tell my family that I have been getting high way more than they realize so that they can help keep a closer eye on me”*

List your own ideas for taking small steps toward positive change:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Take Action! – *Discuss the following:*

- What does your counselor and the rest of the group think of your plan? Any suggestions/feedback?
- Is there anything that you might need to get started or to keep going with these plans?
- Who can help you along the way?