

## Counseling for Behavioral Risks

### Tailor counseling to your client's stage of change

Research shows that individuals adopt new behaviors in stages. Different counseling techniques are needed for each of the three stages presented below.

- a. Use your client's response to the Client Nutrition Assessment form to identify his/her stage of change.
  - 1-2 = Action
  - 3 = Contemplation
  - 4 = Precontemplation
- b. Use the following information about each stage of change to tailor counseling for your client.

#### Action

People in action, the desirable stage, are *doing something*. They may be participating in the behavior at less than the recommended level or they may be maintaining the behavior at an adequate level (e.g., "Yes, I exercise a couple of times per week and I enjoy it.").

**Goal:** Support the patient in continuing their behavior change.

#### How?

- Reward them with **praise**
- Review their current behavior pattern
- Have patient identify **social supporters**
- Have patient identify **barriers** to continuing the behavior activity (relapse prevention)
- Help patient **develop solutions** to barriers
- **Follow up** on their behavior change at future appointments

#### Precontemplation

Precontemplators may realize that a change is indicated, but are *not* willing to consider altering their health behavior (e.g., "I haven't been exercising, and I have no desire to start now.").

**Goal:** To encourage patients to **consider** making a change in behavior.

#### How?

- **Summarize benefits** of the behavior
- Relate benefits to **personal** health status
- **Patient lists** personal reasons to participate in the behavior
- Give **clear advice** to consider changing the behavior

#### Contemplation

Contemplators know that they need to change their behavior. They are *thinking about* making a health behavior change, but may not have the skills, knowledge, or incentive to do so (e.g., "I've been wanting to change my diet, but I don't know what foods to eat.").

**Goal:** Make a **specific plan** for changing the behavior.

#### How?

- Give **clear advice** about how to change the behavior in the near future
- Have **patient identify benefits** they hope to obtain from changing their behavior
- Have **patient choose** a preferred and appropriate activity
- **Praise patient's intentions**
- Have **patient identify** social supporters
- Have **patient identify** barriers to activity
- Have patient **rate confidence** in being able to make the behavior change
- **Follow up** on their behavior change at future appointments

Use the appropriate handouts to provide your client with a prescription and general health behavior information.

- Help the client identify successful behavior change strategies.
- Make note of the client's behavior change plan in the appropriate chart.