



COACHING FOR CHANGE:

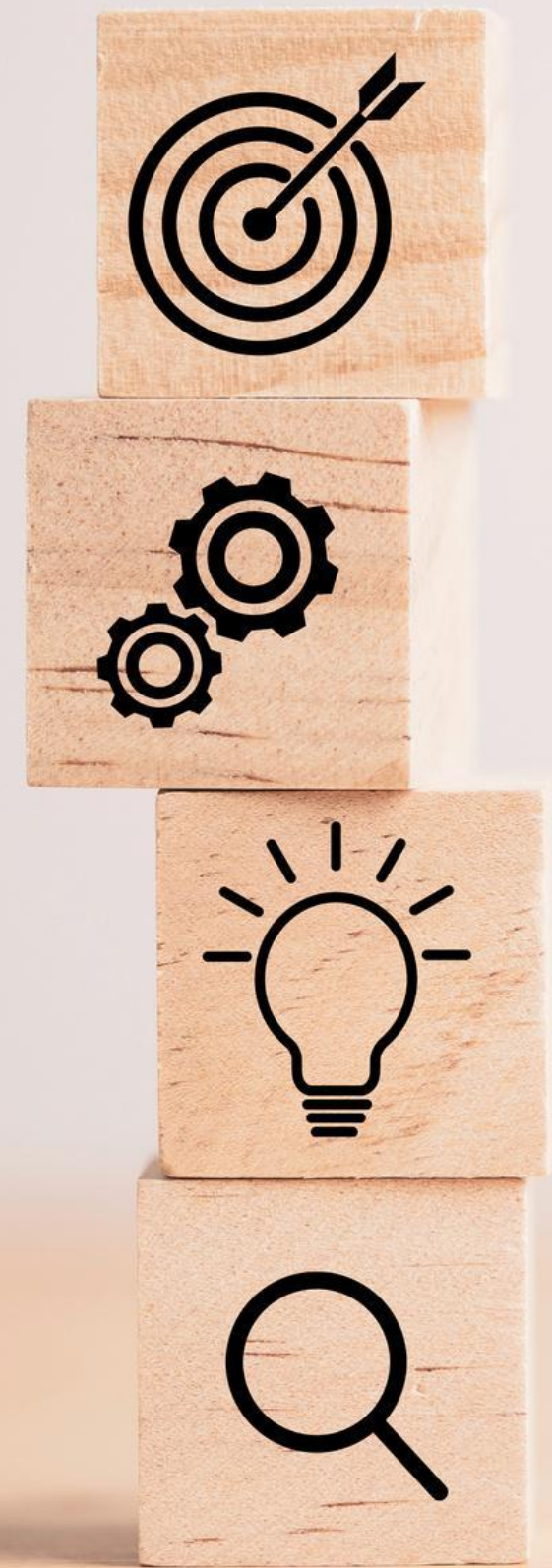
WORKING THROUGH RESISTANCE

SUSAN LEWIS M.ED.

Founder & CEO, Lead trainer & Coach ECEPD

OBJECTIVES

- Define the 5 stages of the Readiness for Change model.
- Recognize readiness and resistance.
- Utilize motivational interviewing strategies when faced with resistance to change.
- Reframe resistance as information

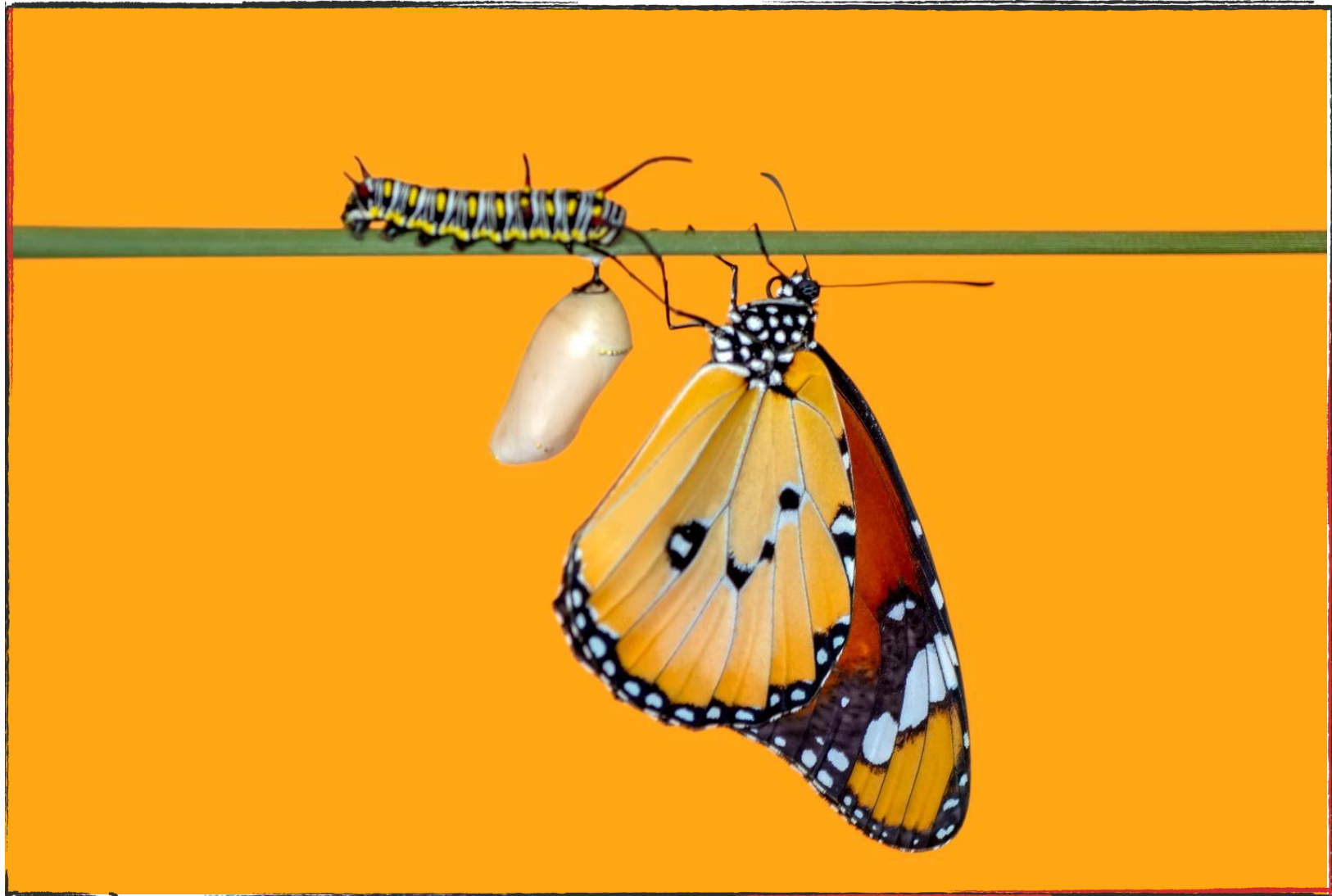


WHAT IS CHANGE?

A close-up photograph of a hand holding a single white puzzle piece. The word "change" is printed in a dark blue, serif font across the center of the piece. The hand is positioned behind the piece, with fingers visible at the top and bottom. The background is a soft, out-of-focus blue.

change

DEFINITION OF CHANGE



CHANGE, ALTER, VARY, MODIFY

mean to make or become different.

CHANGE implies making either an essential difference often amounting to a loss of original identity or a substitution of one thing for another.

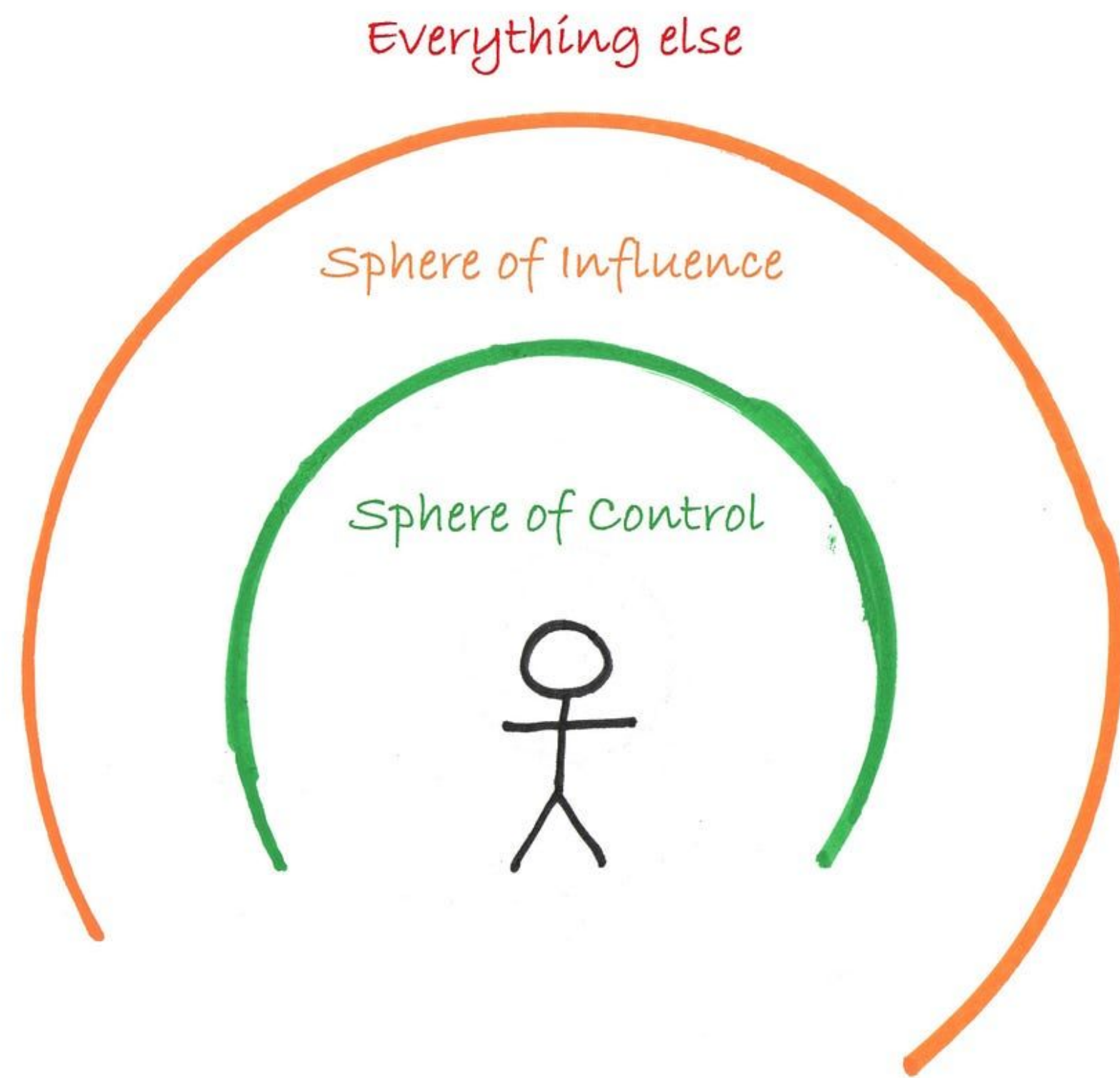
2 TYPES OF CHANGE

Self



Other





FEELINGS ASSOCIATED WITH CHANGE



WHO DECIDES?

What should be changed?

Why it should be changed?

How it should be changed?



STAGES OF CHANGE



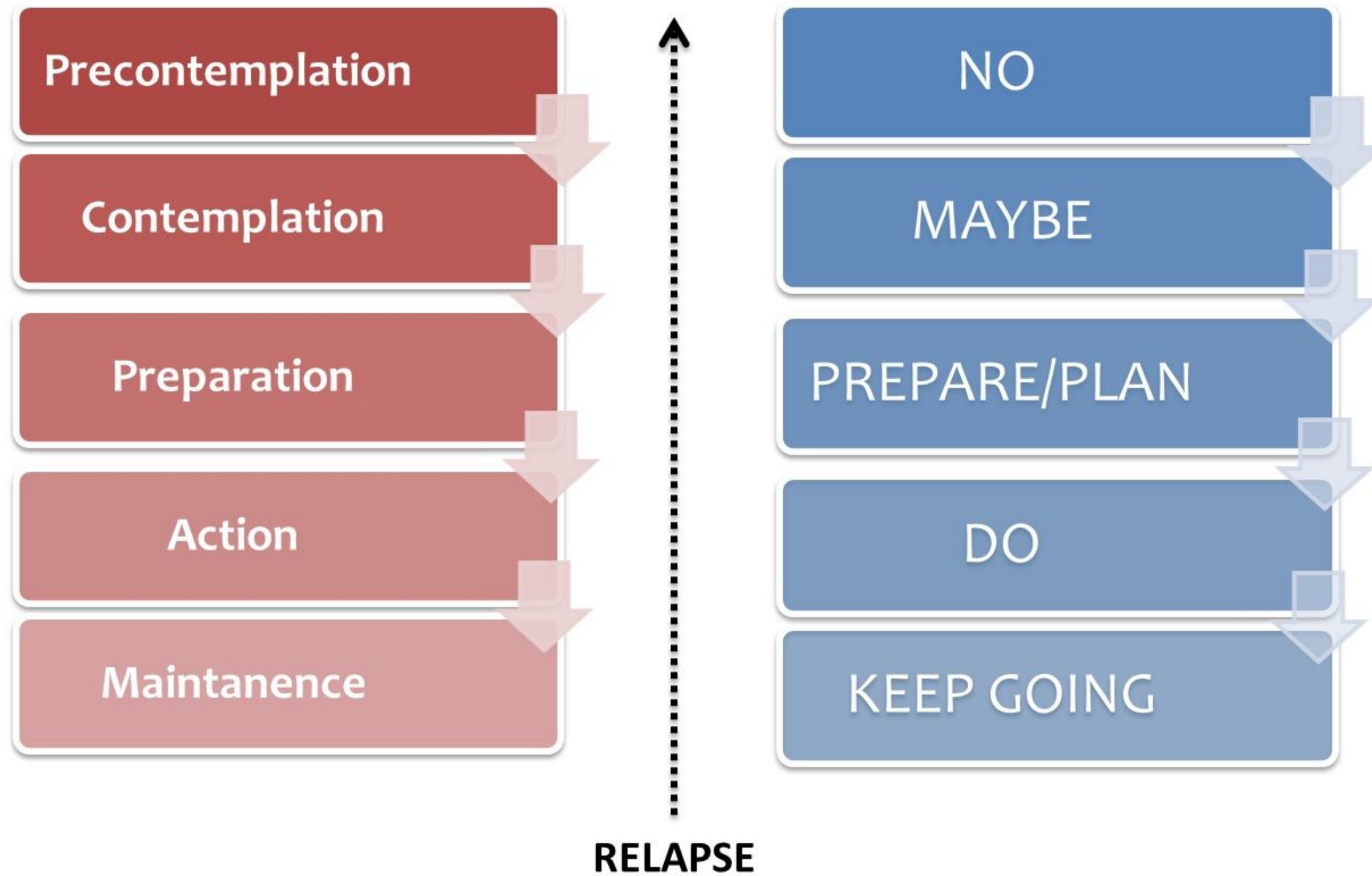
VIDEO MADE WITH
FACTORY AI

Precontemplation:



Transtheoretical Model

Stages of change



WHY ASSESS CHANGE READINESS



Assessing readiness to change will:

- Help to build trust and rapport.
- Expose limiting beliefs that may slow down progress.
- Help individuals take an active role in their own transformation.
- Help set goals that are meaningful to program leaders and/or teachers.
- Improve the chances that coaching will result in real, lasting, sustainable change.

WAYS TO ASSESS READINESS FOR CHANGE

1. Motivational Interviewing
 - a. Skills (OARS)
 - b. Process (listen for change/sustain talk)



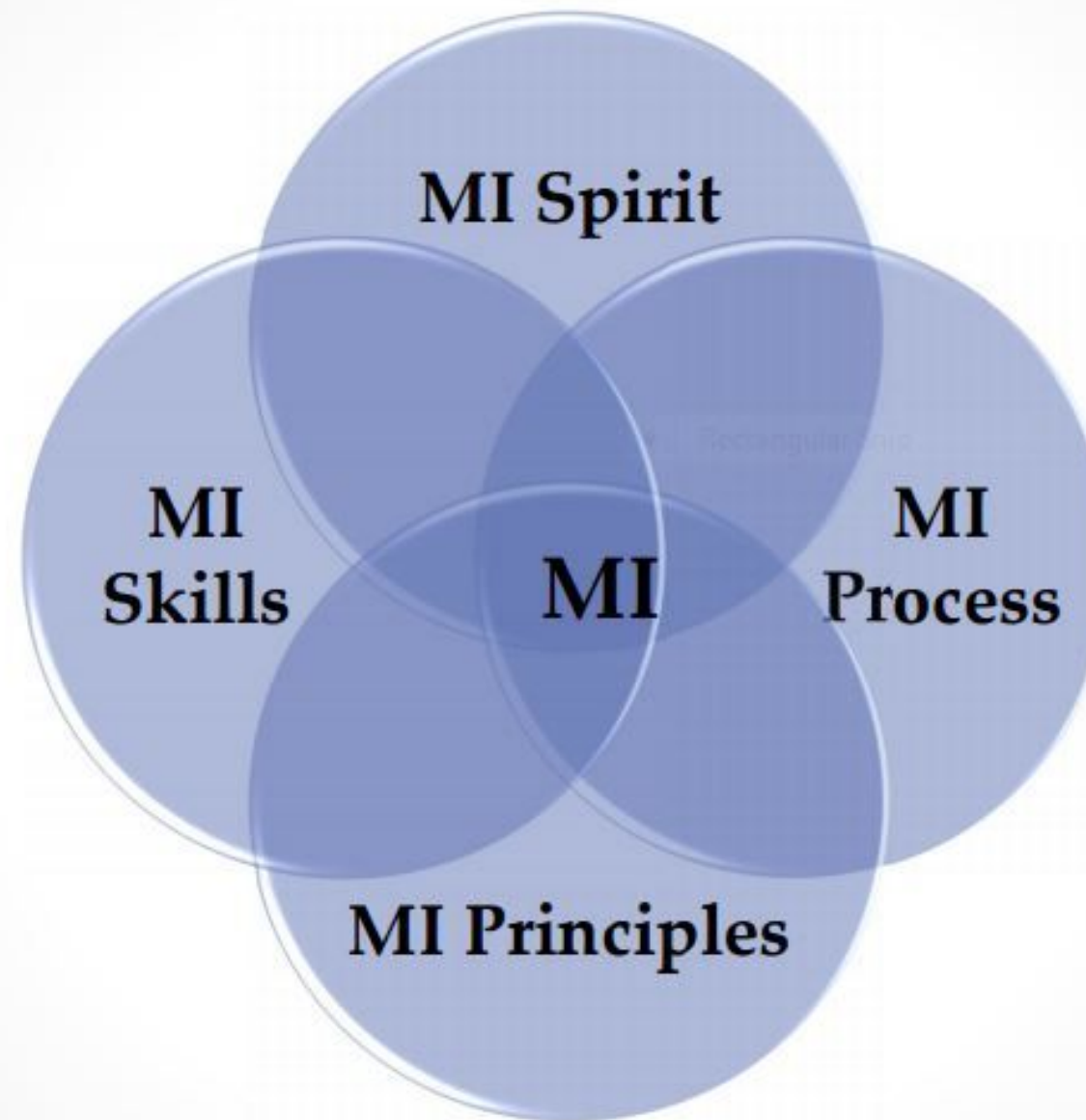
MOTIVATIONAL INTERVIEWING

“MI is a collaborative, goal-oriented style of communication with particular attention to the language of change. It is designed to strengthen personal motivation for and commitment to a specific goal by eliciting and exploring the person’s own reasons for change within an atmosphere of acceptance and compassion.”

Miller & Rollnick, 2013



The Elements of Motivational Interviewing



Motivational Interviewing

O·A·R·S

Ask open-ended
questions

Identify strengths,
acknowledge efforts

<u>O</u> pen	<u>A</u> ffirm
<u>R</u> eflect	<u>S</u> um Up

Use a simple or
complex reflection

Summarize change
talk, progress, &
next steps



OARS EXAMPLES

<p>Open-Ended Questions</p> <p>Open-ended questions invite reflection, reduce defensiveness, and encourage educators to think more deeply about their practice.</p>	<p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What are you hoping children will gain from this change?• What has worked well for you in the past in similar situations?
<p>Affirmations</p> <p>Affirmations recognize strengths, effort, values, and intentions—not outcomes or compliance.</p>	<p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• You really care about creating a calm, predictable environment.• You're balancing a lot right now and still showing up for your classroom.
<p>Reflections</p> <p>Reflections show understanding, validate emotions, and often help educators hear their own thinking more clearly.</p>	<p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• You want to support children differently, but you're worried about having enough time.• It sounds like you believe in this approach, but you're not sure how to make it work with your current schedule.
<p>Summaries</p> <p>Summaries pull together key points, highlight motivation, and support clarity and next steps.</p>	<p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• So what I'm hearing is that you value strong relationships with children, you see why this change matters, and you're trying to figure out how to fit it into an already full day.• You want to support children's behavior in a more proactive way, and at the same time you're feeling stretched by staffing and time.

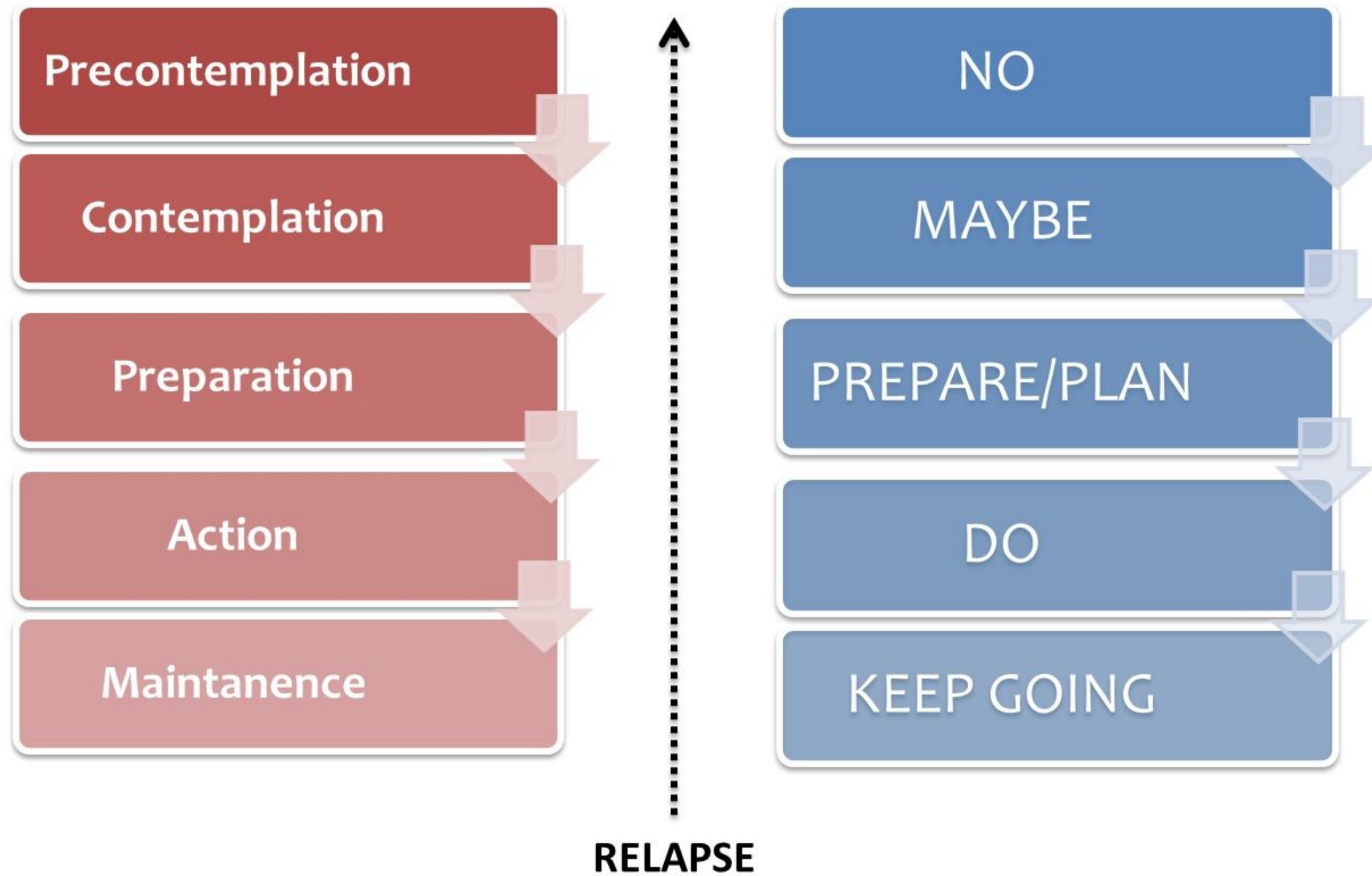


POWER OF QUESTIONS

- Questions shape thinking
- Questions guide awareness and choice
- Not all questions move change forward
 - Not all questions are created equal

Transtheoretical Model

Stages of change



TUNE IN - LISTENING



Change Talk vs. Sustain Talk

Increase Change Talk

DARN-CAT

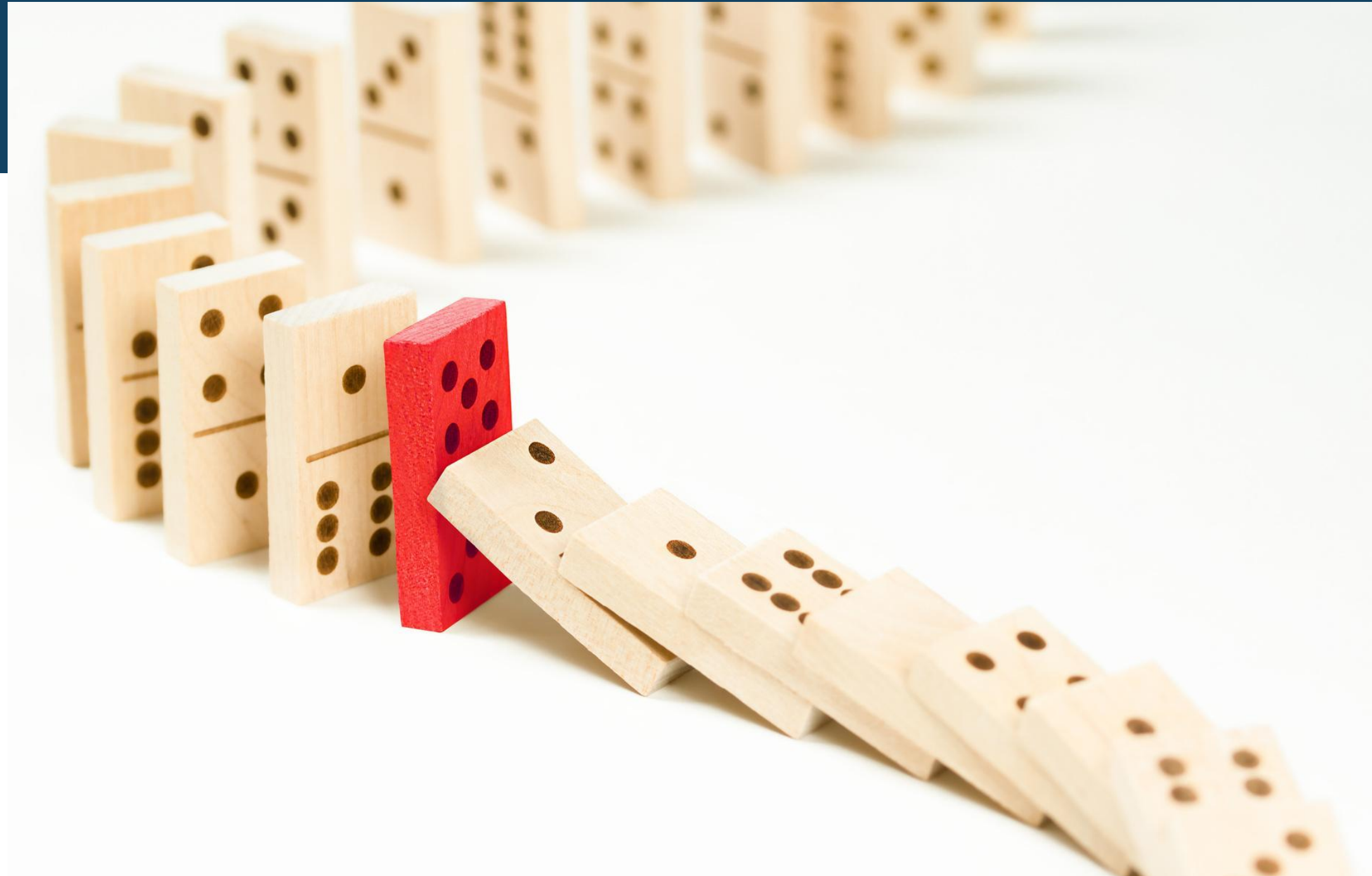
Change talk is at the heart of MI. We want to elicit—

- Preparatory change talk
 - **D**esire: I want to change.
 - **A**bility: I can change.
 - **R**eason: It's important to change.
 - **N**eed: I should change.
- Implementing change talk
 - **C**ommitment: I will make changes.
 - **A**ctivation: I am ready, prepared, willing to change.
 - **T**aking steps: I am taking specific actions to change.

Keywords to Listen For

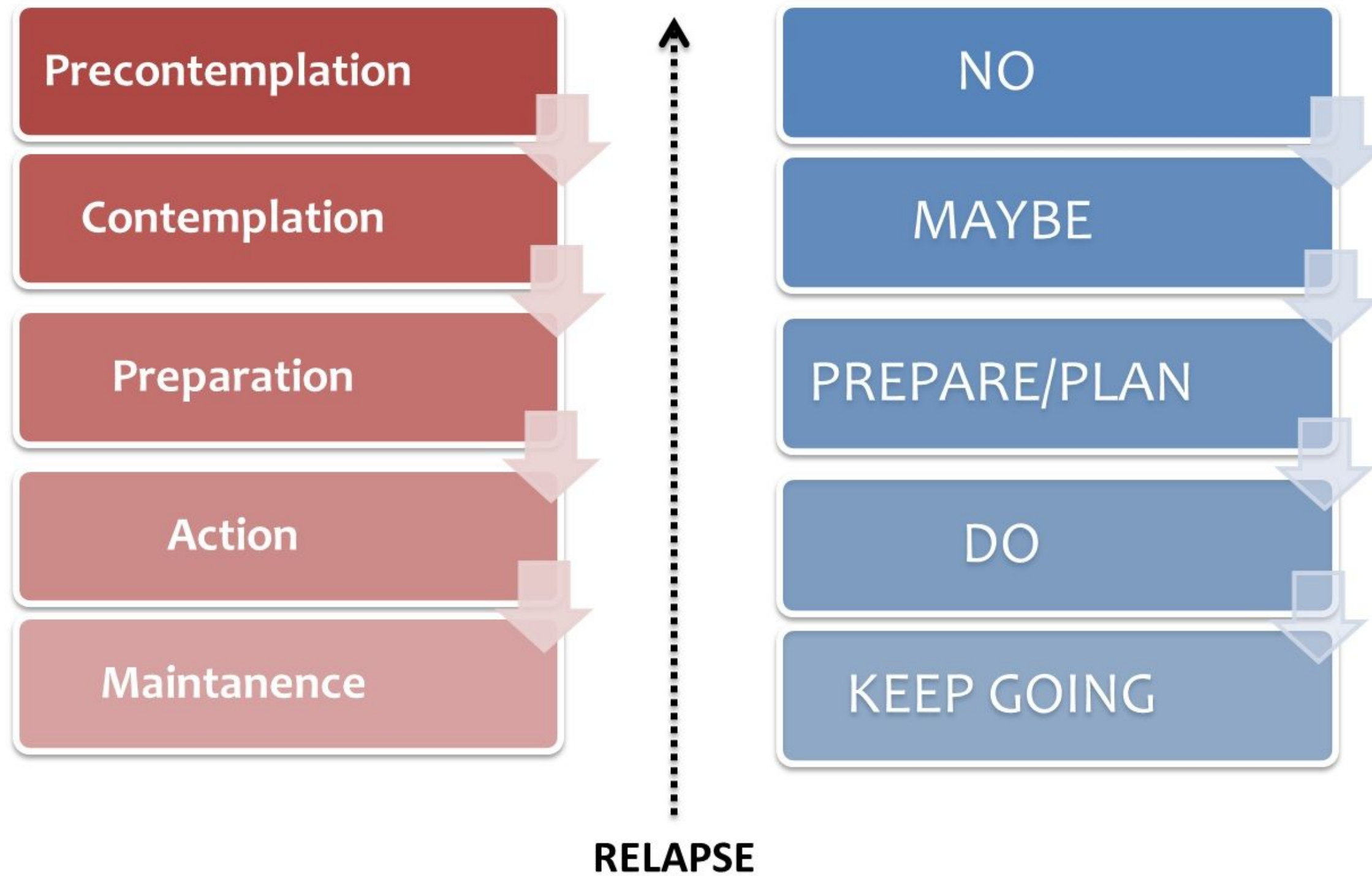
- **DESIRE** to change (want, like, wish . . .)
- **ABILITY** to change (can, could . . .)
- **REASONS** to change (if . . . then)
- **NEED** to change (need, have to, got to . . .)
- **COMMITMENT** (intention, decision, promise)
- **ACTIVATION** (willing, ready, preparing)
- **TAKING STEPS**

RESISTANCE



Transtheoretical Model

Stages of change



Responding to Sustain Talk

Sustain Talk	Reflection	Open Question
I have no desire and don't know why I would anyway	It's a combination of not wanting to change and seeing no reasons	If it was important, why would that be?
I don't think I can	You're not certain about your ability	What would increase your confidence?
It's too much trouble	It's more effort than you are willing to make right now.	Certainly only you can decide, but if you did, why would you?

Example of ambivalence

“I need to do something about my weight but I’ve tried about everything and it never lasts. I mean, I know I need to lose weight for my health but I just love to eat.”

Change Talk Sustain Talk

LET'S PRACTICE



- ☞ **D**esire
- ☞ **A**bility
- ☞ **R**easons
- ☞ **N**eed

I want to be more available to observe my staff, but I'm stretched so thin.

- ☛ Desire
- ☛ Ability
- ☛ Reasons
- ☛ Need

I want to be more available to observe my staff (change talk) but I'm stretched so thin (sustain talk).

DESIRE



I want to be more available to observe my
staff (change talk) but I'm stretched so thin
(sustain talk).

- ☛ **D**esire
- ☛ **A**bility
- ☛ **R**easons
- ☛ **N**eed

DESIRE



I want to be more available to observe my staff (change talk) but I'm stretched so thin (sustain talk).

Response: It sounds like you have a desire to observe your staff. How do you think that would be helpful/beneficial? What would an ideal observation schedule look like for you? What would you want to prioritize first?

- Desire
- Ability
- Reasons
- Need

- ☛ **D**esire
- ☛ **A**bility
- ☛ **R**easons
- ☛ **N**eed

I know that meeting the quality standards will only improve our program but I'm having a hard time getting all of the staff to understand their role in the process.

- ☛ Desire
- ☛ Ability
- ☛ Reasons
- ☛ Need

I know that meeting the quality standards will only improve our program (**change talk**) but I'm having a hard time getting all of the staff to understand their role in the process (**sustain talk**).

REASON

I know that meeting the GNJK standards will only improve our program (**change talk**) but I'm having a hard time getting all of the staff to understand their role in the process (**sustain talk**).

- Desire
- Ability
- Reasons
- Need

REASON

I know that meeting the GNJK standards will only improve our program (**change talk**) but I'm having a hard time getting all of the staff to understand their role in the process (**sustain talk**).

Response: It's evident you see the benefit of participating in quality improvement efforts, but you are having a hard time communicating that to your staff. I wonder what your staff DO understand about the process and what questions they may have? How might you find that out?

- Desire
- Ability
- Reasons
- Need

- ☛ **D**esire
- ☛ **A**bility
- ☛ **R**easons
- ☛ **N**eed

I think I could do that during small group time, but I'm not sure I can keep it going consistently with everything else I'm juggling at that time.

- ☛ **D**esire
- ☛ **A**bility
- ☛ **R**easons
- ☛ **N**eed

I think I could do that during small group time
(change talk), but I'm not sure I can keep it going
consistently with everything else I'm juggling at that
time (sustain talk).

ABILITY



I think I could do that during small group time
(change talk), but I'm not sure I can keep it going
consistently with everything else I'm juggling at that
time (sustain talk).

- Desire
- Ability
- Reasons
- Need

ABILITY



I think I could do that during small group time
(change talk), but I'm not sure I can keep it going
consistently with everything else I'm juggling at that
time (sustain talk).

Response: It sounds like you can see a realistic place in your day
where this could fit, even while you're holding some uncertainty about
sustainability with everything else on your plate. When you imagine
this working, what would be different for you or for the children? What
would help this feel doable—at least as a first step?

- Desire
- Ability
- Reasons
- Need



- ✓ **D**esire
- ✓ **A**bility
- ✓ **R**easons
- ✓ **N**eed

I know something needs to change because the children are struggling and it's impacting the whole classroom, but I'm worried that trying something new right now might make things feel even more chaotic.



- Desire
- Ability
- Reasons
- Need

I know something needs to change because the children are struggling and it's impacting the whole classroom (**change talk**), but I'm worried that trying something new right now might make things feel even more chaotic (**sustain talk**).

NEED



I know something **needs** to change because the children are struggling and it's impacting the whole classroom (**change talk**), but I'm worried that trying something new right now might make things feel even more chaotic (**sustain talk**).

- Desire
- Ability
- Reasons
- Need

NEED



I know something **needs** to change because the children are struggling and it's impacting the whole classroom (**change talk**), but I'm worried that trying something new right now might make things feel even more chaotic (**sustain talk**).

☛ **D**esire
☛ **A**bility
☛ **R**easons
☛ **N**eed

Response: I hear you're noticing that what's happening right now isn't working for the children, and that matters a lot to you. At the same time, you're worried about adding more when things already feel hard. What are you noticing from the children that's telling you something needs to change? If change didn't have to mean a big shift all at once, what might feel like a small, safer step?

DARN CAT Client Exercise

- Lets write down some statements about this change we are discussing.
 - D – Why do you want to make this change?
 - A – How could you do it?
 - R – What are good reasons to make the change?
 - N – How important is it and why?
 - C – What do you intend to do about it?
 - A – What are you ready or willing to do?
 - T – What have you already done?
- Use your OARS to expand, explore and solidify.

REFLECTION & COMMITMENT

What insight from today shifted your thinking the most?

What will I pay attention to differently?

What is one small shift I can make this week to listen more intentionally and offer more guided questions?



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susan@eceptd.com

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THANK YOU!

Supporting Educators Through Change: A Leadership & Coaching Reflection Guide

This handout is designed for coaches, directors, consultants, and system leaders who support early childhood educators and programs through change. It reflects a readiness-for-change framework grounded in adult learning, motivational interviewing, and cultural humility. Use these prompts flexibly to guide reflection, coaching conversations, and leadership decision-making—not as a checklist or script.

1. Understanding the Change Process

Change is not linear. Individuals and programs may move back and forth between stages, and may be at different stages of readiness depending on the specific change.

- *Precontemplation* – Not yet seeing a need or reason for change
- *Contemplation* – Aware of the need for change but feeling ambivalent (“yes, but...”)
- *Preparation* – Considering next steps and gathering supports
- *Action* – Actively trying new practices or approaches
- *Maintenance* – Sustaining change over time

Important reminder: An educator or leader may be in different stages at the same time. For example, someone may be ready to adopt a new diapering policy but resistant to a new curriculum.

2. Factors That Influence How Educators Experience Change

How someone experiences change is shaped by multiple interacting factors. Understanding these helps leaders respond with empathy rather than urgency.

Internal factors may include:

- Stress level and emotional capacity
- Alignment with personal and professional values
- Confidence and prior experiences with change
- Motivation and sense of agency

External factors may include:

- Policy or regulatory changes
- Organizational decisions or mandates
- Staffing shortages or workload demands
- Timelines and accountability pressures

Support and resource factors may include:

- Support from leadership, colleagues, coaches & family, friends
- Time available for planning, learning and reflection
- Access to materials, training, or coaching
- Energy and emotional bandwidth

3. Leadership and Coaching Moves That Support Change

Those supporting educators through change play a critical role in shaping how change is experienced. The goal is not to push people through change, but to create conditions that support ownership and sustainability.

- Identifying the educator or program's *WHY* and connecting change efforts to what matters most to them
- Focusing on what is within the individual or program's sphere of control
- Honoring flexibility in how standards and quality indicators are met
- Avoiding one-size-fits-all solutions, or "Just do it like me" approaches
- Recognizing that resistance often reflects unmet needs or lack of readiness
- Leading with cultural humility and curiosity

4. Using Strategic Questions Based on Readiness for Change

Strategic questioning helps educators reflect, build motivation, and identify next steps without increasing defensiveness. Questions should match the individual's stage of readiness.

Precontemplation / Contemplation

- What feels most important to you about how things are currently going?
- What concerns or hesitations do you have about this change?
- What might happen if nothing changed over time?
- How does this align—or not—with your values or priorities?

Preparation / Action

- What feels like a manageable next step?
- What supports or resources would help right now?
- What strengths do you bring to this change?
- What might get in the way, and how could we plan for that?

Maintenance

- What's helping you sustain this change?
- What have you learned about yourself or your team?
- What systems are supporting this practice now?
- What might put this change at risk, and how can we prepare?

5. Listening for Change Talk and Sustain Talk

Educators often express both motivation and hesitation in the same conversation. Leaders and coaches should listen for both (ambivalence).

Example:

“I want to be more available to observe my staff, **but** I’m stretched so thin.”

Supportive responses reflect the desire for change first, then explore barriers without judgment.

Final Reflection for Leaders and Coaches

When supporting change, ask yourself:

- Am I matching my support to this person’s readiness?
- Am I honoring their context, culture, and capacity?
- Am I working with resistance—or against it?

Readiness for Change: Coaching Questions for Early Childhood Professionals

This tool is designed for coaches, directors, consultants, and leaders supporting early childhood educators. Questions are aligned with the stages of change and grounded in reflective practice, motivational interviewing, and adult learning principles. Use flexibly—these are prompts, not scripts.

Precontemplation

Goal: Educators are not yet acknowledging a need or desire for change.

- What feels important to you about how things are currently going?
- What would have to happen for this to feel like something worth thinking about changing?
- What signs might tell you that this approach is no longer working for children or for you?
- How does this current practice align with your values as an educator?
- What have you noticed children responding well to lately? What feels harder?
- If nothing changed over the next year, what do you imagine that might look like?
- What past experiences have shaped how you feel about change in this area?
- What feels most important to protect right now?

Contemplation

Goal: Educators are weighing benefits and barriers to change.

- What's making this feel important to think about now?
- What are the benefits of staying the same? What are the benefits of changing?
- What concerns or worries come up when you think about changing?
- What past changes felt manageable? What made them manageable?
- What supports do you already have that you might be underestimating?
- What would feel like a meaningful outcome for you if this change worked?
- What feels hardest about this change right now?
- What would make this change feel safer or more doable?

Preparation

Goal: Educators are identifying strategies and supports for change.

- What feels like the smallest next step you could take to get closer to your goal?
- What strengths do you bring to this change?
- Who could support you as you try something new?
- What resources, tools, or information would help right now?
- What routines or systems could support this change?
- How confident do you feel on a scale of 1–10? What would move it one point higher?
- What might get in the way, and how could you plan for that?
- How will you know this step is working?

Action

Goal: Educators are actively implementing change.

- What are you noticing as you try this out?
- What feels easier than you expected?
- What's feeling challenging or uncomfortable?
- How are children responding to this change?
- What adjustments have you already made?
- What's helping you stay committed right now?
- What feedback would be helpful at this stage?
- How can we build in reflection without adding pressure?

Maintenance

Goal: Educators are sustaining change over time.

- What are you most proud of in this process?
- What has helped you maintain this change?
- What have you learned about yourself as an educator?
- How has this change impacted children, families, or your team?
- What routines or systems are now supporting this practice?
- What might put this change at risk, and how could you plan ahead?
- How could you support others who are at an earlier stage?
- What growth feels possible next?

When Educators Feel Stuck

Goal: Educators experience resistance, overwhelm, or stalled progress.

- What feels hardest right now?
- What's feeling out of alignment with your values or energy?
- What beliefs might be influencing how this feels?
- What emotions are showing up most strongly?
- When was the last moment this felt a little easier?

- When was the last time you felt like you were making progress toward this goal?
- What support might you need that you haven't named yet?
- What's one small action that could move things forward?
- What would compassion for yourself look like right now?