

READINESS-TO-CHANGE RULER

The Readiness-to-Change Ruler is used to assess a person's willingness or readiness to change, determine where they are on the continuum between "not prepared to change" and "already changing", and promote identification and discussion of perceived barriers to change. The ruler represents a continuum from "not prepared to change" on the left, to "already changing" on the right.

The Readiness-to-Change Ruler can be used as a quick assessment of a person's present motivational state relative to changing a specific behavior, and can serve as the basis for motivation-based interventions to elicit behavior change. Readiness to change should be assessed regarding a very specific activity such as taking medications, following a diet, or exercising, since persons may differ in their stages of readiness to change for different behaviors.

ADMINISTRATION

1. Indicate the specific behavior to be assessed on the Readiness-to-Change Ruler form. Ask the person to mark on a linear scale from 0 to 10 their current position in the change process. A 0 on the left side of the scale indicates "not prepared for change" and a 10 on the right side of the scale indicates "already changing".
2. Question the person about why he or she did not place the mark further to the left, which elicits motivational statements.
3. Question the person about why he or she did not place mark further to the right, which elicits perceived barriers.
4. Ask the person for suggestions about ways to overcome identified barriers and actions that might be taken.

SCORING

A score above 5 shows that the person is willing to consider change and should be supported and encouraged.

FOLLOW-UP QUESTION SUGGESTIONS

If the person's mark is on the left of center:

- How will you know when it is time to think about changing?
- What signals will tell you to think about making a change?
- What qualities in yourself are important to you?
- What connection is there between those qualities and not considering a change?

If the person's mark is near the center:

- Why did you put your mark there and not closer to the left?
- What might make you put your mark a little further to the right?
- What are the good things about the way you are currently trying to change?
- What are the things that are not so good?
- What would be a good result of changing?
- What are the barriers to changing?

If the person's mark is on the right of center:

- What is one barrier to change?
- What are some things that could help you overcome this barrier?
- Pick one of those things that could help and decide to do it by _____ (specific date).

If the person has taken a serious step in making a change:

- What made you decide on that particular step?
- What has worked in taking this step?
- What helped it work?
- What could help it work even better?
- What else would help?
- Can you break that helpful step down into smaller parts?
- Pick one of those parts and decide to do it by _____ (specific date).

If the person is changing and trying to maintain that change:

- Congratulations! What's helping you?
- What else would help?
- What makes it hard to maintain the change?

If the person has "relapsed":

- Don't be hard on yourself. Change is hard and may take time.
- What worked for a while?
- What did you learn that will help when you give it another try?

Source: Zimmerman et al., 2000.