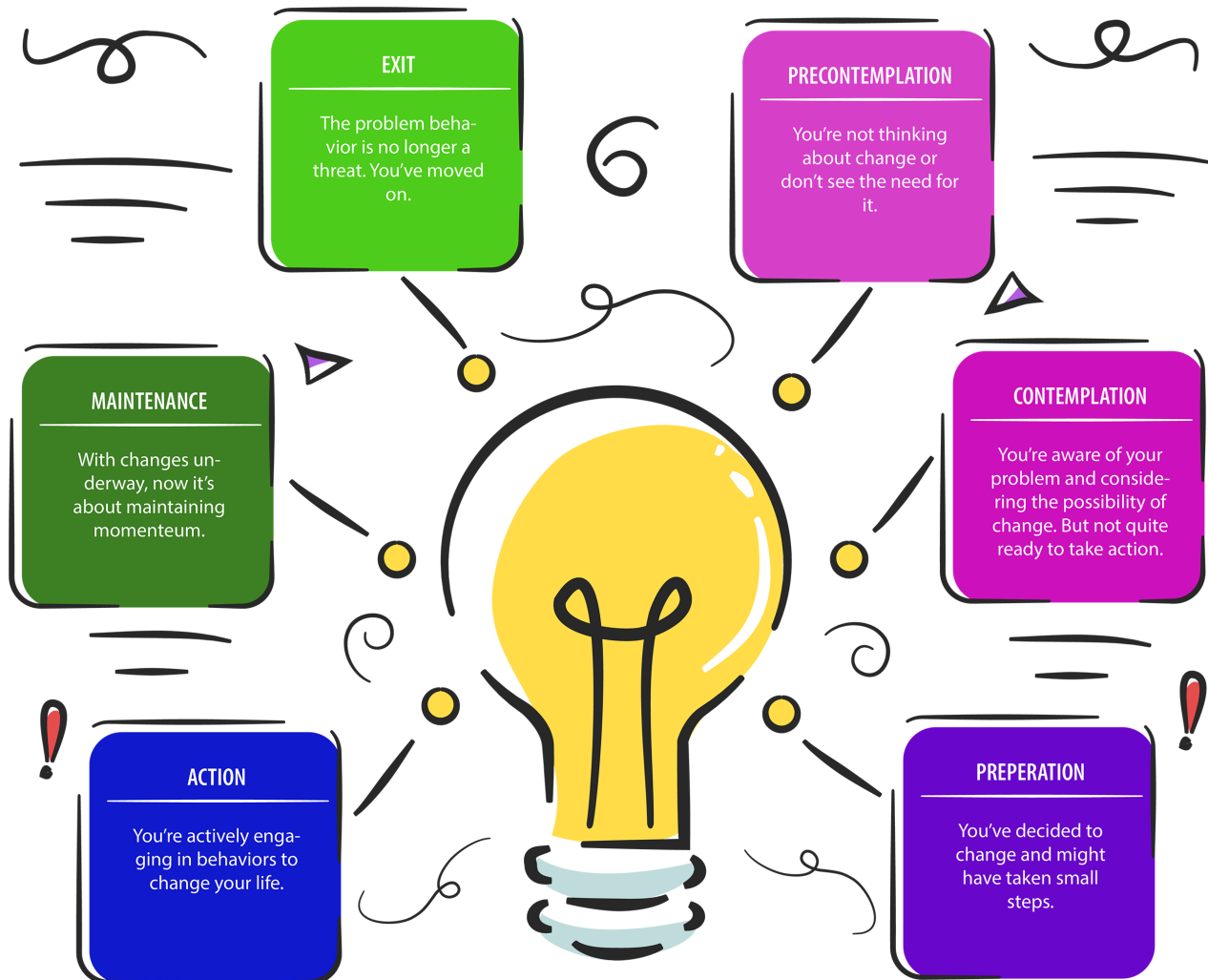


## STAGES OF CHANGE



Before we dive into the "Where Are You in Recovery?" form, let's first explore an important concept: the **Stages of Change**, as referenced in SMART Recovery. This framework is crucial in understanding the recovery process, as it maps out the various phases most people go through on their journey towards lasting change.

**By identifying which stage you currently find yourself in, you gain valuable insights into your readiness for change, the challenges you might face, and the strategies that can be most effective for you.** This understanding is key to personalizing your recovery plan and making this workbook work best.

**Precontemplation:** You're not even thinking about change or don't see the need for it, even if others around you do. It's like being in denial, comfortably or uncomfortably ignorant of the need to alter your habits.

**Contemplation:** You're aware of your problem, mulling over the possibility of change but not ready to jump into action. It's a stage of weighing pros and cons, like standing on the edge sizing up the waters below.

**Preparation:** You've decided to change and might have begun taking small steps. Think of this as lacing up your boots, gearing up for the significant shift looming on the horizon.

**Action:** The name says it all. It's game time! You actively engage in behaviors to transform your life, taking tangible steps like attending support meetings or therapy.

**Maintenance:** With the changes well underway, it's about keeping the momentum, avoiding relapse, and sticking to the new normal you've carved out.

**Exit:** The finish line (though it's an ongoing process). Here, the problem behavior is no longer a temptation or threat. You've not just moved on; you've evolved.



**“THE FIRST STEP TOWARDS GETTING SOMEWHERE IS TO DECIDE YOU’RE NOT GOING TO STAY WHERE YOU ARE.” – J.P. MORGAN.**

Now, let's look at where you are in the stages of change.

## EXERCISE: PINPOINTING YOUR STAGE OF CHANGE

**Objective:** To help you identify where you currently stand in the Stages of Change model concerning your recovery, and to provide insight into the next steps towards progressing in your recovery journey.

Reflect on each stage of change (Pre-contemplation, Contemplation, Preparation, Action, and Maintenance) and the defining characteristics of each.

Take a moment to honestly assess your current thoughts, feelings, and actions regarding your recovery.

**Identify the stage you find yourself in currently.**

Pre-contemplation

Action

Contemplation

Maintenance

Preparation

Exit

**Write below why you believe you are in this stage. Include any specific thoughts, feelings or actions that influenced your choice.**

**Action Steps: List three steps you can take in the next week to move towards the next stage or solidify your position in the current stage if you are in the Action or Maintenance stages.**

1.

2.

3.

Engaging in this exercise is a step towards gaining clarity on your current position in the change process, and the actions needed to propel you forward in your recovery journey.

Reflect on your findings, embrace the journey, and remember, every step, no matter how small, is a step towards progress and a life of sobriety.

## RELAPSE IN THE STAGES OF CHANGE

I purposely omitted relapse in the previous coverage of the Stages of Change to keep things simple. Unfortunately, for many (me included), relapse is part of the recovery process.

Relapse, while not a formal stage in the Stages of Change model, is a common experience in the recovery journey. It's essential to understand how relapse relates to these stages:

**A Part of the Process:** Relapse should be viewed as a potential part of the recovery journey, not as a failure or setback. It's an opportunity to learn and grow, gaining deeper insights into personal triggers and challenges.

**Cycling Through Stages:** After a relapse, individuals often cycle back to earlier stages, such as Contemplation or Preparation. This isn't starting over; it's revisiting these stages with more experience and knowledge about what works and what doesn't.

**Learning and Adapting:** Each relapse can provide valuable lessons. It's an opportunity to refine strategies and strengthen resolve, making future attempts at recovery more informed and robust.

**Maintaining Perspective:** Maintaining a compassionate and non-judgmental perspective towards oneself during a relapse is vital. Understanding that recovery is a nonlinear process helps in fostering resilience and persistence.

**Seeking Support:** Re-engaging with support systems, whether a recovery group, counselor, or supportive friends and family, can be crucial after a relapse. These sources of support can provide guidance, encouragement, and accountability.

Relapse is not an end but a part of the journey. It's an integral aspect of learning and growth that, when approached constructively, can lead to a more profound and more sustainable recovery.