

Family Voice Bulletin – Issue 20 (June 1st) Transtheoretical Model

Summarized by KJ (Krystal-Jyl) Thomas, MSW, RSW

In this weeks session, KJ Thomas MSW,RSW and Jillian Crabbe MSW,RSW facilitated with guest speaker; Chris Curry, BA (Hons), RP, MHA Dip, presenting on the Transtheoretical Model (TTM).

TTM, also known as The Stages of Change is a framework of talk therapy which looks at a person's readiness to make change in their life towards a healthier behaviour. It consists of six stages that help determine where a person is at, and what actions they may be willing to take:

Precontemplation- no intention to make change. A person may be unaware of a problematic behaviour, or feel the cons of changing outweigh the positives.

Contemplation- intention to change in foreseen future. A person may see their behaviour as problematic, or be beginning to see alternative ways of living.

Preparation- intention to change in the near future. Small steps are being planned, beliefs that change can help their quality of life.

Action- change underway. Steps have been taken with a plan to keep moving forward. This can include modifying or developing healthier behaviours in place.

Maintenance- change has been sustained for at least six months. People plan to continue moving forward and working to prevent relapse.

Relapse & Recycle- represents that a person may encounter a relapse during their recovery road. Evidence shows that many people experience this, and it can be a normal part of making changes. This period can also be a teaching tool helping folks learn about themselves, and where to make different choices moving forward.

When discussing addictions, remember to keep the person first (do not use words like “addict, junkie, crackhead, etc.”). While there are many who overcome addictions on their own, others seek assistance. In some severe circumstances, quitting can lead to strong physical side effects and anxiety, and medical intervention is needed to safely detox. Addiction change, does not always equal abstinence. When a person has addiction issues, polysubstance use is common (multiple substances being used). Many will choose one thing at a time to reduce or quit, known as harm reduction. Harm reduction is the conscious effort to reduce or modify a harmful habit.

Fentanyl overdoses have sky rocketed over the years, and it has become an extremely dangerous drug. Street drugs can be cut with Fentanyl or other unknown substances to give a greater “high”. Used unknowingly, or incorrectly this can lead to serious harm or death. Medications such as Methadone, Suboxone, Sublocade, Naltrexone and Remeron have been shown to help with cravings and withdrawal from certain substances. Talk to your doctor to learn more.

Cannabis legalization has sent an implicit message that it is a harmless drug. While many will use cannabis without negative effects, those who are pre-disposed to a mental illness are at higher risk of psychosis, or if currently unwell, worsening psychosis. When making a decision to use cannabis, it's important to know your/ family mental health history.

The “do’s and don’ts” of supporting a loved one overcoming addiction:

- Maintain a supportive, non-judgemental stance while meeting a person in the stage they are at.
- Change is a personal journey. Trying to force change can damage relationships.
- Celebrate the small changes made, these are victories.
- Interventions, confrontation, blaming/shaming, and ultimatums have not shown to be helpful methods to support change.
- With permission, help a person set goals. SMART goals (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Time-bound). Cost-benefit analysis can also help change.
- Addiction is lonely; remain emotionally supportive and loving whenever possible.
- Boundaries are an important part of self-care but should also be approached empathetically. Virtual meet ups can be helpful when physical visits are not possible.
- Addiction management can be life long. Acknowledge the difficulty of change, and empathize with setbacks.

Resources

- Understanding Addiction- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PY9DcIMGxMs>
- Addiction Neuroscience 101- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bwZcPwLRRcc>
- Some find social media helpful; if using this avenue, try and connect with areas that are specific to the help you are seeking. E.g <https://www.reddit.com/r/stopdrinking/>
- SMART Recovery- <https://www.mhaso.ca/smart-recovery>
- Connex Ontario- <https://www.connexontario.ca/en-ca/>
- The Royal Substance Use and Concurrent Disorders Program (613) 722-6521