

Sample Words for Each Stage of Change: Tobacco Use

Stage	Patient Verbal Clue	Physician Task	Sample Words
Precontemplation	<i>"I'm not really interested in quitting. It's not a problem."</i>	<p>State your own beliefs clearly, but not as a confrontation or a denial of the patient's view</p> <p>Try to understand how things look to your patient</p> <p>Build tension between smoking and patient's goals</p> <p>Provide information if patient is willing to receive it</p>	<p><i>"I want to state my opinion clearly. I think that the most important thing you can do for your health is to quit smoking."</i></p> <p><i>"Could you tell me more about what leads you to feel this way?"</i></p> <p><i>"Sounds like you enjoy smoking but also you want good health as you age."</i></p> <p><i>"Would you be willing to hear or read some information about the health aspects of smoking?"</i></p>
Contemplation	<i>"I know I should quit, but I really do enjoy smoking. I've got to quit, but with all the stresses in my life right now, I don't know if I can."</i>	<p>Empathize with the dilemma</p> <p>Accept the patient's reluctance to change</p> <p>Ask patients to identify the "pros and cons" of quitting</p> <p>Build confidence in changing without rushing the patient</p>	<p><i>"Sounds like you're caught in a bind right now. On one hand, you enjoy it because it helps with stress. On the other hand, you know that the smoking is bad for your health and you want to quit."</i></p> <p><i>"You are not sure you are ready to quit now."</i></p> <p><i>"Let's look some more at the things you like about smoking and the things you don't like."</i></p> <p><i>"You have a lot of strengths. When the time is right for you I am here to help"</i></p>
Preparation	<i>"I have to stop and I'm planning how to do that."</i>	<p>Assess patient's commitment and provide reinforcement</p> <p>Focus on positive features of the problematic behavior and how the patient might replace those features</p> <p>Develop an action plan</p>	<p><i>"On a scale of one to ten, how committed are you to quitting?"</i></p> <p><i>"Let's look at the good things that smoking does for you. How will you deal with the absence?"</i></p> <p><i>"What do you think will work for you? What problems might arise? How will you deal with them?"</i></p>
Action	<i>"I'm doing my best. It's tough."</i>	<p>Reinforce positive action</p> <p>Anticipate problems and plan</p> <p>Suggest use of self-monitoring (diary), support from friends, follow-up appointments</p>	<p><i>"It's terrific that you want to quit. What's working for you?"</i></p> <p><i>"What problems have you had? How did you solve them?"</i></p> <p><i>"Relapse is common. What will you do should it start to happen?"</i></p>
Maintenance	<i>"I've learned a lot through this process."</i>	<p>Affirm changes and reinforce learning</p> <p>Encourage vigilance for clues</p>	<p><i>"What have you learned that helps you continue to avoid cigarettes?"</i></p> <p><i>"Are there situations in which you are tempted to smoke? How do you cope at those times?"</i></p>
Relapse	<i>"I blew it."</i>	<p>Affirm the prior success</p> <p>Reframe relapse as learning</p> <p>Assess willingness to change</p>	<p><i>"It's a success that you managed to stop smoking for a period of time."</i></p> <p><i>"What did you learn that might help you to stop next time?"</i></p> <p><i>"How do you feel about trying again?"</i></p>