

Navigating the Stages of Change

Instructions

When it comes to making healthy changes, such as managing compassion fatigue and building resilience, we often go through different stages. Use this worksheet to reflect on your current stage, notice patterns, and take small steps toward your wellness goals. Be honest with yourself—there are no right or wrong answers.

Step 1: Identify Your Stage

Read through the descriptions below and check the stage that feels closest to where you are right now:

Stage	How it Shows Up in Animal Welfare	Check if this feels like you
Precontemplation	"I'm fine. Everyone feels this way. It's just part of the job."	☐
Contemplation	"Something's not working. I'm tired, frustrated, or irritable, but I'm not sure what to do."	☐
Preparation	"I know I need to make changes. I'm exploring my options."	☐
Action	"I'm trying new strategies, such as setting boundaries, practicing self-care, and getting support."	☐
Maintenance	"I'm consistently using my coping strategies."	☐
Relapse/Reset	"I slipped back into old patterns, but I'm noticing it and planning to get back on track."	☐

Step 2: Reflect

Answer these questions based on your current stage:

1. What thoughts or beliefs are holding me in this stage?

2. What are the costs of staying in this stage?

3. What small signs indicate I might be ready to move to the next stage?

Step 3: Action Steps for Each Stage

Use the suggestions below to take concrete steps forward. Pick one or two that feel doable this week.

Stage	Action Steps
Precontemplation → Contemplation	• Notice signs of fatigue or stress in yourself without judgment. • Journal or reflect on your emotions and energy levels. • Listen to a podcast episode or read an article on compassion fatigue.
Contemplation → Preparation	• Talk to a trusted colleague or mentor about your struggles. • Explore self-care strategies, like mindfulness, grounding, or time management. • Make a list of what you <i>could</i> change in your work or routines.
Preparation → Action	• Commit to trying one new strategy this week (e.g., saying “no,” deep breathing). • Join a support group or coaching program. • Reach out to a mental health professional.
Action → Maintenance	• Create a regular self-care routine (daily or weekly). • Track successes and notice improvements in energy and mood. • Check in with a peer, coach, or therapist for support and encouragement.
Maintenance → Relapse/Reset	• Recognize when you’re slipping and pause <u>without shame</u>. • Identify what triggered the relapse. • Revisit strategies from action or preparation and implement them again.

Step 4: My Personal Commitment

Write down one specific, realistic action you will take this week to move forward in your stage:

Optional: Pair this with a small reward or acknowledgment for taking care of yourself:

Step 5: Reflection & Check-In

At the end of the week, answer:

1. Which action did I try? How did it feel?
2. Did I notice any shifts in my energy, mood, or resilience?
3. What stage am I in now?
4. What's my next small step?