



Obstacle- something that *obstructs* or *hinders* progress or action.

Notice that there are two main ways that an obstacle gets in the way of progress. The first is that an obstacle may *obstruct* progress. The second is that something may *hinder* our progress. Let's look at both of those concepts:

Something obstructing our progress is either blocking our vision from seeing where we need to go, or it is just something that is getting in our way that we either need to remove or get around. When we break it down like that, you can better understand what is involved at overcoming this specific type of obstacle. *For example:*

If something is obstructing our path, the question we need to answer is:

>*How can we get beyond the obstruction in order to keep moving forward? The goal could be to remove the obstruction or come up with a way to work our way around the obstruction. For example if we were driving a car and the obstruction was a tree laying across the road, we would need to either*

>find another route

>remove the tree and go forward on the road we are currently on

If the obstruction were something blocking our vision such something covering our windshield, we would need to either

>Remove what is covering our windshield

>Stick our head out the window and just look around the obstruction another way

Something that hinders, interferes with or delays our progress. A hindrance can be a burden that needs to be removed in order to move forward at the proper speed. If something is hindering our progress it could be like an extra weight dragging behind us. If that were the case and we wanted to move forward, our options would be to:

>Remove or cut off the extra weight that is hindering our progress and slowing us down

>Find a new way to move forward while carrying along the weight that was dragging behind us. For example, if driving a car picking it up the hindrance that was dragging behind us and load it in the trunk, then continuing to move forward

>Or we can find someone else who supports us to help carry extra weight of the thing which is hindering our progress



The Exercise – Obstacle Course –

The basic principle behind this exercise is that there are different types of factors that can prevent us from feeling ready to make changes. If we can recognize these obstacles, then we can plan and strategize ways to overcome them and therefore increase our desire and readiness to move forward once these things are no longer in our way.

Use the following scale to honestly assess where you are at right now with regard to taking action to make needed changes in your life with regard to your substance use and other coexisting issues

- I don't want to change at all (even if I know I should)
- I only somewhat want to change
- I want to change but I am not sure how ready I am to do anything
- I strongly want to change and I am ready to start to act
- Change is a top priority for me right now and I am ready to do whatever it takes

Now as honestly and openly as possible, check as many of the following answers below that apply to you, even if just a small amount:

- 1-I am afraid of what it may be like to change ___
- 2-I worry about what my friends or other people will think if I change ___
- 3-I don't like the thought of changing my life, it just makes me feel uncomfortable ___
- 4-I am not sure I know how to do what I need to do ___
- 5-I think I need to learn more about what is involved ___
- 6-I think that I might need more practice before I can do it correctly ___
- 7-I have tried in the past and have been unsuccessful ___
- 8-I don't think that I can pull this off successfully ___
- 9-There is just too much involved ___
- 10-If I change, it is hard for me to imagine doing things differently ___
- 11-I have no idea what alternatives are out there, how am I going to live if I change? ___
- 12-I think I will be bored or won't know what else to do if I change ___
- 13-I don't think enough people will support me ___
- 14-I may lose friends if I change ___
- 15-It may affect my social life and recreational interests if I change ___
- 16-My current relationships may change for the worse if I change ___
- 17-The person I am with will have to change too because they have similar issues ___
- 18-I don't know how I will meet someone for a relationship if I change ___
- 19-I am in love with certain aspects of my current lifestyle ___
- 20-There is a feeling that I get that I just am not willing to give up on by changing ___
- 21-I doubt I will ever be able to feel that same good feeling again if I change ___



- 22-I think one of the problems for me will be what to do when things go wrong____
- 23-I have needs that I don't know how I will fill if I were to stop____
- 24-If I change, what will I do when I get stressed out? ____
- 25-It just seems like more work than I am willing to do____
- 26-The process seems too time consuming or overwhelming____
- 27-I don't know if it's worth all the effort____
- 28-I just don't have the strength to do it____
- 29-I don't feel that my life is worth going through all of this so I don't bother trying____
- 30-I see the point but not in my case, I am probably stuck this way____
- 31-There are too many things around me in my life that will make change too hard____
- 32-There are too many people in my life that may hold me back from succeeding____
- 33-I am around too many places that are not conducive to change____
- 34-I don't know what will happen if I try to change and that bothers me____
- 35-I don't like not knowing how this is all going to turn out____
- 36-If I only knew for sure that everything would be OK I think I could do this____



Scoring and Analysis:

If you checked one or more of items 1-3:

The deeper issue that may be behind your lack of readiness may be the very common experience of FEAR OF CHANGE. Fear of change often comes from anxiety that doing something new or different may end up being worse for us. This can be an extremely common phenomenon, however identifying and acknowledging our fears can help us to learn how to overcome them. Overcoming the fear of change can be achieved with help and this goal can help us feel more prepared for action

If you checked one or more from items 4-6:

The deeper issue may be a LACK OF KNOWLEDGE OR SKILL needed to be confident enough to make change happen. In reality this makes complete sense. Imagine being told to build a house without the right tools, materials or skills needed to use those tools effectively. This would apply to someone who is facing the prospect of embarking in the upward change process without the needed tools and skills. It only makes sense that anyone who feels that they are lacking the needed tools and skills would not feel prepared for such a difficult task. Skill building should be the focus of our efforts in this case going forward.

If you checked one or more from items 7-9:

The deeper issue may be FEAR OF FAILURE. Worrying about not being able to make it to the end of a long assignment of some kind would deter many from embarking on that mission. By the same token, if someone believes that the sometimes long, challenging process of upward change will ultimately end up in failure, then who can blame that person for not feeling ready to take action to start!. The focus in this case is confidence building to overcome fear of failure

If you checked one or more from items 10-12:

The deeper issue in this area most likely is FEAR OF LOSS. Similar to fear of change, fear of loss involves anxiety over what one will do to fill the void left if they change their current behavior. The main difference between fear of loss and fear of change is that the fear is focused on the many unanswered questions that come up with the thought of changing one's lifestyle. Fear of change involves fear of the process itself while fear of loss is more focused on worrying about what will happen when there is a void that may be left over after change is made. The goal in this area involves trusting that there are alternatives. Specifically that involves believing in the fact that you will be able to come up with alternative ideas to fill the potential gaps created by a lifestyle change as opposed to changing your life and being left with a void or sense of emptiness.

If you checked one or more from items 13-15

The deeper issue in this area is SOCIAL-RELATIONSHIP issues. There is often a huge concern when one is considering change about how this change will affect friendships and socialization. For example, if Saturday night involved gambling, smoking pot, and drinking beers with one's best friends, how would it feel to actually stop these behaviors? Friends may not want you around as much and they likely may decide that they don't want you around anymore at all. This can be a very intimidating prospect for someone not yet ready for change. The goal in this area involves trusting in the right priorities and then trusting that relationships will work themselves out for the best if we are able to first do what is right for ourselves.

If you checked one or more items from 16-18

The concern in this area clearly is RELATIONSHIP ISSUES (Romantic). For many people the reality they face with regard to the prospect of change is that romantic relationships may never be the same. If you are in a relationship with someone who drinks and goes to bars and suddenly you are considering changing and stopping this behavior yourself, it is natural to be concerned how the relationship will be affected, for example. This may be the most difficult of all of the areas to prepare for because of the power that romantic relationships can have



on one's life. The goal here is to be able to plan ahead for relationship issues and learn how to handle them in order to help diminish some of the fear and concern in this area

If you checked one or more items from 19-21

The deeper concern in this area is LIVING WITHOUT THE FEELING. Certain substances or behaviors just give us that rush that becomes such a seemingly important part of life. It is not unusual to be concerned about never being able to feel that unique "high" that comes with engaging in addictive behaviors or the lifestyle. The reality is however that there are few if any things in life that can imitate that high. Nevertheless, there are natural "highs" that are less intense initially but much more satisfying and long lasting like seeing your daughter's graduate high school or getting a promotion, for example. The goal in this area is learning to live within normal limits, which essentially means learning to enjoy life without the extreme highs and lows that come with overusing substances.

If you checked one or more items from 22-24

The deeper concern in this area is STRESS MANAGEMENT. Life is stressful for all of us even when we are doing what we are supposed to. The thought of making a lifestyle change in the midst of everything can be even more stressful especially when faced with the difficult question of how you are going to handle stress without your old ways of escaping. The goal here is very similar to the goals involved when one lacks knowledge or skill however the specific skill needed in this case is stress planning. In other words it is necessary to have a new plan with regard to how to deal with the many stresses that come up in life, but this time doing it without returning to negative behaviors or substances.

If you checked one or more items from 25-27

The underlying issue may be feeling OVERWHELMED by change. It is not unusual at all to feel overwhelmed by the thought of undertaking the task of making a major lifestyle change. Often the depth of the problem at hand can directly affect the feeling of being overwhelmed. For example, someone who needs to lose 20 pounds is much less likely to feel as overwhelmed as someone who has to lose 100 or more pounds. Sometimes change can be such a daunting prospect. The goal for increasing preparedness to act in this area can be called change management planning. Change management planning is a way of looking at the change process in small, manageable incremental steps to reduce that feeling of being overwhelmed and thereby increase our sense of readiness and confidence.

If you checked one or more items from 28-30

The deeper issue is NOT FEELING STRONG ENOUGH to succeed. This dilemma is self-explanatory in that it is just what it sounds like; there is a lack of readiness change because it just seems too difficult and it may seem like more personal strength is required than is available at the moment. The goal in this area is also very self-explanatory and that is to build inner strength as a means to increase a sense of readiness for change

If you checked one or more items from 31-33

The issue here is ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES. Problems with what to do about things in our surroundings that could make change seem impossible is nothing new but it remains a critical aspect of the upward change process. It is understandable for someone to have limited sense of readiness for change while existing in an environment that undermines the change process on a daily basis. Although it is true that some environmental concerns may be beyond our control, the goal of planning to manage your environment can help immensely with regard to increasing a readiness to take action. Often there is a lot more that can be done about your environment than initially meets the eye. Planning to manage your environment involves overcoming some the environmental obstacles that we can identify and circumventing these issues to the degree possible with clever planning and strategizing ahead of time.

