CHANGE READINESS AS A REHABILITATIVE FACTOR: A REPORT ON RESEARCH

STEVE BARLOW, REDEQUIP PTY LTD

© Steve Barlow 2011
7 COMPONENTS OF CHANGE READINESS

Motivation

• a necessary condition of the change process (Ajzen, 1985; Koltko-Rivera, 2004).

• more than vague intention: it involves decision-making and a clear commitment towards change (Prochaska, 1986).

• decision-making and commitment must be sustained and reaffirmed throughout the entire change process (Becker, 1964; Born, 1997).

• The motivation for change may derive from a desire to avoid some unpleasant consequences or situations (Lee, 2004; Seligman, 1991), or the desire to attract things that would make the person’s life more coherent (Korotkov, 1998; Salvolaine, 2002).

• the motivation to change must make sense to the person – it must appear to them as a ‘logical next step’ in the story of their life (Maruna, 2001).
7 COMPONENTS OF CHANGE READINESS

Agency

- having agency means a person has a confidence in his or her ability to accomplish things. It is a feeling of self-empowerment; a belief in the efficacy of personal decision-making; a belief that the person can effectively manage their own life (Korotkov, 1998).
- people with high agency see themselves as “masters of their own fates” (Maruna, 2001 p. 76).
- people with high agency have ‘agency thinking’ (agency permeates how they think about life), and they also have ‘pathways thinking’ (they actively seek out pathways around problems to reach their desired destination) (Snyder, 2005).
- People with high agency are more likely to take the initiative with change; they are more likely to be self-starters, and they are more likely to persist with change (Fay, 2001).
7 COMPONENTS OF CHANGE READINESS

Insight

- Insight refers to the realistic assessment of problems; personal needs, goals, and limitations; and people who can be trusted and relied upon.

- People need to be able to ‘read the signs’ that change is needed – sometimes these signs take the form of dissonance (Festinger, 1957); sometimes they are the realisation that the world consistently fails to conform to expectations (King, 2001).

- People need insight into what they really need (Maslow, 1943) and what they really want in order to live a ‘good life’ (Ward, 2002).
7 COMPONENTS OF CHANGE READINESS

Beliefs

• worldview beliefs are particularly influential in the change process. Worldviews are beliefs about ‘the way things are’ and ‘the way things should be’ (Kolisko-Rivera, 2004).

• Beliefs about the way things are and how they should be become so deeply engrained that they become ‘scripts’ that determine patterns of behaviour (McAdams, 1993; Seligman, 1991; Tomkins, 1987).

• Some scripts can see people become victims of circumstance, or victims of society, where their only real power is the power to fail (Maruna, 2001).

• Disempowering scripts and negative belief systems are incompatible with readiness for positive life change.
7 COMPONENTS OF CHANGE READINESS

Vision

• change readiness needs the vision of meaningful and desirable goals (Ward, 2002), hope (Snyder, 1995), and optimism (Seligman, 1991).

• Seligman says there is an art to hope and optimism: it is “finding temporary and specific causes of misfortune” (p. 48). In other words, it is not feeling trapped and disempowered by misfortune, but finding ways out of undesirable circumstances, and not giving them the power to set the course of a person’s life.

• Offenders with change readiness have the power to see beyond the current reality of the prison walls, and have vision and hope for a different kind of life.
7 COMPONENTS OF CHANGE READINESS

Trust

• being open and trusting is one of the processes that drive change (Prochaska, 1986).

• Trust needs to be combined with the insight to know who is trustworthy, but trust is recognition of the fact that change is often complex and difficult, and may not be achievable without help.

• Trust combined with the openness to receive help is an important element of change readiness (Frankl, 1977).
7 COMPONENTS OF CHANGE READINESS

Balance

• change is not positive if it hurts other people and it results in an unbalanced and unsustainable life.

• Change needs to make sense to the person, but it also needs to be responsive to the interests and needs of other people and society (Sternberg, 1998).

• People are ready for change only when they commit to maintaining a workable balance between their personal interests and those of other people.
7 COMPONENTS OF CHANGE READINESS

Tell you

• what to look out for when seeking to identify change readiness

• but not how you are likely to encounter them when you are speaking with an offender
HOW OFFENDERS INDICATE CHANGE READINESS

1. Wanting to change
2. Owning the problem
3. Seeing a future
4. Valuing support
5. Persisting with transformation
HOW OFFENDERS INDICATE CHANGE READINESS

1. Wanting to change
   - Talk of commitments and promises: “I told my family, I promised my family and I can't break my promise to them. Every promise I make my mother, I have to look her in the eye, I mean it, and I keep it.”
HOW OFFENDERS INDICATE CHANGE READINESS

1. Wanting to change
   • Wasting my life: “I don't like this lifestyle, I might be accustomed to it, used to it, but it's such a waste. A waste of life.”
HOW OFFENDERS INDICATE CHANGE READINESS

1. Wanting to change
   - Sick of it: “I know I am not going to use again, I have said it heaps of times before and people say it, but this time something is different inside. I am sick of it.”
HOW OFFENDERS INDICATE CHANGE READINESS

1. Wanting to change
   - Made up my mind: “I have made up my mind what I want to do with my life, get out of here, go back to my family, open up the shop again and do the usual thing.”
HOW OFFENDERS INDICATE CHANGE READINESS

1. Wanting to change
   • Sense of shame: “The thing is that I am very ashamed about my past. I look down on myself, you know, and I have a lot of shame about it. I don't like talking about it so when I talk about the past I am ashamed of it and that is why I put my head down.”
HOW OFFENDERS INDICATE CHANGE READINESS

1. Wanting to change
   • Accepting the struggle: “But just putting everything, all the bad points behind me and just starting again, it's like, you know, learning to walk for the first time. You've got to work on the beginning again. It's going to be a long journey.”
HOW OFFENDERS INDICATE CHANGE READINESS

1. Wanting to change
   • Seeing opportunity: “If I hadn't come to jail I would still be in that same hole I was in and I needed this to happen to jolt my brain or something, to make me think what have I done. I am in jail, I have got to get my life on track. This gave me a kick up the arse, which is what I needed.”
HOW OFFENDERS INDICATE CHANGE READINESS

2. Owning the problem
   - Facing unpleasant truths: “I was lost, no guidance, no goals, just a slave of my evil desires and bad habits. I used to just cover all my problems with drugs. I was just losing my humanity, I was blind and didn't even see it. I was just eating off everyone.”
HOW OFFENDERS INDICATE CHANGE READINESS

2. Owning the problem

• Auditing the self: “I started asking myself the big questions, reflecting, pondering, contemplating on life. I said to myself one day, "Look if you die now, what have you left behind? What have you achieved"?”
HOW OFFENDERS INDICATE CHANGE READINESS

2. Owning the problem
   • Seeing strengths: “If there's something I want to do, then I give it 100%...I know I can get there.”
HOW OFFENDERS INDICATE CHANGE READINESS

2. Owning the problem
   • Developing insight: “I managed to learn how to play checkers and a bit of chess and the main strategy is that you must think before you move. I was just moving everywhere I went outside, I never thought about my actions.”
HOW OFFENDERS INDICATE CHANGE READINESS

2. Owning the problem
   • Accepting responsibility for past: “I put myself in here you know and I don't blame nobody for it. I just feel very not smart in what I did...But nobody pulled me into this, I just stepped into it.”
HOW OFFENDERS INDICATE CHANGE READINESS

2. Owning the problem
   - Accepting responsibility for future: “You have psychology and all that ...but people don't use them. I never used them before, like, I used to talk with them but now I'm trying to use them, use what I can in jail to actually change.”
HOW OFFENDERS INDICATE CHANGE READINESS

3. Seeing a future
   • Has plans and goals: “I have this plan and I have a book in my cell with everything I want to do. My music, my first album, what is going to be called when I get out. I always look to the future because this is not the end. Don't dwell on the past, you know, just think to the future.”
HOW OFFENDERS INDICATE CHANGE READINESS

3. Seeing a future
   • Has agency: “I am confident and I want to do it and I don't want to fail. I am not going to quit because quitting is for losers. That is part of the change, not quitting. Before I would just quit, but now I don't want to quit, now I am trying. I want to change, I want to live up to my potential and I can do it.”
HOW OFFENDERS INDICATE CHANGE READINESS

3. Seeing a future
   • Has optimism: “I thank God that he has given me a chance, he has made me realise that he wants to give me a chance.”
HOW OFFENDERS INDICATE CHANGE READINESS

4. Valuing support
   • Family support: “My mother and father, they've always been supportive, they've always done everything they can for me to help me... they've been supportive, just that itself gives you the strength and helps you.”
HOW OFFENDERS INDICATE CHANGE READINESS

4. Valuing support
   • Gaol support: “The chaplains have been lot of help, I've been seeing them, talking to them, to drug and alcohol workers, and they just gave me encouragement and hope.”
HOW OFFENDERS INDICATE CHANGE READINESS

5. Persisting with transformation
   • Evidence from changed behaviours: “I'm off drugs, I feel good, I have been off drugs for 16 months. It's because I don't need that. Don't worry about abstaining from drugs and alcohol, abstaining from drink and water for a whole month, that's discipline, that's what I built because of Islam.”
HOW OFFENDERS INDICATE CHANGE READINESS

5. Persisting with transformation
   • Evidence from reports of others: “Other people have seen the change in me. They just say to me, "I can tell you were naughty before but now you have changed". They see that, you know, they see that. My mum sees that.”
IMPLICATIONS OF CHANGE READINESS

1. Correctional systems should view offenders as potentially empowered agents of change, not just constellations of risks and needs.
IMPLICATIONS OF CHANGE READINESS

2. If offenders with change readiness are more likely to change than those lacking in change readiness, change readiness should be recognised as a legitimate rehabilitative factor.
IMPLICATIONS OF CHANGE READINESS

3. All else being equal, rehabilitative interventions are more likely to be effective when delivered to offenders who are ready for change.
THE END