The core of wichealth.org has been grounded using the proven effective Transtheoretical Model of Behavior Change (TTM), more commonly known as the Stages of Change.

Change is a process, not an event. The TTM groups the change process into distinct stages of readiness, and provides approaches to help move individuals forward through the stages. These represent ordered categories along a continuum of motivational readiness to change a problem behavior. Transitions between the stages of change are effected by a set of independent variables known as the Processes of Change.

Using the TTM allows wichealth.org to effectively deliver individualized guidance that reflects each participant’s view of a particular behavior and readiness to change. At each stage, and throughout every wichealth.org lesson, participants receive empowering feedback and resources on which processes and principles of change they are applying appropriately, which they may be underutilizing, and specific steps they can take to progress to the next stage.

The five stages of the Transtheoretical Model:

Precontemplation *(Not Ready)*
- Participants at this stage do not intend to start the healthy behavior in the near future (within 6 months), and may be unaware of the need to change.
- Participants here learn more about healthy behavior. They are encouraged to think about the Pros of changing their behavior and to feel emotions about the effects of their negative behavior on others.
- Precontemplators typically underestimate the Pros of changing, overestimate the Cons, and often are not aware of making such mistakes. These individuals are encouraged to become more mindful of their decision making and more conscious of the multiple benefits of changing an unhealthy behavior.

Contemplation *(Getting Ready)*
- At this stage, participants are intending to start the healthy behavior within the next 6 months. While they are usually now more aware of the Pros of changing, their Cons are about equal to their Pros. This ambivalence about changing can cause them to keep putting off taking action.
- Participants here learn about the kind of person they could be if they changed their behavior and often benefit from hearing from people who behave in healthy ways. They’re encouraged to work at overcoming the barriers that may be preventing them from changing their behavior.

Preparation *(Ready)*
- Participants at this stage are ready to start taking action within the next 30 days. They take small steps that they believe can help them make the healthy behavior a part of their lives. For example, they tell their friends and family that they want to change their behavior.
- During this stage, participants are encouraged to seek support from friends they trust, tell people about their plan to change the way they act, and think about how they would feel if they behaved in a healthier way. They learn that the better prepared they are, the more likely they are to keep progressing.

Action *(Started the change)*
- Participants at this stage have changed their behavior within the last 6 months, and need to work hard to keep moving ahead. These participants learn how to strengthen their commitments to change and to fight urges to relapse.
- Action-specific resources include substituting activities related to the unhealthy behavior with positive ones, rewarding themselves for taking steps toward changing, and avoiding people and situations that tempt them to behave in unhealthy ways.

Maintenance *(Successfully changed)*
- Participants at this stage have changed and maintained their behavior for at least 6 months. It’s important for people in this stage to be aware of situations that may tempt them to slip back into doing the unhealthy behavior—particularly stressful situations.
- Participants here learn to seek support from and talk with people they trust, spend time with people who behave in healthy ways, and remember to engage in alternative activities to cope with stress instead of relying on unhealthy behavior.
How do people move from one stage to another?

In general, for people to progress they need:

A. A growing awareness that the advantages (the “Pros”) of changing outweigh the disadvantages (the “Cons”). This awareness is known as decisional balance.

B. Confidence (or self-efficacy) to make and maintain changes in situations that tempt them to return to their old, unhealthy behavior.

C. Strategies that can help them make and maintain change—the TTM calls these processes of change. The ten processes include:
   1. Consciousness-Raising—increasing awareness via information, education, and personal feedback about the healthy behavior.
   2. Dramatic Relief—feeling fear, anxiety, or worry because of the unhealthy behavior, or feeling inspiration and hope when hearing about how people are able to change to healthy behaviors.
   3. Self-Reevaluation—realizing that the healthy behavior is an important part of who they are and want to be.
   4. Environmental Reevaluation—realizing how their unhealthy behavior affects others and how they could have more positive effects by changing.
   5. Social Liberation—realizing that society is more supportive of the healthy behavior.
   6. Self-Liberation—believing in one’s ability to change and making commitments to act on that belief.
   7. Helping Relationships—finding people who are supportive of their change.
   8. Counter-Conditioning—substituting healthy ways of acting and thinking for unhealthy ways.
   9. Reinforcement Management—increasing the rewards that come from positive behavior and reducing those that come from negative behavior.
  10. Stimulus Control—using reminders and cues that encourage healthy behavior as substitutes for those that encourage unhealthy behavior.

Different strategies are most effective at different Stages of Change. For example, Counter-Conditioning and Stimulus Control are likely to help people in the Action and Maintenance stages, but these processes may not be as helpful for someone who is not intending to take action (Precontemplation).

By using the TTM and Processes of Change, wichealth.org tailors each individual’s online nutrition education experience in order to provide the most relevant and useful information that particular client needs in order to progress towards a healthy behavior.

REFERENCES