

## THE FIVE STAGES OF CHANGE IN ACHIEVING SOBRIETY



Did you know that on average it takes a person about 10 years (or more) to move from wondering if they have a drinking problem to actually taking action to address it? It's true. There are many reasons for this. The first is that we are doing our best to manage stressful, complicated, fast-paced lives, and, all the while, our culture promotes drinking as the answer to adding relaxation, escape, and fun into our otherwise chaotic and overwhelming daily endeavors.

Second, the mixed messages around what constitutes "normal drinking" versus a "drinking problem" are confusing and can prevent us from seeing the growing danger

when we go from one glass of wine a week, to one a night, to a bottle a night, and beyond. And, just as drinking progresses in stages, sobriety will progress in stages as well.

Here are the five stages of recovery. It's common for people to jump from Stage 3, to 2 or 1, and back again.

1. Precontemplation Stage. We resist and deny we have a problem, even as we are increasingly concerned about our drinking. It's on our minds more than we'd like it to be.
2. Contemplation Stage. We are ready to bring about change in the future but not immediately. We are aware of the pros and cons of drinking and not drinking.
3. Preparation Stage. We have a sense of urgency around getting sober and take steps toward achieving sobriety to some degree. Folks in this stage could be considered "sober curious."

4. Action Stage. We have sustained prolonged periods of abstinence and taken actionable steps in the direction of deeper self-awareness and self-development. Treatment in some form is sought after and committed to.
5. Maintenance Stage. We are committed to long-term recovery, relapse prevention, and expanding our new sober lifestyle. Generally, this stage lasts anywhere from six months to five years.

It can take the pressure off to realize that you are not expected to change overnight! It all takes time, and the best thing to do today is just become aware and be as honest with yourself as you can, without judgment. After all, if you are reading this article, chances are you have already started the process of renegotiating your relationship with alcohol!

If you'd like to learn more about sober or sober-curious resources and mentoring, send me an email at [allisonmarieconway@gmail.com](mailto:allisonmarieconway@gmail.com).

**Allison Marie Conway**  
 ADDICTION RECOVERY COACH, CPC/CAC  
 ALLISONMARIECONWAY@GMAIL.COM  
 INSTAGRAM: @ALLISIONMARIECONWAY  
 ALLISONMARIECONWAY.SUBSTACK.COM  
 PHONE: 267.304.4535