

ACTIVATING AURORA: Taking the Pledge

By Ron Weese

Behaviour change is a difficult thing. We do what we do because we have habits that we have acquired over time; that work for us. We see no reason to change.

This phenomenon is well documented in research, most notably by behaviour researchers, Prochaska, DiClemente, & Norcross. These researchers studied people with severe behavior problems; drug abusers, violent offenders and alcoholics, but they know that behavior change follows certain stages and processes. They also know this can be used for positive changes like becoming more active.

These well-respected behavior theorists call that Stage; when we are unaware that a change is in our best interests, the Pre-contemplative Stage of change. We simply don't perceive a need to change because we haven't thought about it yet. People in this Stage are described as being 'blissfully unaware' because they are comfortable in their lifestyle. It is the Stage a smoker is when they like smoking and see no need to change. Likewise when someone who drinks and drives and is seemingly unaware or unconcerned about that dangerous habit. It also could be applied to people who are carrying too much weight and simply don't see the need to lose it, or don't care about becoming more active because it isn't valued. The Pre-contemplative Stage is a psychologically un-stressful place to be because people are happy doing what they are doing, regardless of the consequences, of which they are blissfully unaware.

Our government and public advocacy groups attempt to pull us out of this contented state with public service announcements, awareness campaigns and often regulation. Remember when we didn't wear seat-belts? Awareness campaigns taught people why we needed to be more safety conscious. Regulation followed. Recall a time when smoking was allowed everywhere. Awareness campaigns about the harm of second hand smoke were everywhere and now there are warnings on cigarettes and strict regulations around smoking. Drinking and driving has become socially unacceptable because of powerful awareness campaigns by MADD and others along with severe legal regulations. Now we have public relations campaigns about distracted driving and severe regulations in place. Who knows where that will lead but we now are aware and uncomfortable with the consequences of it. Remember when recycling was first introduced? School and public relations campaigns brought awareness to the Community and it has become common-place for the right reasons.

So why does this matter regarding our Take the Pledge Challenge?

Those same researchers identified earlier not only identified the Stages that people go through to change, they studied how to move people through the Stages. These are called Processes of Change and they are highly useful. One of the first Processes is called 'social liberation' which is when someone makes public declaration that change is needed and that they have the confidence to start. The second Process is 'self-liberation' which is basically making a commitment to make the change. That is commonly known as goal-setting.

Activate Aurora's Take the Pledge campaign is designed to help everyone learn about why change is necessary, move people out of the Pre-contemplative state and then help provide some tools to set goals and bring confidence that change is possible.

To learn more about this campaign and to join Activate Aurora, just go to www.activateaurora.com and Take the Pledge. We will provide helpful hints and support the new journey.

Meanwhile, more tips are coming on how to change for those who have entered the next Stage of Change, 'Contemplation.' That uncomfortable Stage that occurs when you know you should be changing, but don't know how.