

# THE FROG PRINCE

## UNDERSTANDING THE CYCLE OF CHANGE

How does change happen? Let's start by remembering the story of the Frog Prince who achieved huge transformation from being a small (and bordering on the unattractive) little frog to a handsome and very eligible prince. We are not for a moment suggesting any of you represent the frog – it's simply that perhaps it is



helpful to think about him in a way that highlights the fact that change is always possible when you want it enough 😊.

Consider the change you are choosing to embark on now. How will you make it happen? We feel certain you have all experienced the process of change on many occasions, and are sure you would

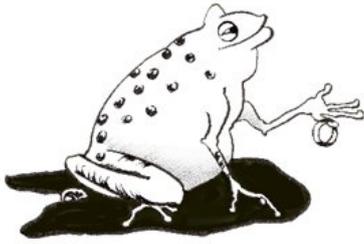
agree that it doesn't just happen *to* us! To achieve change, we have to *engage* with it and be *active* in it.

Sometimes, part way through the process of change, we might lose track of our progress, lapse into old habits, or think 'I've lost track of this', 'I'm not getting where I want.' It's like we've fallen off the wagon, because we don't feel sure of where we are, or how to get back on that damned wagon!

Understanding the process of change is really helpful for those moments, and to ensure our sustainable success. There are several theories available that attempt to describe this process. One that is of particular use for weight loss, or shape changing, and which is fully tried and tested, comes from the work of some psychologists called Prochaska and Diclemente. When you become familiar with the ideas based on their theory, you will have a framework, or a map, that you can easily check in with to help you to keep on heading in the right direction.

We believe that when you know where you are, you can then consider where ideally you would prefer to be, and work out how you intend to get there, even if the odd slip off the wagon occurs on the way.

So, let's think back to our frog living in the pond. Top heavy, a little spotty, and accepting his lot. Not even considering any change.



Yet after seeing the Princess, dear old Frog started to think that he really would prefer to be handsome, human and loved. He needed therefore to engage with the change process, and began to think about all the things he might need to consider before swinging into action and wooing the Princess. And we want to invite you to do the same – to engage with your change process.

You can start to check it out by thinking about a time when you have changed something in your life. It may well be around losing weight, as we imagine that most of you reading this book have had some excellent previous experience of this!

### ***How did you do it?***

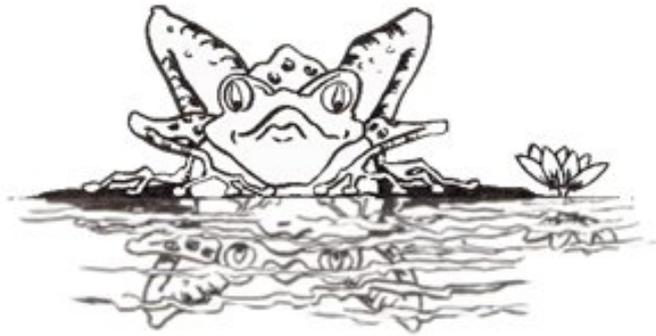
We would encourage you to consider your experience alongside the Frog's story.

Like him, to begin with you probably spent some time not even thinking about change. You might have been quite comfortable in your skin, with your habits, with your size and shape. You might have noticed changes occurring but for whatever reasons remained quite accepting of them. You may have been trying to ignore your size and shape, or it is possible that amongst all the other events and demands in your life, it was something you were not yet paying attention to. You were the Frog in the pond, just enjoying the environment in the great outdoors.

This step in the change process can be described as ***pre-contemplation*** – a place where you either do not want to change yet, or have not considered it a possibility.

Then, something probably occurred which resulted in you beginning to think about change. Maybe other people were putting pressure on you to alter your behaviour around eating and exercise. It can often be the case that a Doctor or family member attempts to advise a change for the good of your health. (Weight to height ratio, blood pressure, cholesterol, pressure on arthritic joints, for example.) It may be that your stimulus was in reaction to something more internal - a feeling on seeing a photograph, not being able to get into a certain item of clothing, feeling puffed out by climbing the stairs. Maybe you wanted to achieve a challenge that you weren't yet in shape for – just like the Frog.

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even slightly best things

moments are that you can now be open to the idea that things can be different, even feel good about that, and think ‘yes, ok I want to make some changes.’

And then you believe that you really **can** make any changes that you want.

Just as our friend the Frog did when he saw the beautiful princess. He began to think that if *he* could transform himself, then being with her might well be a possibility. He *wanted* to feel different, he began to imagine that he **could** be different, and he wanted to make the Princess sit up and take notice of him. He became motivated. For him, the Princess’ beauty (and, obviously, her personality☺) gave him the impetus to change.

This state of being can be described as **contemplation** – now, for whatever reason, you are considering a different future.

Sounding familiar, as you consider changes that you have made in the past?

We don’t know about you, but in our experience an urge to act often follows this stage of contemplation. Yet in the process of long term change, it’s useful to realize that there are more things to consider before moving to action. It’s common for people not to realize this, and many like to dive in and do.

However there is an important stage of **pre-action/ pre planning** in order to make a sustainable difference. Imagine if the Frog, on seeing the beautiful princess, just flew out of the water and flung himself into her arms. The results may well not have been desirable. Rather, you might agree that it was more helpful for him to think a little before taking that leap into action—remember - ‘Look before you Leap!’

In your own experience of previous change, what pre planning took place?

- ❖ What did you need to consider?
- ❖ What were your actions following this?
- ❖ And did they achieve sustained change?

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Commonly, when people swing into action regarding weight or shape change - 'I'm joining the gym', 'I'm cutting my calories', 'I'm going to walk instead of getting the bus', they begin with great motivation and good intentions.

Over time, they might then experience a *lapse*, a phase where they go back to old behaviours. This might happen during an evening out or on a special occasion for example. It is our view that pre-planning will help to prevent this happening. When you understand more about the cycle of change, you will understand that even if this happens, it is what we *do* about it that matters as much as, or more, than the lapse itself.

Some people go straight into thinking 'well it's ruined now, I've spoilt it completely', and use the lapse as an excuse or reason to abandon the whole change programme, and dive back into the murky waters of dissatisfaction and helplessness. This then leads to full relapse, and abandoning their good work. How many people out there have said such things as 'I lost three stone, dropped 2 dress sizes, and now I've put it all back on'?

Others might think 'well, I've spent a day or two in my old habits, now I'll get back on track and balance out what I'm doing so I can get to where I want to be.' When you are armed with the knowledge of how change works, you are more likely to be able to take that approach. You can realize that even with a lapse, you can still take charge of your change process, and choose to think and do differently to your previous attempts in weight management.

This shift in thinking leads to you being able to stay within the change process and achieve your goal. It also enables you to succeed in the final stage of *maintenance*, doing what you need in order to make your changes robust, sustainable, and effective. This is more likely to work if you have done the planning of what 'contingencies' you can have in place if every day hasn't gone as smoothly as you'd hoped.

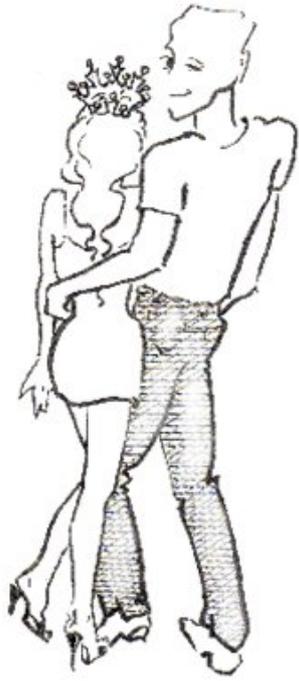
### **Does this sound familiar to you?**

If you were to think about where you are in this moment in relation to losing weight, what stage are you currently at? The fact that you are reading this book suggests that you are at the very least *contemplating* change, possibly *preparing*, and now considering how to *act*. Our encouragement is to contemplate carefully what you want, prepare thoroughly, think about all the possible actions you can get to where you want to, and prepare how you might respond if you lapse.

As a final note, remember you are developing your own personal plan so use what fits and works for you.

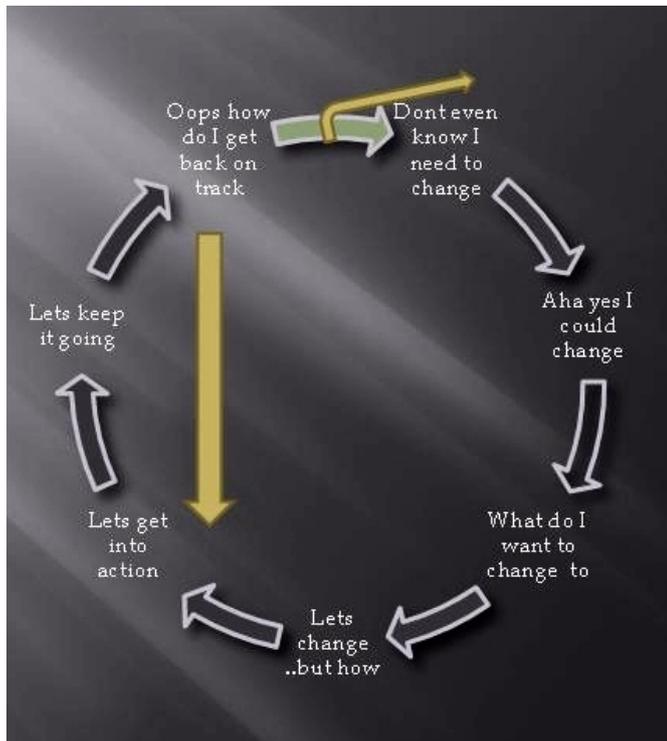
Oh - and the most really significant point to remind you of before we finish...

**The Frog became a Prince – *and* got his Princess!!**



## SUGGESTED EXERCISES

Grab a pen and some paper, as it can be helpful to write things down as you go. Find somewhere comfortable and quiet to sit. Now, allow yourself to think back to a time when you have attempted to lose weight or change something previously. Think about how that journey started for you.



- ❖ What happened to make you decide you wanted to embark on this change?
- ❖ How did you then start to prepare?
- ❖ What encouraged you?
- ❖ Once prepared, what kind of things did you do towards achieving your weight loss/change?
- ❖ What changes did you make? Really give yourself time to think about this in detail, and remember – write your answers down.
- ❖ Can you remember what kind of thoughts and feelings you had around this time?
- ❖ What was going well?
- ❖ What was a little more of a challenge?

- ❖ How did you manage those challenges? Who or what for example?
- ❖ To what extent did you manage to consolidate and maintain the change?

***If not...***

- ❖ What caused you to lapse/ fall off the wagon?
- ❖ How did you stay off the wagon?
- ❖ What did you learn from this?
- ❖ If you were able to step back in time, what would you do differently?

***Now***

- ❖ What has caused you to contemplate more effective weight management now?
- ❖ What do you need to plan?
- ❖ What actions need to be in your plans?
- ❖ With all of your knowledge, what might you pre-plan in case of a lapse?

Write down your three key learnings from doing this exercise:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

