

User Manual - Stage of Decision Making

Definition

‘Stage of Decision Making’ refers to the individual’s readiness to engage in decision making, progress in making a choice, and receptivity to considering or re-considering options. Although bearing some conceptual similarity to ‘stage of change’, it differs in two ways.

First, the stages of decision making are elicited in finer detail to more precisely capture willingness to consider and re-consider options. This is important because a person’s response to decision supporting interventions (e.g. decision aids) will depend on the degree to which they are receptive. Moreover, the approach a person takes in counseling or coaching can be tailored to stage. For example, a coach may gently confirm that a person’s choice is informed and values-based if the person has already made up their minds; in contrast, a person in the earlier stage of decision making usually benefits from more detailed information about options and values clarification.

Second, for values-based decisions, reasonable options do not involve change (e.g. forgoing amniocentesis, hormones for menopause, choosing watchful waiting for prostate problems).

Therefore the goals in decision support involve progressing through stages of decision making, but not necessarily stages of change [1].

Sample Tool

Stage of Decision Making

People who will be having heart surgery may be asked to consider self-donating blood before surgery or receiving only volunteer blood from healthy volunteers.

At this time, would you say you;

- haven’t begun to think about the choices; (1)
- haven’t begun to think about the choices, but am interested in doing so; (2)
- are considering the options now; (3)
- are close to selecting an option; (4)
- have already made a decision, but am still willing to reconsider; (5)
- have already made a decision and am unlikely to change my mind. (6)

Stage of Decision Making © AM O’Connor 2000

Directions for Use

Stage of Decision Making should be assessed before providing decision support interventions (e.g. decision aids). It can be used to screen out participants who may not benefit from decision support intervention. It is an important covariate in determining who benefits most from decision support intervention. Interventions such as decision aids are most beneficial to those in active deliberation contemplation (3,4) or at least willing to consider/re-consider choices (2,5). People who haven’t begun to think of choices may not be ready for intervention (e.g. could still be in shock or denial about the diagnosis). Those who have already decided and are not willing to reconsider are less likely to benefit from intervention.

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Scoring and Interpretation

This tool is not 'scored'. However, the categories can be used to screen out participants or to determine co-variation in decisional conflict (tends to higher in earlier stages) and success of interventions (success higher among those in active deliberation stage).

Psychometric Properties

Construct: is associated with decisional conflict measure in hypothesized direction. Early stages are associated with higher decisional conflict; later stages with lower decisional conflict [5,6].

Clinical Applications Using this Tool

Blood Transfusion [2]
Cardiovascular Risk Reduction [3]
Ottawa Decision Support Guide: Practitioner Worksheet [4]
Ottawa Personal Decision Guide [4]

Clinical Formats: - these questions are imbedded in (a) practitioner-administered and (b) patient-administered clinical decision support tools.

(a) Stage of Decision Making

How far along are you with your decision?

- Not thinking about the options → interested in considering further? _____
- Considering the options
- Close to selecting option _____ → interested in re-considering options? _____
- Taking steps towards implementing option _____ → interested in re-considering
- Have already carried out choice _____ → interested in re-considering

Stage of Decision Making Ottawa Decision Support Guide: Practitioner Worksheet © 2000, AM O'Connor, MJ Jacobsen, V Fiset

(b) Stage of Decision Making

How far along are you with your decision?

(Check ✓ the box that applies to you and put the date at the top of the column.)

Date (month/day/year):	First time	Second time
	___/___/___	___/___/___
a. I have not yet thought about the options.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. I am considering the options.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. I am close to choosing one option.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. I have already made a choice.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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Availability

You may use any of these scales at no cost without permission.

These tools are protected by copyright but are freely available for you to use, provided you cite the reference in any questionnaires or publications.

Suggested Citation

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References

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