

Redefining Success: Finding Sustainability in the Small Wins

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Who I Am + Why This Matters

- Program Director, Doors to Freedom
- Working with adolescent survivors of trafficking
- 9 years in residential care

→ *This work has completely reshaped how I define success.*

A Story That Challenged How I Define Success...

Age 15

9 months in placement

Unplanned discharge

A Story That Challenged How I Define Success...

Returned at age 17

GED

Job

Engaged in therapy

Left again - unplanned

A Story That Challenged How I Define Success...

She was not the same person.

She had built capacity.

She experienced success.

→ *What if success isn't defined by how a story ends... but by what changed along the way?*



How is success measured in your setting?





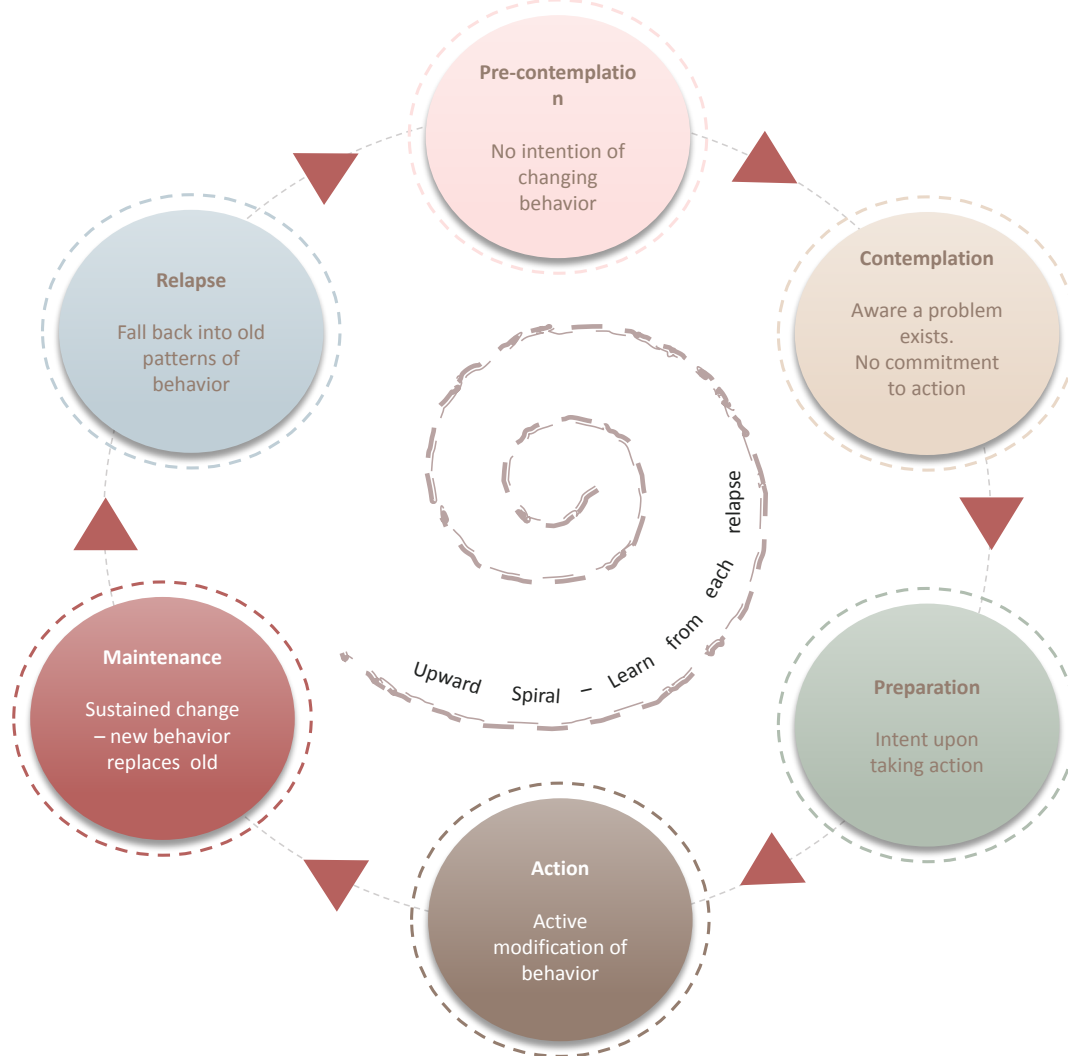
Think of a client who didn't “look”
successful... but felt meaningful



Objectives

By the end of this training, participants will be able to:

- Reframe how we define success
- Understand change as cyclical
- Identify “quiet wins” in daily practice
- Use a strengths-based lens to reduce burnout
- Walk away with practical language and tools



- Not a linear process, it is a cycle
- May cycle back to an earlier stage

Regression Reframe

→ *How many of you have seen progress... then regression?*

Regression is not failure – it's information.

Often signals increased trust.

→ *What did you learn in that moment you wouldn't have otherwise?*

Redefining “Success”

Traditional success metrics -

- Compliance
- Timelines
- Program Completion

Trauma-informed success indicators -

- Increased self-awareness
- Asking for help
- Naming emotions
- Returning after disengagement
- One safe choice in a hard moment

→ *Success does not equal the absence of struggle. Success equals building capacity over time.*

Quiet Wins that Sustain the Work

Quiet Wins: Moments that reflect internal growth, trust, or effort. Often undocumented but deeply meaningful.

→ *Think of one quiet win from this week.*

If we only measure outcomes, we will miss impact.

PROGRESS OVER PERFECTION

*What shifted today?
Because progress doesn't always look like completion.*

Quiet Win: What is one small win you noticed?

What it Shows: What does this tell you about their growth?

Reframe the Moment:

Without a trauma-informed lens, this might be seen as:

Instead, we're recognizing it as:

Your Impact: What did you do that supported this moment?

Carry It Forward: What is one way you can carry this forward?

Don't miss the growth while waiting for the outcome.



Language, Burnout, and Sustainability

The goals need to align with realistic expectations for our clients. If we have unrealistic success measures/goals, this can fuel burnout.

When we can't name progress, we stop seeing it. Quiet wins don't just sustain clients – they sustain us.

OUT OF MY CONTROL

The actions of others

The outcome of my efforts

IN MY CONTROL

The future

Being present in this moment

Past mistakes

My words

How I speak to myself

My mindset

What I give my energy to

The opinions of others

How I spend my free time

How I move on from failure

Other people's boundaries

The boundaries I set

What happens around me

What other people think of me



How will you start tracking quiet wins this week?



Encouragement for all -

This work is hard.

It is often unseen.

But it matters deeply.

Frameworks Guiding This Work —

- Bessel van der Kolk - *The Body Keeps the Score*
- Stages of Change Model
- Carl Rogers – Person-Centered Theory
- Strengths-Based Social Work Practice
- Trauma-Informed Care Principles



Questions

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