If we are to use the stages of change model, ask ourselves, and document:

What specific violent and controlling behaviours are we referring to when we say that the adult is at a particular stage of change?

Is the adult's contemplation, preparation or action in relation to these behaviours conditional on any circumstances or self-centered goals?

Which of the adult's violent and controlling behaviours appear to be associated with earlier stages?

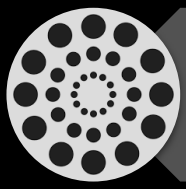
Which of his violent and controlling behaviours are we not yet able to judge which stage the adult is at?

Coercive control	Psychological and emotional violence
Physical violence & harm	Sexualised violence
Economic abuse	stalking
Social violence	Image based abuse
Technology facilitated abuse	Systems abuse
Cultural and spiritual abuse	Reproductive violence

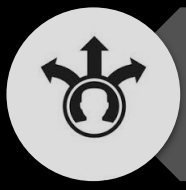
Keeping adult and child victim-survivors at the centre means not becoming swept away with the behaviours that the person using violence is starting to contemplate changing… don't lose sight of the many more behaviours and greater harms that family members are experiencing that he is pre-contemplative about.

Rodney Vlais, September 2025

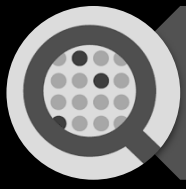
Signs that an adult user of violence is moving *genuinely* into the contemplation stage concerning a particular aspect or part of his patterns of harmful behaviour



Acknowledges the behaviour is not just a 'once-off', and that willpower alone is not enough to cease it or ensure that it does not happen again



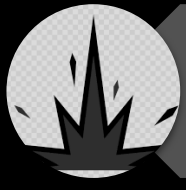
Begins to show some (still very limited) awareness that the behaviour is a choice, and used with intent



Starts to talk about the behaviour with at least a small degree of specificity – not just vague labels



While still strongly in victim stance, shows moments of owning the behaviour to some degree



Starts to name something (even if only the tip of the iceberg) of the impacts of the behaviour on others, and on himself – signs of ambivalence



<u>Starts</u> to sit with a bit of shame / discomfort of how the behaviour & its impacts violates values & ethical aspirations important to him (and his community)



Starts to identify less harmful alternatives to the behaviour, and why it is important to himself and others that he moves towards these alternatives

If the perpetrator of violence is pre-contemplative, shift your focus towards planting seeds, sowing doubt and creating ambivalence → so that you, or the next service, has something to work with

"You're telling me you believe it's all your partner's fault as to why you are here, and that you've done nothing wrong. Can I be straight with you about what's going through my mind?... What if it's not as simple as that?" [or, if you're concerned about him feeling insulted by the word 'simple'… "what if it's not exactly like that?"]

"You feel that the police didn't listen to your side of the story, and that the Magistrate you saw didn't give you a chance. What if they took the action they did because of concern about your partner's safety?"

"I can see you feel a lot of anger about being made to come here. What benefits from participating in the program could that anger make you miss out on?"

"You are trying to work things out at home and have some ideas about how to go about this. What if your attempts to solve things are having impacts you might not be seeing?"

"You feel that you are on top of everything and that you won't repeat the harm you caused before. I can tell you aren't proud of what you did. Sometimes, we feel so bad about something we've done that we don't want to admit the possibility we could do it again. Could overconfidence be impacting your judgement here?"

Planting seeds, sowing doubt and creating ambivalence can feel collusive → make a judgment call as to whether the technique would be too collusive. Use mid-point micro-skills to try to minimise collusion with his problematic narratives and beliefs.

As with the BEST-EARS approach (see my recent resource), empathise selectively and then turn the conversation → but rather than being too ambitious through focusing on responsibility-taking, follow with techniques such as:

- What if there's more to the story?
- What might you be missing?
- What if there's a different way… would you be interested in exploring that?
- What impacts does [this anger, this belief, etc.] have on you?
- Could overconfidence get you into trouble?