

Worksheet 4.2: Decisional Balance

The contemplation stage can be particularly challenging for Edi and frustrating for carers. It is so easy for carers to see a glimmer of change talk (a green shoot) and then rush in and drown it (over-water it) with too much focus on change, rather than acknowledging the difficulties of letting go of the illness.

The decisional balance has four quadrants:

Table 4.3 Decisional balance quadrants

1. PROS of no change	2. CONS of no change
4. PROS of change	3. CONS of change

You have already made a start by thinking about quadrant one which equates to the benefits of ED from Edi's perspective (Exercise 2.2 in Module 2).

This tool can really help you to empathise with the internal dialogue that your loved one is facing as they move from pre-contemplation, through contemplation and on to preparation:

Quadrant 1 – Advantages/ benefits of my ED now (ED voice very loud)

Quadrant 2 – Possible disadvantages of my ED (healthy side of the person trying to challenge the very loud ED voice)

Quadrant 3 – Disadvantages of letting go of my ED (ED voice fighting back)

Quadrant 4 – Advantages of letting go of my ED (healthy side of the person standing up to the ED voice and starting to think 'I CAN do this')

It is all too easy for carers and clinicians to be blinkered and focus on boxes 3 and 4, which has the effect of pushing Edi into sticking with boxes 1 and 2. In order to enable 'bigger-picture thinking' we all need to be able to look at all four boxes and in particular to acknowledge the cons of change as this can be a real sticking point and hurdle for Edi to navigate. The ED voice will be arguing very hard for no change at this point.

Note also that this tool can be used whatever decision is being considered and in which Edi is in two minds. This might include challenging individual ED rules, increasing social network, going on holiday, changing school, going to university and work-related issues.

Fill in the quadrants as if you were Edi.

If you are certain that your loved one is currently firmly in pre contemplation and therefore not having thoughts of change you could base your answers on this scenario:

Peter is showing signs that he might be starting to see reasons why his eating disorder might get in the way of his future ambitions. His Mum is seeing some green shoots and some glimmers of his old self. He is talking about playing hockey, finishing his A-levels, going on holiday with his mates and going to university. However, Peter is still displaying many ED thoughts and behaviours and becomes very emotional at the slightest challenge. Imagine you are Peter and complete the decisional balance chart in the order shown.

Table 4.4 Decisional balance quadrants for Peter

1. PROS of no change	2. CONS of no change
I'm good at Ed	It stops me doing some things
4. PROS of change	3. CONS of change
Healthier life	It is really scary