Effective Tips for Making Behaviour Changes that Stick
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Step 1: Identify Your Goal

- Pick a specific behaviour to change. Start with no more than one to two behaviours to change at a time. Define in exact terms what you would like to change.
- Ensure that your goal is measurable. To change your goal, you will have to know where you are headed, and how to determine if you are getting/have gotten there.
- Pick an attainable goal. The goal should be something that, based upon the life you are living, is something that you can achieve.
- Ensure the goal is realistic. You may want to lose 30 pounds, but a realistic goal may be to lose 15 pounds this year and 15 pounds the following year.
- Ensure the goal is time-limited. Set a specific period of time in which you will accomplish your goal. Behavioural change takes a series of steps, and those steps can each be accomplished over a specific period of time. As you accomplish your time-limited steps, you can reward yourself for successes.

Step 2: Identify your Readiness to Change

- Before you begin, ask yourself questions such as “how ready am I really?” “…is this the right time for me to make a change?” “…what are the pros and cons of changing?”.
- Consider the benefits of the change. How can you begin to make the change in a realistic fashion? What would life be like if you didn’t make the change? Is the change worth it? How or why? How would the change impact your life in a positive manner?
- Consider how the change fits in with other important life values that you hold.
- Prepare to change. Gather the information and tools that you need. Anticipate setbacks. Remember that small change is better than no change. Get supports as you start to make the change.
- As you start change, consider how to build upon the behaviour over time. What other behaviours can you add in?
- Once the behaviour change has been made, consider how to transition to a long-term maintenance plan. How can you sustain this behaviour change over time?

Step 3: Identify Barriers

- Anticipate setbacks. If you have tried to make this change in the past, what got in the way of the change being successful before? Problem-solve the barriers that you have encountered in the past.
- Identify the pros of not changing the behaviour (this can often help you appreciate why the change has not yet happened). Identify the cons of changing (the reasons the change may be difficult to do).
- Establish a specific contingency plan for each of the barriers you identify.

Step 4: Implement Change

- Identifying the following cognitive processes of change can help increase the likelihood of behavioural change:
  - Barriers/traps: identify the common barriers you may encounter.
  - Increase knowledge: obtain the background information you may need to make the change.
  - Identify the consequences of changing and not changing – what are the potential impacts if you both did and did not make the change?
• Understand the benefits of the change – how would the change impact your life in an immediate/meaningful way?
• Identify options – what are the various options you have for change? There are often several paths to the same end goal.

Identifying the following *behavioural* processes of change can help increase the likelihood of behavioural change:

• Commit: make a verbal commitment to change. Let others that are close to you know about the change are making.
• Substitute alternatives: be flexible and identify different ways you can achieve your overall goal.
• Enlist supports: find a friend or co-worker that may also want to make the change. It can often be easier to make change when you are making the change with someone else.
• Reward yourself: make sure that you reinforce and reward yourself for small successes.
• Set triggers & reminders: when life gets busy and other stressors enter our lives, it can be easy to let good self-care fall behind.

• Obtain a baseline of your behaviour. Track your usual activity for a week. This can often help you to identify patterns in your day and help identify times when it would be easier to implement the change.
• Be aware of the powerful impact that conditioning plays in activity and behaviour. Actively work to change habits that you may have gotten into that are not conducive to achieving your goal.
• Approach behavioural change gradually. Make small, specific changes.
• Make a schedule with yourself to build the activity into your day-to-day life. Follow the “double-time” rule where you schedule double the time you think it would take to achieve the change.

**Step 5: Revisit & Revise**

• Do not get discouraged by setbacks. If you are not on track with the changes you identified, work to identify the barriers. Were your expectations too high? Was the specific goal you set too ambitious?
• Revise your goal as necessary.
• Expect & visualize success!

**Step 6: Reward Yourself**

• Set milestones that can help you track your progress. Ensure that you schedule in regular rewards for each milestone that you achieve.