

Preparing for Change – Setting Good Goals

In order to practice nutritional harm reduction, it's going to require changing some habits. When changing a behavior, particularly one that involves a drug or drug-like food, you'll need good goals and lots of support.

Good goals – no matter what they are – share certain things in common. They are clear and doable. They are specific and concrete. They are realistic. And they require you to focus on what *you* can change. Of course, at Suppers, you can rely on the support of therapeutic friends.

Although we state goals in the positive, there is often a negative motivation. What needs to change? How important is it to fix this? What are the consequences of not doing so? Whatever you want to accomplish, you can break it down into manageable goals. You've come to Suppers; you had some likely outcome in mind.

Some goals aren't enjoyable. So a good question to ask yourself might be: How important is it that I accomplish this (rather than do I feel like doing it?) If working on a goal is enjoyable but not important, it may still be a good beginner goal if you need to experience early success. So, for example, a good beginner goal is something you already do and could take more credit for: I will attend a weekly Suppers meeting.

If it's not enjoyable, but it's important, you might get some fuel from answering the question "How is what I am currently doing working out for me?"

Examples

A good goal is really clear.
I will go to bed at 10 p.m., NOT
I wish I had more energy.

Focus on what you can do, not what you can get somebody else to do.
I will do a crossword puzzle in the check out line, NOT
I will complain to the manager for displaying all that candy at the check out.

Focus on healthy solutions.
I will eat 2 fruits per day, NOT
I will skip meals to save on calories.

Be specific.
I will eat an apple daily, NOT
I will eat more fruit.

Make it measurable.
I will prepare one Suppers meal per week for my family, NOT
I will cook more frequently.

Make it realistic for you.
I will walk ½ hour per day 4 times per week, NOT
I will exercise 2 hours every day.

Make it affordable now.
I will walk with Betty 3 times a week for an hour, NOT
I will start saving for that fabulous in-home gym.

Preparing for Change – Setting Good Goals

Make it concrete.

I will use 50% of my grocery budget for single, fresh, whole food, NOT
I will buy healthy food.

Keep the focus positive.

I will eat my favorite sweets exclusively as dessert after a meal of whole food, NOT
I will avoid sweets all day til after dinner.

Make it an outcome you can succeed at by doing the behavior.

I will eliminate sugar from my diet, NOT
I will lose 10 pounds this month.

Sample Questionnaire: Preparing for Change

A sample has been prepared for you; see answers in orange.

Read an example of how to prepare for change. You could do this alone, but it might work better doing it with a therapeutic friend.

I am thinking about making the following change: **Quitting caffeine.**

1. Name the reason you think something must change.
I can't stand the anxiety any more.
2. Name benefits of staying the same
I love coffee, it starts my day.
3. Name benefits of changing
The lift is short lived. I feel addicted to caffeine and think I will feel more stable if I quit.
4. Describe the difference you want to experience.
I will feel less panicky.
5. Name a small change one could make that would lead to the desired outcome.
Reducing the intake.
6. Acknowledge how you feel when thinking about making the change.
Mixed, scared, might fail.
7. How important is it? You can use a scale of 1 to 10.
I think it's about 8. I hate how I feel.
8. What makes it so important?
It's affecting how I relate to my family. My head spins more and more as I lose tolerance for caffeine.
9. What else will have to happen to make change possible?
I will need my family to be supportive. I have to stop eating doughnuts because I can't have one without the other.
10. What might sabotage the process?
If I meet friends as usual at the diner Saturday mornings.

Preparing for Change – Setting Good Goals

11. How will you handle the potential sabotage?
I have to have some honest conversations with them before I do this.
12. What will happen if you stayed the same?
I will continue to feel addicted, spinning, a slave to caffeine.
13. How can the change be broken down into small, manageable pieces?
I can talk to my family before changing anything.
I can tell my friends this is coming and to not expect me for breakfast until I accomplish this.
I can eat protein at breakfast to help stabilize me.
I can take supplements to help prevent the headaches I would usually get.
I can do it in stages rather than cold turkey.
14. What support would help you accomplish this?
If my family knew I was going to be a bear for a week, they could not take it personally when I am cranky and nasty. Need to ask for their support.
15. Who can provide that support?
Kids and husband. Come to think of it, I should tell my boss too.
16. How will you know when you have achieved the change?
I will be off coffee for as long as it takes to resist the urge to have it without feeling sorry for myself.

Preparing for Change – Setting Good Goals

Preparing for Change

Now try your hand at writing down a goal that is concrete, measurable, and doable; something you can accomplish yourself or with a willing supporter, not something that requires recruiting some one else.

I am preparing to make the following change:

1. Name the reason you think something must change.
2. Name benefits of staying the same.
3. Name benefits of changing.
4. Describe the difference you want to experience.
5. Name a small change one could make that would lead to the desired outcome.
6. Acknowledge how you feel when thinking about making the change.
7. How important is it? You can use a scale of 1 to 10.
8. What makes it so important?
9. What else will have to happen to make change possible?
10. What might sabotage the process?
11. How will you handle the potential sabotage?
12. What will happen if you stayed the same?
13. How can the change be broken down into small, manageable pieces?
14. What support would help you accomplish this?
15. Who can provide that support?
16. How will you know when you have achieved the change?