



Valley Center Counseling, Inc.

Life Transitions Newsletter: January 2009



Dear Clients,

As 2008 ends and 2009 starts it is the time of year that we reflect on the past and think about changes for the future. This newsletter focuses on how to keep your New Year's Resolutions. Or another way of looking at it is how to bring about the change that you desire. This is a reprint from January 2008's newsletter – it is worth re-reading.

Happy New Year – May 2009 be filled with peace, joy, good health and happiness.

*Penny Blazej, LCSW, BCD
President of Valley Center Counseling*

How You Can Successfully Keep New Year Resolutions

Millions of people make New Year Resolutions and the vast majority of them quit before the end of January! Whether the resolution be losing weight, getting in better physical shape, to quit smoking, getting into a better relationship, to stop drinking, or changing our careers -- the failure rate for change is very high. So how can you keep your resolutions?

First you need to understand what change involves. Changing a habit is changing the direction of your life. Habits are little routines you execute **automatically**. To change them you first need to understand the nuances of the habit. You then must figure out the best ways to interrupt the routine and replace it with another healthier one. This process requires self-awareness, determination, planning and support.

So what is the recipe for changing bad habits? You first need to analyze the old habit, then plan how you are going to interrupt it, prepare to execute that plan and then act. The 10 steps below will help you to implement the above recipe giving you your desired outcome.

First: ANALYZE

Step 1: Choose goals you really desire.

You need to want to accomplish these goals enough to make the sacrifices that are needed. Change does not come easily so your desire needs to be strong.

List the benefits of each goal and why you want to accomplish it. Post this on your bathroom mirror. When times get difficult, and they will, go and read them. Keeping the bigger picture can help you overcome the urges. Remember, if you can divert yourself for 5 minutes, most urges disappear.

Step 2: Keep goals simple and select no more than two key goals

Too much change too quickly is a recipe for failure. If you can successfully change two key bad habits in a year you are a GREAT success. As most of you know, success breeds success. Next year you can bring about two more important changes. Before you know it, you have molded your life to be what you want.

Step 3: Make the goals realistic

If you have been overweight all your life and you have more than 20 pounds to lose, it would be unrealistic to have a two month time frame. Weight loss studies have shown it is best to lose ½ to 1 pound per week. Remember, as long as the monthly weight goes down, you are winning even if it is just a ½ of a pound!

Step 4: Make them specific

Getting healthier is a noble goal, however, how do you measure it? Break the goal down into smaller more measurable objectives. For example choose a specific amount of weight to lose and/or increasing exercises by specific amount of time each week.

Step 5: Make sure you can measure the goals.

If you cannot measure it, you will have difficulty determining whether you are accomplishing it! If your goal is to improve your spirituality, how would you measure it? Examples are: the number of books you read on the subject; how many times per week you meditated; are you journaling regularly; did you attend a conference on the subject? I think you get the idea.

Second: PLAN

Now that you have selected no more than 2 key goals that meet the above 5 criteria you are ready to go into the planning stage.

Step 6: Prioritize your goals

Which of the two goals are the most important to you? Focus on that one first and once you begin to see success and feel that the new habit is ingrained then start on the second goal.

Step 7: Make a plan for each goal

Partition the goal into small steps (or strategies/tactics) that bring about gradual change.

Write your plan down and post it in a highly visible spot. This will strengthen your commitment. Remember, you are the CEO of this very important health plan.

Third: PREPARE

You now have a detailed plan that spells success. Now you must execute the plan. For example: bring the right team together, remove all tempting high calorie low nutritious food items from the house, get walking shoes and/or join the gym; join a group that will support your efforts etc...

Step 8: Hold yourself accountable

Track your progress on a spreadsheet: weight lost, number of times you worked out at the gym, blood pressure, number of days without smoking or drinking etc... Remember that visualizing your success will help enforce the new habit.

Find a good life coach or therapist to hold you accountable and help you overcome any resistance that may emerge. Hypnosis is a great technique for instilling new habits. You may want to sign up for a few sessions to help reinforce your efforts. As always, make sure the professional is licensed and in good standing.

Step 9: Get support

Find a buddy who is also developing the same new habit. Look for a mentor that has already attained this goal and emulate them. Share your plan with family and friends and ask for their support. After all, you will need people to celebrate with you!

Fourth: ACT

Step 10: Celebrate each small accomplishment

For example: if you are trying to lose 35 pounds, celebrate every 5 pound loss and everytime you drop a full size.

Remember it takes at least 45 days to develop a new habit, some experts believe it takes 90 days. The first 30 days are the most difficult because most of the change is occurring during this period of time. However, the next 60 days is when you reinforce the new changes. Without

reinforcement it is easy to slip back into your unhealthy habits.

Changing habits is not for the faint of heart, however, the outcome certainly is worth the efforts. Good Luck!

Shorts

There are thousands of people who cope with anxiety disorders. One of the treatments is to eliminate caffeine from your diet. Many of you have changed to decaffeinated products. But beware – not all decaffeinated products are caffeine free. Studies have shown that up to 30% of decaf coffees ordered at coffee houses and restaurants contain unacceptably high levels of caffeine, or are not decaf at all.

There is a new product on the market called the D+caf™ Test. These easy to use inexpensive strips can quickly measure the level of caffeine in a liquid products like coffee, teas or sodas. For more information go to: www.discovertesting.com.

Book Reviews

“Tell Me I’m Here – One Family’s Experience of Schizophrenia” by Anne Deveson is a well written, easy to read, short book that really captures what it is like to live with a schizophrenic child. Over forty million people worldwide develop schizophrenia at some time in their lives. If you or a loved one has been diagnosed with schizophrenia, I recommend reading this book.

You can order this books from www.amazon.com or you can borrow it from my library.

Wise Words

At a recent holiday sermon a definition of **“family”** was given which touched my heart. I thought you might enjoy it as well.

F Forget
A About
M Me
I I
L Love
Y You

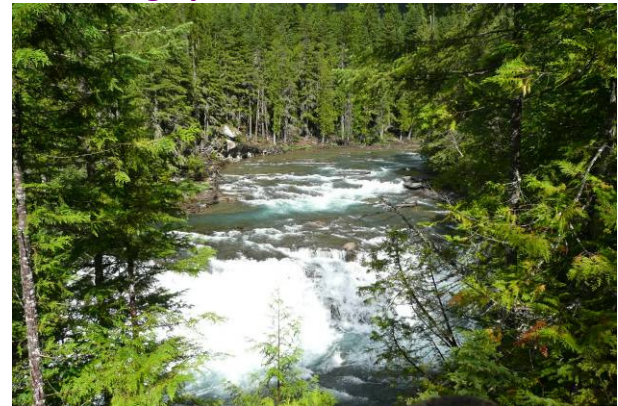
Announcements

Penny will be giving a presentation at the Valley Center Library on February 28th on **“What is Hypnosis”**. The talk begins at 11 A.M.

Just for Laughs



Breathing Space



Glacier National Forest

