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Helping Your Clients Make a Long Term Change - Part 2

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Welcome to Part 2 in the series that will virtually guarantee success in affecting a lasting change in any one of your clients. In [Part 1](#), we discussed what change was, the beliefs that must be present and comprised a list of what we wanted, while determining what was keeping us from getting there.

In Part 2, we will discuss how to get leverage, how to interrupt and replace an old limiting behavior pattern and finally, how to condition a new pattern until it becomes a new behavior. Since (if you've followed [Part 1](#)) your clients now know what they really want and what is preventing them from having it, it is time to get leverage. Because people ultimately do things for two reasons (to gain pleasure and to avoid pain), your job is to help your clients modify their associations to pain and pleasure. They need to change their association of intense pain to "not changing now" and intense pleasure to "making the desired change now."

We have all sought to change something in our lives, but just couldn't get it to stick. The result was a feeling of failure and a subconscious link of pain to change, simply because failure is not a good feeling. The reason most people fail is not a lack of capability; it is always a lack of motivation. For example: If someone held a gun to your head and told you to stop eating poorly and exercise, would you? Of course you would! That is some pretty big leverage. Now, I am not saying to do anything like put a gun to your head, but it is a pretty intense picture.

What I am saying is that the only way we will make a lasting change is to create a sense of urgency that will leave us no alternative but to follow through and adopt the new behavior. Change is never a question of "can I?" but one of "I will." To create leverage, we must have a lever. If you have failed in the past, it was because your lever was not strong enough.

The best leverage a person can have is knowing they have not lived up to their own standards. So set the bar high! Changing a behavior is only in small part knowing how and in very large part knowing why. How many times have you heard someone tell somebody he should quit smoking? To which he responds, "Why would I quit smoking?" He must know why, and it must be a very strong reason for change to last.

Asking positive questions is an excellent way to get leverage. By helping your clients ask themselves empowering questions, you can help them get leverage on their new behavior. One of the great things about this approach is that the client will feel all of the positive effects of succeeding on their own accord. They did it themselves. There are three excellent questions you as a coach (we are all coaches as well as trainers) can have your clients ask themselves before they make any decision:

1. Does this put me closer to my desired behavior? (Healthy lifestyle)
2. Can I be proud of this, or will I not tell anyone? (Food choice, skip workout)
3. How will I feel after I don't do/do this? (Think ahead)

Interrupting the old patterns, which have been holding you back and derailing any former attempts at change, is the next step in affecting a lasting change.

My favorite axiom for the definition of insanity is, "Doing the same things over and over again and expecting a different result." Think about it. How applicable is it to you? This may be a big part of your previous attempts at making change. As human beings, we develop patterns. We then condition these patterns until they become habits. Everything we do is a result of this phenomenon.

Interrupting an old and undesired pattern we wish to change is fairly simple. For example, if your "preventing behavior" from the list you made earlier is overeating, be conscious of this at dinner time. If you feel you are about to overeat, jump up from the table and yell "PIG" or something strange along those lines. This might feel funny and might make you and others laugh, but what you are doing is interrupting an old pattern. The catch is that it must be done at the right time - in the moment.

Another way to interrupt an old pattern is to scramble it. To scramble a pattern, there are three steps:

1. See your old pattern as if projected on a movie screen.
2. See the pattern as a cartoon, reverse and distort the images (i.e., give everyone involved a mustache, change speeds and colors). Just play around with the image until it looks and feels nothing like your initial image.
3. Now think about the old pattern, and it will seem of little importance.

This works because all of the feelings we have as human beings are based on images we see in our minds. When we focus on those images, we automatically feel how we felt when the situation occurred. By changing the picture and how we see it in our minds, we change the sensations we link to those patterns. If we wish to break the pattern of overeating, by jumping up and yelling "PIG," we change the sensation of overeating from a fulfilling pattern to one that is unacceptable. Now that we have changed the picture in our minds, we have a better chance of staying away from the old pattern.

Questions can have a profound effect on interrupting patterns as well. The best question when interrupting an old pattern is simply, "What am I doing?" For example, when you feel yourself pulling into the fast food drive thru, ask yourself, "What am I doing?" Be sure to answer, and I guarantee you will be honest. You will discover that you know it is putting you further away from your goal, and you will turn around. Pattern interrupted. Keep at it. Share this information with your clients. The results they achieve will make them feel better than they have ever felt.

Once you have interrupted your undesired pattern, it is time to replace it with a new and more fulfilling alternative. The main reason why people fail in their attempts to change is because they are unable to replace the old pattern with a new way of getting out of pain and into pleasure. This brings about only a temporary change. Many people do change but have nothing to replace the old behavior pattern with, and therefore, they eventually return to the old behavior, even though there is a negative side effect.

Your clients have come to you because they desire new healthy lifestyles free from unwanted fat and unnecessary health problems and lifestyles that promote wellness and allow them to feel better about themselves. Your job is to work with them to build and reinforce these desired patterns.

If, for some reason, an empowering alternative to a client's undesired pattern cannot be found on your own, the way you will replace your old patterns is simple. Have them model people who have already achieved what they wish to accomplish. You should keep a variety of testimonials at your disposal, and likely one situation will be similar to theirs. The old, "If they can do it, I can too" mentality is one that your client will likely adopt. You must understand the importance of replacing old patterns because of the fact that, if we do not find a suitable alternative, our brains will automatically seek one out. This is most evident in people who quit smoking only to gain a lot of extra weight. Their brain automatically replaces the old pattern of smoking with eating because they did not have an alternative pattern in place. The new pattern is your desired behavior from the desired list earlier in the chapter. The undesired behavior is the second part of the list, which is what is preventing you from having it.

Now that your clients are clear on what they have to do to bring about the lasting change they desire, all that's left is to condition the new behavior pattern until it is constant.

The way we condition a pattern until it becomes habit is through positive reinforcement. With enough emotional intensity and repetition, any behavior - good or bad - can be conditioned. By emotional intensity, I mean our brain is a complex part of our anatomy and cannot tell the difference between something that is vividly imagined and something that actually happens. This means if you want a desired change or a desired outcome and you see yourself already achieving that outcome and live like you already have, it is inevitable that it will come about. Have your clients buy smaller clothes or a bathing suit they want to fit into. The emotional intensity of making that purchase and seeing themselves in it when they go on that trip to the islands will be the same as if it has already happened.

The reinforcement aspect is the next step of conditioning a new behavior. The best example of positive reinforcement probably occurs in the training of animals. When training a dog to sit, we give the dog a treat every time he does as we ask. Over time, the dog realizes that when he sits, he will get a treat, so he sits on command. This is positive reinforcement - a new behavior has been conditioned and now the dog will sit without even getting a treat. In the quest for a desired change, you must reward yourself every time you make it through a day in your new behavior. The thing about reinforcement is that it must be immediate; like the dog that gets a treat as soon as he sits, his brain senses that this is a good behavior. You must reward yourself immediately as well. It doesn't have to be big, but it has to be positive and make you feel good. We always link the reinforcement to the pattern that is occurring. If you wait a week to reward yourself, then in essence you are reinforcing what you are doing at that time. If you do something positive on Monday and wait until Saturday to reward yourself, you are unconsciously reinforcing whatever you do on Saturday.

I hope you now have an even greater understanding of the science of change. I had a colleague read [Part 1](#) of this series and give me some feedback. What he said was, "The article made me think in a different arena. I thought of things in a way I never had before." That was exactly the reaction I wanted as well as the thought stimulation this series is written for. By now, you and your clients are firmly set on the highway of behavior modification and are considerably closer to the destination of a lasting change.

Always remember what Anthony Robbins says: "Any pattern of emotion or behavior that is continually reinforced will become automatic. Anything that we fail to reinforce will dissipate."

Recommended Reading:

1. Personal Power 2 (CD series) by Anthony Robbins
2. Get the Edge (CD series) by Anthony Robbins
3. [Awaken the Giant Within](#) by Anthony Robbins

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