

## **Making Changes**

To be sustainable changes to our lives need to be implemented in an evolutionary, not revolutionary way. That's not what we typically try to do though is it? Typically, we are unhappy with some aspect(s) of our lives and we let it continue to fester until we reach a tipping point, and then try and make multiple radical changes all at once. We give our bodies no time to adjust, so end up injured, sick and/or suffering from dreadful cravings. As a result, within a few weeks or months we tend to be right back where we started thinking "it's too hard to change, there's no point in trying".

Change can be difficult for sure. Habits are deeply ingrained and take some undoing. But if you approach it in a more constructive manner it's not nearly as difficult as we usually manage to make it seem. There are two keys to making long lasting changes and achieving them without it seeming like a battle. Firstly shift your focus from the outer world to your inner world and secondly don't try and do too much at once.

Change will always be difficult when it involves a battle of willpower; trying not to do something is always much more difficult than doing something. So, for example framing a desired change in eating pattern as "I'm going to eat more vegetables" rather than "I'm going to eat less chocolate" is likely to improve your chances of success.

The desire for change needs to come from deep within you. You need to start with a change in perspective. You need to understand and believe in the changes and what you are aiming to achieve. If you don't understand or believe, if you're doing it because someone else has told you to or because you think you should rather because you truly believe it is the right thing for you, then you need to address that before you try and actually make the change. When you truly believe in what you're doing it is so much easier to achieve. When the desire for change comes from your soul and you know at the deepest level that this is what you need to do, you will find yourself led and supported on the journey and it won't seem like such a struggle.

Motivations are important in this. The soul is only really going to be receptive to motivations that are founded on self-love and respect, not in ego. So wanting to improve diet and exercise habits to take better care of your body, to have more energy and live a better quality of life is a motivation your soul can adopt, whereas wanting to do it because you think it will make you look more attractive or because you think you will like yourself more as a result are ego based motivations that makes no sense to your soul. Consider what is driving your desire for change and if it isn't a motivation founded in self care then take some time to examine more deeply whether this is in fact the change you need to make, or whether there are other issues that you need to address first, or the underlying issue is actually something quite different.

It's very important that when you think about the changes you frame them positively. Don't think about what you're not going to do, think about what you are going to do. "I'm going to nourish and care for my body by eating whole, healthy foods" is much more positive and empowering than "I'm not going to eat any junk food". You also need to think about how you are going to handle cravings or urges if they arise and have plans in place. Don't turn it into a battle with yourself, that just draws attention to the craving and gives it power. Use distractions or examine the craving critically and recognise it for what it is then set it aside.

You'll know when you're really ready to make a change because it mostly won't seem like hard work or sacrifice. You probably won't have to do a lot of resisting temptation, because you just won't feel the temptations. There'll be occasional moments of course. But when the change is coming from deep within you, you have already made the change in your heart and so the manifestation of it in your life is a much simpler thing to accomplish.

I struggled for years with being overweight, unfit and unhealthy. I would go through periods of trying to make change, but it never lasted. It was always too hard. Other things got in the way. It was never enough of a priority, I never wanted it enough. But then something changed. I don't know quite what, but my best guess is that it was a culmination of events that just created the perfect storm for me to motivate a behavioural change, although even then it took a couple of years to all come together:

- I started paying more attention to older people and noticing the variation in their health and fitness levels even into significant old age. I decided that if I wanted to be a fit and healthy 80 or 90 year old I had to start now!
- I saw friends lose people close to them as a result of tragic accidents and the significance of how lucky I was to be alive was reinforced to me. I realised how important every day we have in this life is and I wanted to start making the most of mine.
- A teacher came into my life in the form of a good friend who encouraged me to open my mind to a different way of viewing the world and my place in it.
- Other 'signs' started appearing in my life such as the opportunity to attend a wellness retreat where the new ideas I was exploring were reinforced and built on.

My journey has been, and continues to be, one of lots of little incremental changes in all aspects of my life, resulting in much improved physical and mental health. Very seldom along the way have I had to use willpower to keep myself on-track. In fact as a general rule I try to avoid keeping myself on-track via willpower.

To me willpower is about fighting with yourself and I don't want to do that. If I really don't feel like exercising I don't. If I really feel like something indulgent to eat, I have it. I know myself well enough now to recognise when my state of mind or emotions are being driven by poor diet or lack of exercise and when that starts to happen it's a very effective wake-up call to get things back on track. I know at a very deep level that eating well and exercising well feels great, and that eating badly and not exercising feels awful so it's not hard to want to do the right things!

If there are a lot of things you want to change then you may find it easier to address them one at a time or at least in small groups. This is quite personal though, so take time to examine your situation and identify the best approach for you. As a general rule though, the more things you're trying to tackle at once the more important it will be to have your motivations coming from the deepest spiritual level. Sometimes it is helpful to tackle things together because they're complementary. For example increasing exercise and improving diet can each support one another and can both improve your mood and create a self-supporting cycle of feelings of wellbeing.