



MAKE ONE SMALL SHIFT AND CHANGE YOUR LIFE

By Sylvia Hepler, Executive Coach and Advisor

Making changes scares many of us, doesn't it? What exactly are we frightened of? What are YOU frightened of? Not getting positive results? Not receiving support through the process? Finding out you don't have the courage? Learning that other people don't approve? Not knowing where to start? Just hearing the word CHANGE may give you stomach butterflies, a throbbing headache, body quivers, or a lot of self doubt. So maybe it's time to try a different approach to getting more of what you need and want. Maybe it's time to make ONE SMALL SHIFT to the left or to the right. One tiny movement away from where you are this very minute...instead of trying to do something really big.

One tiny step can have a ripple effect that eventually makes a huge difference. For example, if you rarely or never smile, try smiling to someone who is steadily present in your life before you go to bed tonight. Observe the other person's reaction. That single smile possesses the power to alter your entire relationship with this individual. If you smoke, indulge in one less cigarette today. It could be the beginning of a smoking cessation program for you. If you typically eat too many unhealthy foods, substitute one healthy item for that bag of potato chips or pack of cupcakes. If you constantly complain about work, choose one positive thing to say about your day when you next talk with a friend,

family member, or peer. If you've got a pile of papers on your desk that needs purged, pick up one of those papers and deal with it. The key word is ONE. One tiny action can lead to greater happiness, improved health, increased productivity. There's a lot of magic in one small shift.

What kind of magic? It's actually an emotional and psychological magic. Think about how you feel when you smile, smoke less, eat healthy food, say something good, or file one paper. You feel great about yourself, don't you? You feel great about YOU because you did something you didn't think you could do,

something you put off doing for a long time, something you simply didn't take the time to do. You also feel great because you know you are now in closer alignment with your personal values and priorities. This sense of alignment brings you happiness in a way that nothing else can. There is no substitute for taking steps toward becoming the kind of person we desire to be. When you eat an apple instead of a piece of cake, you prove to yourself that you value good nutrition and care about your health. Further, if weight loss is a priority, then you consume eighty calories of vitamins and fiber rather than four hundred calories of sugar, fat, and simple carbohydrates. When you file an important paper, you prove to yourself that you value organization. If office neatness is a priority, then you are moving toward cleaning up the mess. When you smile at someone, you prove to yourself that you value amicable relationships with others. If patching up your relationship with a coworker is a priority, then you're on the way to accomplishing it.

Taking these little steps on a regular basis brings about the major change we seek. If there are thirty papers on the pile and you file one paper per day, the entire pile obviously disappears within a month. As a result, filing the stack of papers is painless. Smoking one less cigarette each day for a month is easier than suddenly cutting out thirty cigarettes in a day or a week. It's all about getting started in a way that seems possible for you. Getting started is the hardest part of making any kind of change.

So how do you come around to actually making one small shift and ultimately the major change? Try the following:

1. Determine the major change you eventually want to make.

2. Decide upon a realistic time line for making that change.
3. Make a list of the circumstances, people, and other barriers that could sabotage or slow down your change making efforts. Develop strategies for dealing with them.
4. Identify all of the steps you need to take in order to make the big change. You must perceive each step as do-able.
5. Assign a completion date to each of those steps.
6. Focus on the first step and ask yourself what needs to happen so that you take that step.
7. Find a trustworthy accountability partner who agrees to check in with you periodically during the entire change making process.
8. Take that first critical step.
9. Assess your feelings upon completion of that step. Celebrate your mini success.
10. Complete all necessary steps within their respective time frames to make the big change you want.

If you find yourself dragging your feet on one or more of the steps you've outlined, have an honest conversation with yourself. Do you really want to make that particular change? Do you want to make it but at a later time or for a different reason? Are you attempting to make this change because somebody else recommended it and you wish to satisfy that person? In order to make change successfully, you must be motivated deep inside yourself. You really can't make long lasting change unless YOU want to. When YOU truly want to do it, however, the outcome is powerful.



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