

HEALTH AND FITNESS

"If you always do what you've always done, you'll always get what you've always got"

Behavioural Change Strategies to ensure you kick start 2009 on top form

During a recent visit to Jersey whilst staying at the Ommaroo Hotel on Havre des Pas I found myself reflecting on my past year and how I could improve it for the better. "But you are a life coach" I hear you cry. Even being a life coach there is always room for improvement.

Being inspired by the ambience of this wonderful hotel and incredible views from the large bay windows overlooking the sea, I had the perfect surrounding and ambience to reflect on my thoughts for this task.

Whenever we find ourselves at the end of one year and the beginning of another it is the perfect time to reflect on the past year and plan your changes for the coming year.

Always looking at what you have learnt and how you could do things differently...

STRATEGY # 1 – PERSONAL ALIGNMENT

Knowing and understanding yourself is paramount in achieving overall fulfilment and happiness. You need to have a clear view of your values, needs, and wants.

It is common to think that you want one thing and you really believe you need it, but it goes against your core values. This causes both long and short term problems.

If you want to achieve total congruence and eventual happiness you need to make sure your wants, needs and values are fully aligned.

STRATEGY # 2 – MAKE SURE YOUR NEEDS ARE MET

In life there are a core set of needs that every one of us has. It is paramount as human beings that these needs are met, if not it can lead to unhappiness, stress, and depression.

SECURITY - A sense of having a safe territory around us, so we can lead our lives without fear

BALANCE - A sense of autonomy and control over our lives

CONNECTION - Friendship and trust in all types of relationships

MEANING AND PURPOSE - this comes from being mentally and physically stretched

STRATEGY # 3 – TAKE BACK CONTROL

A lack of control is one of the main causes of stress. It is important to take back control of your life as a priority. You are in charge of you. Establish your boundaries and be prepared to stand by your decisions. Begin by regaining control of all aspects of your life at home and at work. De-clutter your life and have the confidence to make changes. Make a habit of reviewing this each year to ensure you stay in control.

To keep yourself motivated to see these things through you could visualise the end result and imagine the feelings associated with that success. For example, imagine how good it will feel to clear out the loft or garage of all that junk and sell it on the internet or hold a garage sale. Imagine how great you would feel when the junk is gone and you are left with some cash.

STRATEGY # 4 - LEARN TO FEEL GOOD

When you feel good your body produces higher levels of the brains "happy" chemical serotonin. This controls your mood and low levels of serotonin have been said to cause a lowering of the mood and can lead to depression.

Another important "feel good" brain chemicals are the endorphins. These are released when we exercise. It is therefore important to have a regular exercise slot in your diary. Always make the time even if it's simply walking to work instead of driving. You can monitor this by a pedometer, available from most high street chemists. Not only will you feel good but you will lose weight at the same time. Aim for 10,000 steps per day.

STRATEGY # 5 – GOALS

Goals are vital in us achieving what we want in life. They are instrumental in our lives both at home and at work. They add priority and focus to our lives and can keep us on track to achieve our objectives.

Goals start with a vision and finish with a plan. If we don't break them down sometimes they appear too daunting and we can be put off or give up entirely.

A valuable rule when setting goals is to ensure that they are specific, measurable, and achievable and that we review them regularly and we give ourselves specific timescales to achieve them.

Goals start with a vision, picture what you want, explore the opportunities, and then be specific. Remember write them down.

A great example to illustrate this was when my wife gave birth to our second child a few years ago. After starting her maternity leave she felt fed up with paper pushing administrative job roles so she decided that she wanted to stay at home for a few years whilst bringing up our children but also she wanted to re-train in something more fulfilling in life that she could do as a career after this time was over and the children had started full time education. Listing out her interests and areas she wanted to learn more about. She researched some distance learning courses online and found one in Nutritional Medicine. She is now entering into her third year of the course and although it has been challenging at times to juggle studying and home life she has had the internal motivation in working towards the ultimate goal of achieving this degree and changing her career later down the line. When she finishes soon she will be able to work the hours she chooses in a subject she loves. What could be better than that!

AN INSPIRING STORY TO REMEMBER FOR 2009**"Effort only fully releases its reward after a person refuses to quit"**

One day a farmer's cow fell down into a well. The animal cried piteously for hours as the farmer tried to figure out what to do. Finally he decided the animal was old and the well needed to be covered up anyway; it just wasn't worth it to retrieve the cow. He invited all his neighbours to come over and help him. They all grabbed shovel and began to shovel dirt into the well. At first, the cow realized what was happening and cried horribly. Then, to everyone's amazement, he quieted down. A few shovel loads later, the farmer finally looked down the well and was astonished at what he saw. With every shovel of dirt that hit his back, the cow was doing something amazing. He would shake it off and take a step up. As the farmer's neighbours continued to shovel dirt on top of the animal, he would shake it off and take a step up. Pretty soon, everyone was amazed as the cow stepped up over the edge of the well and trotted off! It's going to feel like life is shoveling dirt on you, all kinds of dirt. The trick to getting out of the well is to shake it off and take a step up. Each of our troubles is a stepping stone. We can get out of the deepest wells just by not stopping by never giving up and moving consistently in the direction that we want.

Just continue to shake it off and take a step up and learn from the experience.

Mark Shields is a leading Behavioural Change Coach and currently offers renowned telephone coaching consultations for islanders. He is happy to discuss any issues in confidence for further information check out his website

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