

CHANGE ANYTHING

Many believe that our success or failure is based only on our willpower, self-control, or desire and ability to “tough it out.” In reality, there’s six key sources of influence that can make or break our progress, and almost no one can change on willpower alone. This handout outlines how to use these sources when you’re creating your change attempt. When making your plan:

Identity key moments. What times/places/feelings/etc do you struggle most with? When do things go wrong? You can change if you get these moments under your control.

Make key behaviors. Make specific rules for how you’ll handle key moments.

Use all six sources discussed below. Using only one or two sources rarely helps enough, but using all six sources together makes success much more likely.

Adjust your plan. Successful change takes time, trial and error, and many mistakes. When something goes wrong, notice what happened and realistically adjust your plan to deal with it in the future, remembering that key moments can change. Your plan is a starting point, not the finish line.

Write it down! Recording your plan makes success more than 30% more likely.

1 – Love What You Hate: Personal Motivation

Changing how you think about the present and future changes your behavior.

- Physically visit someone who lives the way you will live if you keep making the kind of decisions you make now.
- Tell the whole story about your future - don’t leave out the unpleasant parts.
- Stop focusing on the unpleasant sacrifices; instead, focus on why you do what you do.
- Make a personal motivation statement about what you’re doing, using feelings and facts.
- Make tough jobs into a game by setting limited time, a small challenge relative to your motivation, and a score.

2 – Do What You Can't: Personal Ability

Many personal problems are a result of not being able to do what’s needed; increasing skills or knowledge helps you handle challenges that are difficult to “power through.”

- Evaluate your ability to meet your goal and recognize what skills you still need to gain.
- Deliberately practice and prepare for each key moment. Set standards to measure yourself against, and find a qualified coach to give you feedback and direction.
- Go into challenging situations with a plan of what to do, but avoid situations that overwhelm your willpower.

3 and 4 – Turn Accomplices Into Friends: Social Motivation and Ability

Surround yourself with people who see good behavior as worthwhile and achievable.

- Know the difference between accomplices - who keep you in bad habits/undermine your goals - and friends - who enable, celebrate, and hold you accountable for your progress.
- Get in control of or leave bad situations.

- Define your “normal” by how *you* want to live, feel, and be, not by what others do.
- Talk with your accomplices: start by asking for their help, then explain how they’re hurting you without blaming them. Next, ask them to be “friends” and explain exactly how they can help you.
- Add new friends and distance yourself from accomplices who are unwilling to change.

5 – Invert the Economy: Structural Motivation

Short term pleasures often cause long term pain that’s easy to ignore in the moment. Linking short term incentives to long term habits helps bring the future into “now.”

- Use incentives with personal meaning. Try putting a short-term thing you care about at risk (e.g., set aside a large amount of money you must donate if you don't reach your goal).
- Use incentives in moderation. Huge incentives tend to become the motivation, so when the incentive stops, so does your motivation. Plus, small, inexpensive, meaningful incentives are often just as effective.
- Reward yourself for your efforts, not results, and reward yourself for small wins.

6 – Control Your Space: Structural Ability

Our environment has a huge impact on our behavior. Get your environment on your side.

- Build personal boundaries to keep unwanted influences out. (Don't rely exclusively on this strategy, otherwise you'll fail if the boundary fences somehow drop.)
- Keep good things close and convenient, and bad things distant and difficult.
- Set up reminders to keep you on track, especially during key moments.
- Set up good choices as the default that takes active effort to stop (e.g. automatic deposits)
- Remove harmful distractions/habits from and add change tools to your electronics.

General Advice

- Don't commit to a plan you can't eventually find a way to like.
- Choose strategies that are a good fit for you in your specific situation.
- Engage in interesting, low-temptation activities and environments.
- Act small, act now - do what you can now, not later.

Remember, you’re the rule, not the exception; you won't succeed where others fail by using only one or two strategies, then “powering through” on your own. Skipping any of these concepts - personal motivation, personal ability, social motivation and ability, structural motivation, or structural ability - sets you up to fail. On the other hand, studies show that you’re ten times more likely to succeed when you use all these sources together to reach your goals.

For more information and discussion, read “Change Anything: The New Science of Personal Success” by Kerry Patterson, Joseph Grenny, David Maxfield, Ron McMillan, and Al Switzler.

My Goal: _____

	Motivation	Ability
Personal		
Social		
Structural		

