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An Alternative to Motivation

There's a lot of talk about motivation. But you know, motivation is a pretty rubbish friend. You're relying on constantly making conscious decisions, which literally drains your "brain power", leaving you with less capacity to focus on anything else in your life.

We are all fairly ambivalent to change. We think both in favour of and in opposition to the changes we want to make - our ideas compete. Smoking is a good example; you know its probably going to make you ill, but you do it anyway.



Another example are the "justifications" we give ourselves - "oh you only live once", "I deserve a treat" - etc. If you're trying to motivate yourself to make a change, the conversation inside your mind might go like this "mm, ice cream, I'd really like some ice cream" "no, remember it makes you fat, you shouldn't be eating ice cream" "yes, but it does taste nice. I deserve a treat, its been a difficult day" - its exhausting and its no wonder we run out of motivation after a while!

There's a technique called motivational interviewing, which is all about making changes and aims to help you lose your ambivalence to change and therefore remove our issues with making changes. This ambivalence we all feel can be a source of anxiety and emotional stress; some people use denial or procrastination to justify to themselves why they haven't yet made changes. Motivational interviewing isn't motivating you as such, its helping you gain clarity on the changes you want to make with the aim of helping you find an intrinsic want to change, which is way deeper than being motivated. You lose the exhausting brain chat, and decisions become so much more easy because you are so totally committed to changing.

Once you've got this intrinsic want to change, you want to think about each element

which will add up to that change. If it's weight loss you want to achieve, your list of elements is going to include food, exercise, sleep, stress at a bare minimum. The next thing to do is to think about the here are now, what can you do right now to get a little closer to where you want to be. When we're intrinsically motivated AND aware of what we need to do to add up to a change, choices become a "no brainer".

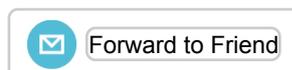
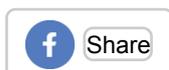
Most bad choices we make are simply habits. If we can make ourselves aware of them, we're on to a winner. This is where technology can come in really handy - the Fitbit (or any of the activity trackers or apps out there) will remind you when you've been sitting still for too long; other apps (Lifecycle is one) can tell you where you spend your time and can politely point out that you spent 10 hours last week watching TV, despite feeling like you didn't get a minute to yourself.

Environmental triggers are worth considering too. If you find yourself inhaling a packet of chocolate digestives at 9pm every night in front of Coronation Street, you are fighting an uphill battle if you've got to remind yourself not to eat the biscuits every night. So remove the trigger; change what you do - go upstairs and have a soak in the bath at 8.30, read a book, engage your brain - and you won't even realise you didn't eat the biscuits until you're ready to give yourself a pat on the back.

So; the trick is in losing your ambivalence and justifications to what you want to change (and why you haven't done it yet) - this is intrinsic motivation. Then, figure out your habits and change those which don't align with what you need to do in order to reach your goal, either by using technology or by changing your routine.

Until next time, enjoy staying healthy!

Best wishes,



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