

## **MOTIVATION: THE KEY TO LIFELONG CHANGE**

**By Mary Claybon**

Change does not happen without motivation. As I said in my last article, you change when an inside voice says “I will and I must!” not when outside voices say “You should and here’s how.” Motivation is the push, the deep down meaningful reason within your own heart and soul that makes you want to take action in a direction that is different from the way you are living now.

You decide you want to start an exercise program, not just because your doctor says you need to, but because you want to be able to take long walks in a park, hike in the woods or simply have the energy to play with your grandchildren. You decide to eat healthier, not just because you’re afraid of a heart attack, but because you want to live a long life and enjoy your retirement years.

As a coach, I spend a lot of time getting my clients to explain their reasons for wanting to change. Quitting smoking just because the Surgeon General says it causes cancer is not enough of a motivator for people who have enjoyed smoking for years with a strong addiction to nicotine. When I finally quit smoking it was because I wanted to be an aerobics instructor and be a healthy role model for others. The people who I have seen keep off weight, quit smoking, and make daily exercise a habit are those that had an inner shift take place motivating them to kick old unhealthy habits.

Once the new behaviors become a daily habit, the overall feeling of health and well-being is enough to continue a pattern of living a healthy life. Wanting to live a long life is not enough motivation. What is it about life that makes you want to live long in it? Long lasting motivation is the key to long lasting change.

We get all excited about a new diet, exercise or smoking cessation program and can imagine ourselves feeling and looking good. We go shopping and buy new walking shoes, new exercise clothes and maybe a new piece of exercise equipment; stock up the pantry and refrigerator with healthy food choices and the excitement grows. On Monday morning we begin our new life with pride, energy and excitement. Tuesday the excitement continues. Wednesday we’re getting tired and someone offers us an invitation to indulge in a fantastic dessert and the time flies before we realize we didn’t take our daily walk. By Thursday we go to start again and on Friday it feels like an effort to continue this way of living. The temptation to go back to old habits is strong by the weekend. Before you know it the treadmill starts collecting dust. The exercise clothes go unused. And the pantry and refrigerator start filling up with fattening treats and snacks again. What happened? Not enough motivation to continue.

Like I said, your reasons for changing have to be powerful and come from inside or the changes will not last. Change starts with a vision supported by strong motivation. You have to draw on your inner strength and drive to be better. Do you have enough motivation to keep you striving toward change?

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