



How to Turn Change into Success

What does it take to successfully make transformational change in your life? Everyone knows how challenging it can be to make even a simple change, like switching to a new diet. So, what about more profound changes for your health, your private or professional relationships, or changes in your career? How can you make sustainable progress towards your goal without giving in to the uncomfortable feeling that comes with this change? Spoiler alert, it is not possible to make a successful change without actually making changes.

The best way to measure progress is to see evidence of it in your life. Let's say you want to do more sport and live an overall healthier lifestyle. Evidence of your commitment to making these changes could be, for example, establishing a consistent sport routine and deciding to switch to a more plant-based diet. Concrete evidence would be present in the form of scheduling time for your new sport routine and in the development of new habits such as consciously shopping for healthier food and trying new recipes.

If you still get up every morning and go about your day in the same way as always – wake up, reach for your phone, roll out of bed to the bathroom, go about your work day routine, sip the usual brand of coffee in the same mug, finish the day in front of the TV etc. – and repeat this program daily, you are probably not successfully making any changes.

So, what does it take to make successful changes and what stops us?

Achieving transformational change is hard and it requires a shift in thinking. Without this, it just becomes an exercise in sorting through options. Transformational change takes commitment and focus. It takes resilience – no matter the pushback from those around you. As you go through enacting change in your life, there may be a point where you need to adjust your expectations of the end result or maybe you will need to adjust your timeframe. But ultimately, if you want to be successful, there needs to be evidence of these changes in your life. It is that simple. It takes psychological commitment, a willingness to accept any consequences and your brain forming new neuropathways.

However, if it really were that easy, you would have done it already – so what's stopping you? Why are you walking away from your hopes and dreams? Why have you accepted feeling underwhelmed with your job, despite your unhappiness with the lack of challenges? Why are you still avoiding looking for new opportunities, big or small? Why are you not sticking to your health routine, knowing that your fitness level is not moving in the right direction? Why are you not stepping up and communicating your needs to your partner?

We are often only willing to make major changes when life itself is presenting challenges to us; for example, the current pandemic and the unexpected adjustments that came with it, or when we experience a decline in our health, an adjustment in our working life or a breakdown in our relationships. In these cases, the fear of *not* changing is bigger than the fear of leaving everything the same way.

Change requires you to shift your thinking and overcome your fear of the possible consequences, such as rejection, failure despite all your efforts, financial loss or the loss of friends or business partners. Fear and uncertainty often force you to look at your past and will likely lead you to find evidence as to why your dream is a bad idea. As a result, you are not able to see past this initial phase and beyond to the wonderful experiences, fun and joy that you might have in a new job or the sabbatical that you allowed yourself to have, the wholeness you will feel if you live a life more in line with your values, or the benefits of improved communication with your partner.

Consider this: the way you think can influence your life, as though it were shaping your destiny. You typically think 60 000 to 70 000 thoughts per day, and 90% of these are usually the same as those from the day before. The same thoughts lead to the same choices; the same choices lead to the same behaviours; the same behaviours lead to the same experiences; the same experiences lead to the same emotions; the same emotions influence your thoughts (thoughts that you've already had). So, everything stays the same.

How you think, how you act and how you feel makes up your personality. Hebbian learning, a neuroscientific principle, can be summarised as 'cells that fire together wire together'. So, if you keep thinking the same thoughts, keep making the same choices, keep demonstrating the same behaviour and keep creating the same experiences for years on end, you create a hard-wired set of programs that become your identity.

By the time you reach the age of around 35 years, you have conditioned yourself to be a set of memorised behaviours, unconscious emotional reactions and automatic habits, with hard-wired attitudes, beliefs and perceptions, and function just like a computer program. When we decide to change, we are only using 5% of our conscious mind against the 95% of our programmed subconscious. So, while we are often told to 'think positive' in trying to achieve something, this doesn't help, because that thought is going up against the conditioning from our past.

If you would like to read more about this concept, please check out Dr Jo Dispenza's research on how your thoughts are connected to your future. He states that "if you're not being defined by a vision of the future every single day, I assert that you're left with the memories of the past and you will be predictable in your life because if you're thinking the same thoughts, then your life should stay the same because the same thoughts lead to the same choices". So, if you think and feel based on the past, you cannot successfully change.

You cannot create a new future holding on to the emotions of your past.

The [latest research](#) on memory says that human memory is notoriously unreliable, especially when it comes to details. Scientists have found that prompting an eyewitness to remember more details can generate details that are outright false but feel just as correct to the witness as real memories. Therefore memories are, for most of us, not accurate. Memory is a creation and over the years we delete, generalise or distort our experiences. We embellish our memories or experiences to re-affirm our emotions and therefore our identity. You might re-live a depressing past life you did not even have! You need to be greater than your body and environment (external circumstances). You need to start creating a new future, one that is already so alive in your mind that you change the wiring in your brain.

I know this is a lot to take in. I hope my research and summary helps you to understand why it is so hard to make changes and explain what is involved. I recommend that you first make an honest analysis: what are your objectives? When do you want to achieve it? What are you hoping to gain? What is stopping you? And are you willing to accept and deal with the consequences that come along with your change? You might find that you are not ready yet.

This is an important realisation too. The next questions could then be: What are you going to do with this realisation? Can you embrace where you are at?

If you are ready to create your new future and have the courage to start, you need to prepare yourself for the below:

1. You must accept uncertainty.
'I am going to create a vision of my new future and believe as if it is already happening. I trust my ability to figure things out, even if the outcome is unknown.'
2. You must overcome judgment, rejection and, potentially, loss.
Prepare yourself by determining the impact for those affected by the change you wish to make. Other people (spouse, family, friends or colleagues) might not understand. Often, people would rather you conform, perhaps even for their own wellbeing. So, what could be your communication strategy to bring them along with you for support? In my own experience, once you have successfully achieved your objectives, people will tell you how wonderfully you did.
3. It is going to be uncomfortable, it is going to feel unfamiliar, and you are not going to be able to predict the next moment. Your body will say, 'I do not like this' and will try influencing your thoughts: 'you will never change'; 'this does not feel right'; 'you are just like your mum', 'you have never been good at this'.
4. Don't let your feelings ('I'm tired') or your limited time ('I'm too busy') take over and sabotage your progress. Focus your energy on what holds your attention.

You have to be strong and keep picturing your future in your mind if you really want to change! What thoughts do you want to fire and wire together? Your brain does not know the difference. Can you teach your body to feel empowered, loved, healthy and whole? If you are waiting for external confirmation it will never happen. You must create these feelings yourself – *love* yourself. If you practise that, you will start seeing new opportunities and you will have new experiences showing up in your life. There will be evidence.

Break the habits of your old self and reinvent a new life – rewire your brain. Remember instances where you have achieved this already, for example: it *was* possible to get a new job; it *was* possible to buy my own house or go on that special holiday. This vision is called intention; you conjured this image in your mind, believed in it until it felt real and it became reality.

Remember that the initial struggle is part of the process. If it were easy, you would have done it already. Also you cannot really coach yourself because you get caught up in your emotions. Thinking about problems will stir up emotions and inhibit self-reflection. It sometimes takes an external disrupter – a coach – to help you move forward. Maybe it is time to invest in your future?

In partnership with me, a transformational coach, you will have the space to reflect and talk things through, all in a judgment-free zone, with someone that keeps your goal in mind and challenges you. I will help you dig deeper so that you can discover what is keeping you from moving forward or causing you to snap back. I will keep you on track with attaining your goal and support you along the way. I will decipher the clues you give me to help you identify what the real blocks are.

Before engaging a coach, it is important for you to see if you feel comfortable in their presence and if you feel trust, as your coach is ultimately your thinking partner. Does the coach bring all the relevant experience to the table – a global mindset, a positive outlook, international and cultural experiences, an awareness of future trends – and can they be honest with you? Let's have a chat to see if we are a good fit.