

How to embark on an adventure called change and make those New Years Resolutions really happen.

Dr. Larry Ohlhauser, MD, The Healthy CEO

Dissatisfied with the status quo, you're looking to challenge yourself with positive change. But the very thought of it overwhelms you and wears you down.

Sound familiar? You're not alone. At one time or another, all of us face what seem like insurmountable challenges.

Simply put, change isn't always easy.

But remember that tremendous benefit lies on the other side of deliberate and positive lifestyle change. The way you approach change can make it much less daunting and much more appealing – an adventure rather than a threat. Even the process can be extremely rewarding.

Whether in business, at home or any other area of life, the essential ingredients are the same.

Knowledge

We change only what we recognize needs improving. This knowledge comes actively or passively.

You discover that your blood pressure is out of control. Actively – because you went for a routine physical. Passively – because you collapsed and landed in hospital.

Deliberate observation or untimely, often very emotional wake-up calls tell us how well our lives are working. Once we recognize that change is necessary, gathering accurate and relevant information helps us decide how best to produce results.

Do I understand what the real problem is? Is there more than one problem? What's the best solution? Do I know what I have to do? What are the benefits of this change?

Knowledge gives us insight into where change is needed, informs how best to progress through that change and provides the incentive to commit to change.

Attitude

Attitude is an outlook, a mindset or a way of thinking. Where do you stand? And just as critically, why do you stand there?

Some things are our responsibility, others aren't. When we identify a problem, we must honestly determine if it is ours to solve or someone else's responsibility.

We are the only ones with the power to alter our circumstances, lead our lives and take ourselves where we really want to go. If we don't assume responsibility, we won't get anywhere, and we'll have no one to blame but ourselves.

Fundamental to any change that counts is framing it within a larger, life-sized "why." This kind of "why" has to do with quality of life, personal satisfaction and principles of life purpose.

Clients have given me their reasons for losing weight. I'm putting my health at risk, they've told me. I want more energy. I want to look younger. I want to hike the Grand Canyon.

But, what is the life-sized "why" that good health might address? How does this goal fit your life purpose?

Preparation

Only a fool would climb Mount Everest without first preparing carefully and adequately. Good preparation becomes the difference between life and death.

It is also the difference between the success and failure of your challenges. How many times have you gone into an important meeting – one where contracts, your job status, your reputation or serious dollars were on the line – without preparing adequately? You probably did your homework first. The more that's at stake, the more important preparation becomes.

You map out how you are going to make change happen. You come up with an effective game plan. You think strategically and set goals.

Action

While research and planning are necessary to achieve any goal, they're useless if you never get started. The course of action will be clear if you've made good goals. You'll be able to actualize your plan by taking individual, calculated steps.

Progress is made in a series of these small but deliberate action steps. Each one is vital. Resist the temptation to procrastinate, quit or take shortcuts. Keep going no matter what.

Evaluation

When you go on a long journey through unfamiliar territory, you check from time to time to make sure you're on course and still have everything you need. Evaluating your progress at regular intervals keeps you on track.

Reassess regularly and don't be afraid to revisit your goals and make adjustments. Tweaking the process is much better than giving up. Maintain your initial motivation and drive by building a system of rewards. For every 10 lb. you lose, treat yourself to a new outfit or a night out to show yourself off.

Real change is possible. You have the power to make it happen.

But no one can do it for you. It's up to you to take the lead.

© 2010 Dr. Larry Ohlhauser, MD

Dr. Larry Ohlhauser, MD, is an internationally acclaimed health consultant and author living in Edmonton. Reach him through his website at www.thehealthyceo.com.