

## Successful Change

Livingconfident.com is devoted to helping people beat fear and anxiety. But, like any other well-meaning source of self-improvement, it doesn't do any good if you don't have the tools to successfully make the desired changes. Self help books and workout plans usually ignore the hardest part of life changes. It is important to learn about whatever you are trying to change, but the commitment and the tools to change and stay on track are just as important.

Here is a quick list of items to consider. They are in no particular order and I think are key ingredients for you to successfully get through self-improvement changes. In brief, it is important to have a **good attitude, focus on the right things**, and **have a support system in place to help you**. So here are some items to check off on your way to a better you!

**Make the change as painless as possible and easy to stick with.** You live in the real world and it doesn't do any good to sign up for something you have no chance of achieving. Step back to realistically evaluate where and in what part of the day you will perform these new behaviors and are there easier ways to blend them in?

**Focus on the new you!** Do not focus on the effort and inconvenience of the changes you "have to make" or what you are "missing out on." Instead, imagine and focus on your new life and bring a good attitude. You are making yourself better! Imagine how much better you can be and do not limit your potential. Think of it as seeing just how good you can become.

**Surround yourself with people who are encouraging and have some of the habits you want to adopt.** People tend to stick with the crowd. An alcoholic should not be hanging around other drinkers. They may not be supportive of quitting drinking and you will constantly be tempted to slide back to your old ways. Find people who emulate what you are trying to become and will be encouraging. Don't expect everybody in your current circle to understand why you are making these changes. You may have to ignore and distance yourself from those folks for a while. They most likely have plenty of their own issues.

**Write down your goals.** Define something achievable and measurable. Then build a plan to achieve it step by step. Make your goals known to the people who are helping you. This keeps you focused and can also provide a method to measure how you are doing.

I don't think you can necessarily set a timeline for a specific outcome. A classic example is "I want to lose 50 pounds this year." But you can **commit to a process** that is appropriate for your goal and stay true to that process. Assessments early on should only be about how you are sticking to the process and what adjustments need to be made. Committing to the process allows you to lay your head on the

pillow and know that you won today. You succeeded and are doing what you committed to. This is a great morale boost and provides the fuel you need to get you to succeed tomorrow.

**Allow for setbacks.** Not everything will go perfectly. You can't always get to your meditation today or read some of the new book you found on happiness. You know your schedule and what you can realistically achieve. A commitment to daily meditation may be better backed off to 5 or 6 days a week. This is not meant to damper your enthusiasm, just make sure life cannot totally derail your plans.

It is easier to commit to lifestyle changes when you are in your own environment, but how will these changes survive traveling for the conference, the holidays, or an unexpected family emergency? Give yourself a little wiggle room to take on unplanned responsibilities.

**Set a timeframe that you will commit to.** "I will stick with this change for at least 45 days. Until then I will only make minor changes and then I will evaluate how it is going at the end of this period." This is an example, but make your own timeline.

**Build a team to support you.** High profile athletes and stars do it. Why not you? Therapists, trainers, friends, colleagues and even your children can all play a part in your personal improvement. Be clear about what you want from each of them.

**Don't be afraid to try something new.** Not everything will sound like a great idea from the start. You may just have to try it and trust the people in your corner that they are giving you good advice. Remember, what you were doing before wasn't working, so you may not be the best judge at this point. Once you have given the change a realistic chance, then you can make some adjustments.

**Get ideas from people who have been there and succeeded.** There is nothing like learning from other people's mistakes and successes. It helps from a process standpoint, but also helps reinforce the notion that "if that person can do it, I can too."

**Avoid short cuts that stop you from really achieving long-term success.** Pills, or any process that is not sustainable is a red flag. These may be necessary in some cases, but making improvements to living your life should be focused more on long-term success and process oriented. If you are trying to fly without anxiety, medicating yourself or getting drunk is not really getting to the root of the issue. Just always be asking yourself if this is something you could sustain and will want to be doing 3 years from now. These should be lifestyle changes and things you are committed to doing for a very long time. The ultimate goal is getting to an outcome you are proud of.

**You need patience.** What you are changing may be complex. So, it is reasonable to assume that your perfect outcome may take a while. Try to commit to the process and not focus so much on the outcome at the beginning.

**You have to commit to success.** Failure is not an option. Don't give up. There will be stumbles and bumps in the road. You will have to make adjustments. That is almost guaranteed. But I am convinced there is no reason a person cannot change or improve anything about themselves if they want to and are committed to it.

I wish you the best!