



# Employee Assistance Program

## Let's Get It Started

If you've been thinking of starting a new hobby, exercise program, nutritional plan, or morning routine, why wait?

Procrastination is common, and it can be helpful to avoid several common patterns that keep you thinking about making a change instead of acting on it. One pattern is overanalyzing situations by wanting to make sure you make the right choice or have explored all aspects of the situation. Also common is the tendency to wait until the right or perfect moment when things slow down, you feel better, or have more time/money, etc.

Wishful thinking can also play a role in our pattern of delayed action as we believe there is a way to reap the benefits associated with starting something new without accepting the work and sacrifices that are often involved. In their book *Changing for Good*, Prochaska, Norcross and DiClemente describe another pattern, premature action, which is often characterized by impulsively signing up for a class, buying exercise equipment, or taking similar action without a clear goal, the motivation to achieve it, or a plan for getting there.

While fact-based reasons for changing may be evident, the motivation to start something new often comes from a dramatic, emotionally charged event or realization. In his post to Psychology Today's blog in 2012, Dr. Jim Taylor describes it this way: "Change starts with a simple, yet powerful, epiphany - I just can't continue down this same road any longer." Dr. Taylor also observes that when "you experience this realization in the most visceral and overwhelming way, then you have taken the first step toward positive life change."

Once you are committed to taking action, it is important to define your goal(s) and make them specific and measurable. If you want to make a change and are unsure where to start, contact your EAP and speak with a counselor who can assist you in developing small measurable steps toward reaching your goal. A few factors to consider when developing your plan include:

- **Start small; keep it simple.** By identifying small changes, you increase your likelihood of sticking with them and achieving success. If you want to change your eating habits, start with changing one food item or one meal. If your goal is to run a marathon, start by walking a few miles, running a few miles and eventually running the full distance.
- **Celebrate achieving small successes and benchmarks.** To stay motivated, it's important to acknowledge your accomplishments throughout the process. By establishing benchmarks and acknowledging /rewarding your success on the road to your goal, you offer yourself continuous motivation.
- **Get a coach or use the buddy system.** Receiving support from others often serves as a source of motivation and accountability on your journey to achieving your goals. Family, friends, or even your EAP can serve as good sources of motivation and accountability.
- **Be persistent and have patience.** Traditionally it takes 21 days to form a new habit. Focus on what you are attempting to gain not what you want to lose. Remember to be kind to yourself, and if at first you do not succeed, don't give up! Consider what you have accomplished and allow yourself to regroup and continue on toward your goal.

For more additional resources or support in taking that first step towards starting something new contact your Employee Assistance Program.



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