

DON'T DO ANYTHING UNTIL YOU READ THIS

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*Published in the Chadds Ford Post and
the Kennett Paper, February 2009*

Starting a new year, starting new diets, joining the gym, etc. What happens to the initial motivation? For most of us it peters out around mid-February. Most likely Valentine's Day dinners and chocolate have something to do with it.

I know it's hard. We all have good intentions of being healthier this year. However, a broad statement like that can be overwhelming. Over the years, I have compiled tools and motivational information to help my clients walk through the process of "becoming healthier" in their minds before taking any action.

This month's article is the first in a series of six that will not only help you break down your goals into smaller more manageable pieces, but also help you to find the mindset you need to succeed. For the next six months, I will give you just one or two suggestions to help you keep your motivation fresh, and your mindset clear

The first thing you need to do is craft your "Why?" statement and fill in the "4 square." Your "Why" statement clearly defines why you want to make changes. It encompasses reasons that are close to your heart. For instance, you say "I want to lose weight to look better at my cousin's wedding." I answer, "Why?" Think about it. Why is it important to look better at the wedding and no other time? What about after the wedding? Keep asking yourself, "why is that important?," until you find your real motivation. Maybe it's not really about looking good at the wedding, it's about feeling good about yourself, less self conscious on the dance floor, or better yet, being able to dance and not get out of breath. Further, it might actually come down to is being physically able to do more activities with my kids, grandkids, spouse, etc. More specifically, to not die of a heart attack like your father did. That's a reason to remember.

Write your reason on top of your "4 square" (four boxes, two on top, two on the bottom). Along the left hand side, label the boxes, "If I change," and "If I don't change." Along the top, label the boxes, "Good things," and "Not so good things." Now go back and fill in each of the boxes with as many reasons you can think of, good and not so good, for making or not making any changes. Think of what life will be like day to day and in the future. Think of the work involved, the fun you'll have, the money you will have to spend. Think of everything, because every decision has a consequence. Our decisions are largely based on what rewards will come of it, whether you realize it at the time, or not.

Read your "Why" statement and your "4 square" everyday. Get a good feel for what you are choosing and the results of your decision. It's OK not to make changes at this time as long as you understand the consequences and take responsibility. But, if you choose to move forward, now you need to find a "buddy." This is someone who you trust with your feelings, who will support, but not nag you. Tell them your plan, and ask them to be there for you when you want to vent. If this person is willing to jump on board with you, great. Have them complete their own "Why" and "4 square."

Now congratulate yourself for the little things, skipping dessert last night, walking 15 minutes around the parking lot, eating breakfast this morning. Even if you haven't officially started yet, congratulate yourself for taking it seriously this time, for taking the time to do the "assignment" above. And get ready for next month's article, "Get Your Head in the Game."

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