



JANUARY 2021:
HEALTH COACHING HINTS

NEW YEAR & NEW HABITS

Learn how to create SUSTAINABLE
HABITS that will lay the foundation
for a successful and healthy year.

Health Coaching Hint #1: Make so small you can't help but do it

Creating lifestyle changes don't have to be intimidating. The secret is to start with small steps and work up to the goal you ultimately want to achieve.

In order to start a new behavior, it is important to first evaluate your motivation for doing it and your ability to do it. When it comes to our health, many of us are highly motivated. The struggle comes with trust and confidence in our ability to take that first step. It doesn't help that your level of motivation can also change over time.

In order to truly create a long-term lifestyle change, you need to figure out how to think beyond your motivation. You can do this by breaking it down into small steps that are not too far outside your current ability to achieve.

To help you do this, follow these steps:

Be clear on the outcome you want to achieve by making a change.

Make a list of which behavior changes would help you to achieve that outcome.

Choose one starting behavior that you feel you CAN do and that you WANT to do.

Outline the specific (small) action steps you will need to do in order to perform the behavior and get started.

What is your primary health goal for 2021? How can you break it down into smaller steps so that it can become a sustainable part of your daily life?

To really solidify a new behavior, you need a consistent prompt or anchor to attach it to.

Health Coaching Hint #2: Find an Anchor

Last week we talked about how to break your desired lifestyle change into small, easy to accomplish action steps. This week I will share with you how to ensure this new behavior will become a permanent part of your daily life.

The best way to do this is to find a prompt or anchor that already exists in your daily routine. There are three types of prompts that you could choose from:

PERSON PROMPTS - Rely on something inside of you to initiate the behavior, but are not the most reliable prompts for new behaviors. Examples include a full bladder prompting you to use the bathroom, or a rumbly tummy prompting you to eat your next meal.

CONTEXT PROMPTS - An environmental cue that reminds you to take an action. These are best for one-time behaviors or those that happen less frequently. Examples include sticky notes or a phone alarm.

ACTION PROMPTS - Behaviors you already do that remind you to do the new behavior. These are best for anchoring your new behavior to. Examples include brushing your teeth, starting the coffee maker in the morning, or any number of actions that already exist in your routine.

The final trick to ensure the anchor you use for your new behavior is effective is to plan for the new part of your routine to happen **AFTER** the action that already exists. This could include doing 2 squats **AFTER** starting the coffee maker in the morning, taking a walk around the block **AFTER** rinsing your lunch dishes, or saying two things you are grateful for **AFTER** you lay your head on the pillow to go to sleep at night.

You may have to play around with this a bit to find the right fit. Have fun with it and be patient.

What anchors can you use for your 2021 goals?

Health Coaching Hint #3: Celebrate!

The one thing we often forget to do is to celebrate our successes. Sure, we celebrate the big things. A new job, the birth of a new child or grandchild, or buying a new house or car.

What about all the small successes we have every day?

One way you can encourage a new habit to become an established behavior is to pair it with a celebration--a reward for making the new behavior that creates a positive emotion to activate your brain's reward center.

For some, the act of celebration can seem foreign or awkward. Play around with different celebrations until you find the one that works for you. Different behaviors might require different rewards, so don't be afraid to play around with this and have a few on hand that you know work. To find a celebration that is natural and authentic to you, think about these questions:

Is there a song that makes you feel happy, successful, and upbeat?

Is there a physical movement, like a fist pump, a short dance, or simply a smile that makes you feel

happy and successful?

Are there words or phrases like “Woo-hoo!” or “Awesome!” that you can use to reward your behavior?

Are there specific sounds that bring positive emotions to the mind?

Is there something you can visualize, a favorite vacation spot or a loved family member, friend or pet, that you can bring to mind when you complete the new behavior?

When you are taking those small actions steps toward your 2021 goals, don't forget to stop and celebrate along the way. This positive reinforcement can be the difference with converting a new habit from being a chore you have to perform into a behavior you enjoy.

It may feel weird in the beginning to celebrate such small achievements, but over time it will work to increase your confidence and trust in making successful, sustainable lifestyle changes.

Health Coaching Hint #4: Don't Expect Perfection

If we learned anything from 2020, it's that despite all the best laid plans sometimes we have to adjust to the unexpected. To help you achieve our health goals for 2021, I want to share with you one final tip that benefits from the resiliency you gained this past year.

As you are creating your small actions steps, finding an anchor for your new behavior, and celebrating your small successes, remember this one important thing:

Don't expect perfection.

When you expect to do something perfectly, it often leads to avoiding doing anything. What works for one person may not work for another. Often, it can take time and some trial-and-error to figure out what will work best for you.

We can't learn unless we fail.

Approaching each step toward achieving your goal as a small experiment that may or may not work can lessen the burden of needing to be perfect. Instead, be inquisitive, be willing to think outside the box, and remember you are stronger and more resilient than you think.

“Fear of failure breeds failure. Fear often leads to either inaction or in holding you back from your full potential. Fear of failure does not serve you. Let it go. Choose instead to believe in yourself. To have faith. Pray if you need to. Empower yourself. Open yourself to the possibilities. I would rather believe that anything might be possible than sit in fear. I know that fear will only hold me back. I choose courage and hope instead.”