

Small Steps: Making sure your change efforts fit

If you have recently subscribed to this newsletter, hello – it is great to have you join us.

And if you are a regular, thank you for being here!

At Qoligenic® we help people take small steps to improve their well-being and support the change they want. Qoligenic® aims to give you the best chance to thrive - to boost your quality of life, using small shifts and building resources along the way. It's for you – and people like you – wherever you are.

This month, small steps focuses on how to optimise the likelihood that personal well-being change will succeed.

So, what do you need to know and do?

What?

“People have to create life shifts – or changes in cognition and behavior – for themselves, which can require considerable motivation and effort.”

(Lyubomirsky, Dickerhoof, Boehm & Sheldon, 2007)

Personal change often feels hard to start, tedious to continue or the end result a long way off. It is not unusual for people who come to me for coaching to feel frustrated or disheartened that change they are trying to make either hasn't really gotten started, has faced obstacles or has failed to stick.

While it is only human to berate yourself (“Maybe I just didn't want it enough”) or to look for external explanations (“Well if I didn't have so much work to focus on....”), what does research suggest gets in our way?

Psychologist James Prochaska ([2016](#)) suggests that three common factors can obstruct us from making the changes we want:

- > **I don't know how** – feeling you have neither the knowledge nor the support to commit to the change.
- > **I don't think I can** – where demoralisation sets in and it feels hard to keep trying.
- > **I don't really want to** – where you feel ambivalent about the change, or compelled to do it for external reasons, rather than because you are self-motivated and self-determined.

The concept of **self-efficacy** ([Bandura, 1977](#), 1986, 1997) plays a key role in successful behaviour change. This refers to your belief in your capacity to make behavioural changes towards your goals and provides you with the confidence to make and maintain changes in situations that tempt you return to former, less desirable behaviours.

So What?

“All of us have unique needs, interests, values, resources and inclinations that undoubtedly predispose us to put effort into and benefit from some strategies more than others.”

(Lyubomirsky, 2010)

A constructive way to set yourself up for successful personal change is to customise the strategies that you choose to fit you and your lifestyle. As all of us have different values, needs, interests, resources and preferences, it makes sense to match your approach so that your intent and actions are best supported.

Consider this.

Professor Sonya Lyubomirsky, who has researched the science of happiness for over thirty years, developed the concept of **person-activity fit**, which proposes that any positive change strategy will match you better if it feels natural and if you are truly motivated to pursue it.

She advocates that the following features all influence the will, way and likelihood of success at achieving wellbeing improvements and sustaining these over time.

Fit with what you want (and don't want)

- > For example, if you want to exercise regularly (and don't want to sit around at home), make sure you devise specific strategies or actions that support regular exercise (such as making a weekly schedule, including regular exercise times).

Fit with your strengths

- > What strengths, talents or abilities make sense for you to tap into in support of your goal?
- > Choose activities that leverage these natural strengths so you are more likely to be motivated, make progress and achieve small wins.

Fit with your lifestyle

- > Consider the extent to which the activities or actions you will choose fit with your needs, your personality and your lifestyle. If you have a hugely busy life, choose activities that can slot in or don't require an extra chunk of time in your day.

In addition, Lyubomirsky emphasises that the **features** of positive activities all influence success at increasing happiness or making change.

- > **Dosage** – the frequency and timing of when you engage in a positive activity matters.
- > **Variety** – theory and research suggest that positive changes in people's lives are more likely to promote sustained boosts in well-being if the events generated by the positive changes are varied. Building variety in also avoids hedonic adaptation – where, after a time, we get used to gains we've made as they lose their novelty and we begin to take them for granted.
- > **Sequence** – consider whether it is best to start with one or two small shifts or with starter activities, rather than trying too many options at once.
- > **Social Support** - Engaging in positive activities, like making other behavioural changes, is more successful when those taking action have social support (Bandura, 1986).

A key advantage of being intentional about personal change, of planning actions that reflect person-activity fit and support self-efficacy, is that you improve the chances that you will succeed.

Remember, those who are motivated and most successful at happiness-increasing activities or personal change engage in activities that:

“... increase positive emotions and fulfill psychological needs, are practiced with optimal timing to minimize boredom, and, finally, infuse variety into one's life and daily pursuits.

(Lyubomirsky, 2011)

Try this

Want to experiment with person-activity fit?

Click [here](#) for an evidence-based, downloadable diagnostic that helps to determine happiness-enhancing strategies that fit your current values, goals, needs and which may be most effective for you.

I look forward to speaking with you next time.

What Else?

If you enjoy reading this monthly newsletter, [please share it with others](#) who might find it interesting.

If you need help identifying the change you need to make or would like to explore how coaching might be useful, contact me for an initial chat – free of charge and no obligation.

Know someone you think would benefit from coaching? Please share this email and let them know to get in touch.

In my two decades plus of leading large-scale change and transformation, successful change tended to be perceived by organisations as something that was hard, that would be resisted, that had to be sold and that needed to be pushed through. Executives felt that if a burning platform could be identified, a [guiding coalition](#) established (Kotter, 1995), the WIIFM (What's In It For Me) defined, early wins celebrated and tracked metrics on dashboards green, then change could be managed, implemented and squared away.

Obviously, I've chosen specific examples here, and most certainly simplified the complexity of change, especially in organisations. Yet I've done so for a reason. Many of the ideas about what contributes to successful change are legacy beliefs and ideas and cannot be readily applied to our dynamic, turbulent evolving and continuous change contexts.

So, what is it about **Solutions** and what difference can a focus on solutions make?