



## HabitShift Principles for Leaders

In order to attract followers, it is helpful to know how people make changes – how we let go of old patterns and how we grab on to new patterns. Learning to recognize what stage people are in and how you can best lend your support leads to the greatest success.

### The Stages of Change

1. What Problem?
  - No intention to change in the next 6 months
2. Oh, THAT Problem
  - Intending to make changes in the next 6 months
3. Ready...Set...
  - Planning to change in 30 days
4. GO!
  - Made the change less than 6 months ago
5. Keep the Fire Alive
  - Made the change more than 6 months ago

### 10 Ways to Keep Active Lifestyles ALIVE!

These 10 tips are derived from extensive studies of human behaviour change, neuroscience, cognitive behavioural psychology, and adult learning techniques. One of the tremendous advantages of walking versus running is that talking is so much easier. And all that talking results in camaraderie, mutual support, and frequently, great entertainment!! These tips will make good conversation starters and at the same time, help raise awareness and build motivation to keep active.

Here are some ideas for how to use them:

1. Pick one of the techniques, make sure you understand it, find a good story from your own life that illustrates the point, and, while on a walk, tell that story to spark conversation.



2. Develop a question or two from a technique to ask participants during the walk to get them thinking and telling *their* story.
3. Get a conversation going about all the possible ways people have used the technique successfully in other areas of their lives.
4. Find out from participants what to watch out for with respect to a particular technique.

### **[1] PRIORITIZING**

The role of willpower is overrated. Do you think that is true? Making good habits stick isn't so much a matter of willpower as it is prioritizing. Willpower is necessary but aligning your schedule, what you eat, when you go to bed and get up, and even your social life, around becoming active, does a lot more for making good habits stick than what most people call willpower. Imagine choosing your friends based upon your desire to be fit. Now that's commitment but many people do it!

### **[2] FOCUS**

If someone were to ask you why you joined the program, how would you answer them? Would your answer start with some form of "I want to stop...(smoking, eating sugar, etc.)" or would your answer be something like "What I want to do more of is...(eating more veggies, play with the grandkids, etc.)"? Here's a suggestion: focus on *both*.

If you want to *stop* sitting around after dinner, think about what activity you will *start* in its place. Conversely, if you want to *start* walking 3 times a week, think about what it is you want to *stop*. There are two sides to every coin and feeling a strong attraction to the positive and a strong dislike for the negative is much more motivating than either alone.

### **[3] SEEK KNOWLEDGE**

Become a student of both a life filled with physical activity and one filled with lethargy. Study what people are saying about the benefits of activity and the harm of inactivity. Spend some time at the library or on the internet. On the SportMedBC website, for instance!

Learn enough information so that you could deliver a 10 minute talk on the pluses and minuses, ignoring for the moment that most people think dying by fire is better than giving a talk. If it helps, think of how all this fascinating data will make people a "must have" on the tea/juice/cocktail circuit.

### **[4] GO PUBLIC**

Tell the world about how you will keep fitness as a major component of your daily life. It turns out that those who are secret about the habits they want to change are decreasing the chance that they will succeed. Going public forms a psychological contract – a pact with yourself – that makes going back on your progress that much more difficult. A billboard on the main street in town ought to do it.



#### **[5] ASK FOR SUPPORT**

Enlist a fan club of wild supporters. Ask for a commitment from trusted others to cheer you to “go for the gold”. A little shot of encouragement can do wonders. And, with those who don’t fall into the category of “supporters”, call upon your assertiveness skills to a) request that around you, they cease the behaviours that lead you down the path of sin or b) at least ask them to stop dragging you to your “comfy chair” after dinner. Remember, the meek SHALL inherit the earth...but ONLY if it is OK with everyone else. So enlist others!

#### **[6] TAKE RESPONSIBILITY**

Unless someone else is in charge of your body parts – specifically your hands, mouth, feet, and legs – most of your habit changes are not a physical issue. Right? Is someone holding you down and stuffing that extra helping of fully-leaded rum raisin ice cream into your mouth? You wish. Are you chained to your couch? Not so the chains were visible. If no one is holding you down and you are not chained to the couch, then leading an active life has more to do with managing emotional and cognitive patterns than physical.

The point is that most often, staying active has more to do with how you manage your feeling and thought patterns than your body. The good news is that they are your feelings and thoughts and your body and proclaiming that you are not in charge of them all is a certain pathway to premature aging.

#### **[7] STOP KIDDING YOURSELF**

Divide a piece of paper into four sections. Label the sections:

1. What I *adore* about not being active
2. What I *detest* about being inactive
3. What I *would adore* about an active lifestyle
4. What I *would detest* about living an active life.

Stop kidding yourself. Let’s face it: if being inactive didn’t hold a powerful sweetness for you and being active didn’t have a strong bitterness, do you think this would be so hard? This is an important step to being realistic about the challenges of change.

#### **[8] FORGIVE SLIPS**

A key skill that many struggle with is the ability to truly forgive ourselves for slipping up. It is actually very rare that anyone who wants to adopt an active lifestyle does it in a straight line. More typically, lifestyle changes happen in fits and starts with plenty of slips along the way. Listen to people who make their living in sports: often you’ll hear them say that it’s important to be able to “forget” the slip-ups, let them go, don’t lose confidence, and take the next step.



### **[9] TAKE SMALL STEPS**

Habit change, at its core, is often not dramatic; it's incremental. Perfectionists are in trouble, actually. Perfectionists have trouble with incremental rewards – they are after the “perfect” performance and nothing less will do. A key skill in changing habits is the ability to give your self honest credit for small steps – not just Herculean leaps. This concept is inextricably woven throughout SportMedBC's RunWalk clinics.

### **[10] GET READY**

Research indicates that most people fail to change because they weren't ready. Today, a six-pack and bag of chips vegging in front of the tube and tomorrow...THE TREADMILL. Most know it as “A New Year's Resolution”. When you are truly ready, the “bad” habit – being inactive – feels inappropriate in your life; you easily lay it aside. The more typical scenario has one of your hands prying the stiff fingers of the other from around the throat of the “bad” habit while it screams in agony at being separated from its soul! How to get ready? Start by re-reading items 1 – 9 and applying them.