



LifeWorks *Balance* is a publication of LifeWorks Employee Resource, a *free*, confidential service provided by your employer for you and your family.

LifeWorks can assist you with balancing and managing many of life's challenges.

Our professional counselors can assist you with:

- Emotional concerns
- Work-related issues
- Family/marriage issues
- Chemical dependency
- Stress/anxiety/depression
- Financial and legal concerns

You can reach LifeWorks Employee Resource with one simple call.

1.800.577.4727

Remember ...

Whether it is a work, family or personal issue, we're here for you.

LifeWorks Employee Resource
424 West Superior Street
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FOR YOUR *PEACE OF MIND*

Helping Make Life Work for You in 2010!

Financial concerns, family relationships, work issues? One life challenge can affect other parts of your life. It can be difficult to know where to begin to find solutions. That's where LifeWorks can help. Call us. We can evaluate your situation and recommend professional help no matter what challenges you and your family are experiencing.

Balance



FOR YOUR *WELL-BEING*

The Gift of Personal Change ...

With the new year approaching, many of us are probably already considering some New Year's Resolutions. Once we have gotten through the holidays, it is usually a good time to slow down and reflect upon our lives. You might ask yourself some questions such as: Am I truly happy in life? Am I healthy? Am I managing my finances appropriately? Am I living a manageable life free from major stress and chaos? If the answer to any of these questions is no, then it is probably time to look at making some changes.

Unfortunately, many New Year's Resolutions do not last long. We might have the initial motivation to change but we don't stick to our plans and we can slip back into old habits or behaviors. Lasting change can be hard to attain. But it CAN be done. Many people quit smoking, lose weight, or get out of debt. So, what's the secret? How do you make it stick?



Two researchers (James Prochaska and Carlo DiClemente of the University of Rhode Island) discovered some interesting things about the change process. After studying almost 900 cigarette smokers, they realized that the process of change comes in stages. Thirty years later, their findings have been shown to be true. They discovered that change has 6 stages:

1. **Precontemplation** (Not yet acknowledging that there is a problem behavior that needs to be changed)
2. **Contemplation** (Acknowledging that there is a problem but not yet ready or sure of wanting to make a change)
3. **Preparation/Determination** (Getting ready to change)
4. **Action/Willpower** (Changing behavior)

5. **Maintenance** (Maintaining the behavior change)

6. **Relapse** (Returning to older behaviors and abandoning the new changes)

So, what is so important about these stages? If you are in the *Precontemplation* stage, you are not ready to acknowledge or accept that something is wrong. Others around you might want you to change but you aren't ready. That's why nagging or begging someone to change is rarely successful.

Someone at the *Contemplation* stage is closer to being ready to change but might not be quite ready to jump into action.

Once someone has reached the *Preparation and Action* stages, however, it is time to jump into action. The desire to change will be stronger in these stages so it is important to strike while the iron is hot.

Once the decision to change has been made it will be important to consider these important tips:

Change continued ►

Q&A

Q: *“My son has been coming home from school and going right to his room. He is usually talkative and outgoing. He says there is nothing wrong but I am wondering if he is getting picked on. What can I do?”*

A: Your son may be a victim of bullying at his school. Bullying is aggressive behavior that is intentional and involves an imbalance of power and/or strength. Bullying can happen to girls or boys.

- Physical – hitting, punching, tripping
- Verbal – name calling, teasing, racial slurs, sexual comments
- Emotional – intimidation, spreading rumors, social exclusion
- Cyber bullying – sending degrading texts or e-mail messages.

Signs of being bullied may be:

- Torn clothes or damaged property
- Unexplained cuts or bruises
- Loss of interest in school or social activities
- Mood changes – sadness, unexplained anxiety, teary, quiet
- Physical complaints such as stomach aches or headaches
- Emotionally shut down

Some important action steps:

- Check in with your child often. Be a good listener and gather as much information as possible.
- If the bullying is taking place at school or on the bus, involve the school staff. Expect on-going assistance.
- Coach your child to be assertive but not aggressive.
- If the bullying is happening online or through text messages, report it to the authorities.

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● **Don't keep your desire to change a secret.**

The more supportive people you can enlist, the better. You might be surprised at how encouraging others can be. If you aren't comfortable telling friends or co-workers, join a support group. There are support groups for almost every challenge in life.

● **Set your goal and start immediately working your plan.**

Don't delay. Immediately begin to structure a plan for change by setting small, attainable goals. If this aspect is difficult for you, get professional help. A professional (such as a Wellness Coach) can help you create a concrete and structured plan. He or she can also help you stay on track by providing on-going encouragement and education about your issue. Many insurance companies offer free telephonic or online support to help change behaviors affecting health (such as obesity or smoking).

● **Don't try to change everything at once.**

Trying to change all of your bad habits at the same time is not a good idea. It will likely just lead to feeling overwhelmed and discouraged. Focus on making one major change at a time. Some bad habits might be related. For example, if you are a smoker who smokes one pack of cigarettes a day, you are spending about \$1800 a year just on cigarettes. If you are also struggling with financial issues, giving up smoking will help ease that burden as well.

● **If you fall off the wagon, get back on it.**

Long-lasting change can be difficult to sustain. Relapsing or “slipping” can be a normal part of the change process. But it is important to jump right back into action without



delaying. It is also important to be honest with your support network about your relapse or slip. They can help normalize the process for you and infuse you with more encouragement and motivation. It is also important to evaluate why you relapsed so you can avoid similar situations in the future.

Changing behaviors can be hard work. Some people are lucky and they can quit a bad habit immediately. Most people aren't like that. Most of us need at least six weeks of steady and deliberate changes in behavior for new habits to form. But then we will need to continue to work at maintaining that change. Maintenance can be easier if we have followed our structured plan and are reinforced by the small successes along the way.

It is never too late to make a change and anyone can do it with some help and encouragement. If you are contemplating a change, your employee assistance program can be an excellent place to start. EAP counselors are trained in helping others identify solutions to life's challenges.

Call us, LifeWorks is always here to help.



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