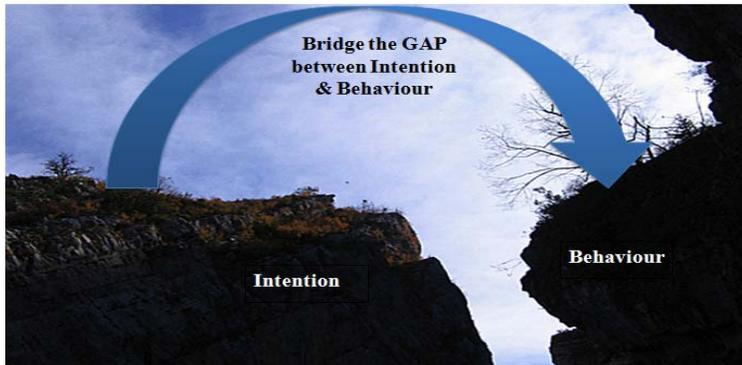


## Good Intentions and Behaviors: Bridge the Gap



*Good planning and hard work lead to prosperity, but hasty shortcuts lead to poverty. Proverbs 21:5*

Starting the New Year many of us have serious intentions to make changes. However, gaps emerge between good intentions and behaviour. So how do we bridge this gap?

Researchers believe successful behaviour modification comes about through the mastery of self-regulation (the process of controlling your own behaviour).<sup>1</sup> If your motivation is high, and you are confident in your ability to perform the new behaviour, the three tips listed below may be what you need to bridge the gap between your intention and your actual behaviour.<sup>2</sup>

1. **Set Goals!** Set SMART goals (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and time-based). Have both long-term and short-term goals. Short-term goals, or process goals, can be tasks to accomplish daily or weekly, which will keep you focussed on your ultimate goal. If you are not an expert in the behaviour you are trying to change, ask for help from an expert (i.e., a personal trainer, tobacco treatment specialist, dietician, or your doctor).<sup>3</sup> Determine a reward to give yourself when you accomplish a certain number of goals, and brainstorm possible obstacles that may hinder you from

reaching your overall objectives. For each obstacle write out a brief plan detailing what to do to avoid getting off track.

2. **Keep A Record!** Monitor your progress daily by keeping a log/journal. Be specific with your tracking so that you can compare your actual behaviour to the desired behaviour. Tracking your routines in check-lists, sleep logs, exercise journals, or eating diaries is fundamental to making a change.<sup>4</sup> Compare your actual behaviour to your objectives and be sure to acknowledge the days (or moments) when you do well. By keeping track of your behaviour, you will learn what people/places/things trigger your healthy behaviour. People who monitor their behaviour generally stick with behaviour change efforts longer and are more successful in reaching their goals.<sup>5</sup>
3. **Ask A Buddy!** Share your goals with a friend and create a contract outlining how you will help each other attain your goals. Soliciting the help of a friend will increase your confidence and commitment to change your behaviour. Be sure to persuade each other to carry on with the work, and learn from each other by watching and emulating behaviour patterns that aid you in your objectives. Behaviour change is easier when undertaken as a committed team.<sup>6</sup>

Change your behavior for your own wellbeing, and research the health benefits.<sup>1</sup> Stay confident: progress slowly, get help from loved ones, reward your successes, listen to positive feedback, and use positive persuasion.<sup>1</sup> Lastly, use strategies listed above for self-regulation. *For God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control. 2 Timothy 1:7*

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