

Self-Management Health Aid

Gearing Up to Make Healthy Changes



Making changes that are good for you, like quitting smoking or starting to exercise, can be hard. To help ensure your success, you need to assess how ready you are to make the change. Once you are ready, you need to develop an action plan that can help you achieve your goal. Getting support from your health care team may help you in your efforts.

Understand the Ingredients of Motivation

Motivation is what leads to change. The strength of your motivation is determined by two core components:

- ▶ **Importance:** Is there a good reason why I should change?

- ▶ **Confidence:** Do I know how I can make this change happen?

Both of these factors need to be present. If either is lacking, your efforts to change may be more difficult.¹



Motivation

Should I really start exercising regularly?

▶ Belief in Importance of Change (the “why” of change)

- ▶ Why is regular exercise worthwhile?
- ▶ Will it make a meaningful difference in my life?

▶ Confidence in Ability to Change (the “how” of change)

- ▶ Can I really commit to regular exercise?
- ▶ How will I start to exercise regularly?

Source: This framework draws from the work of Pip Mason.¹



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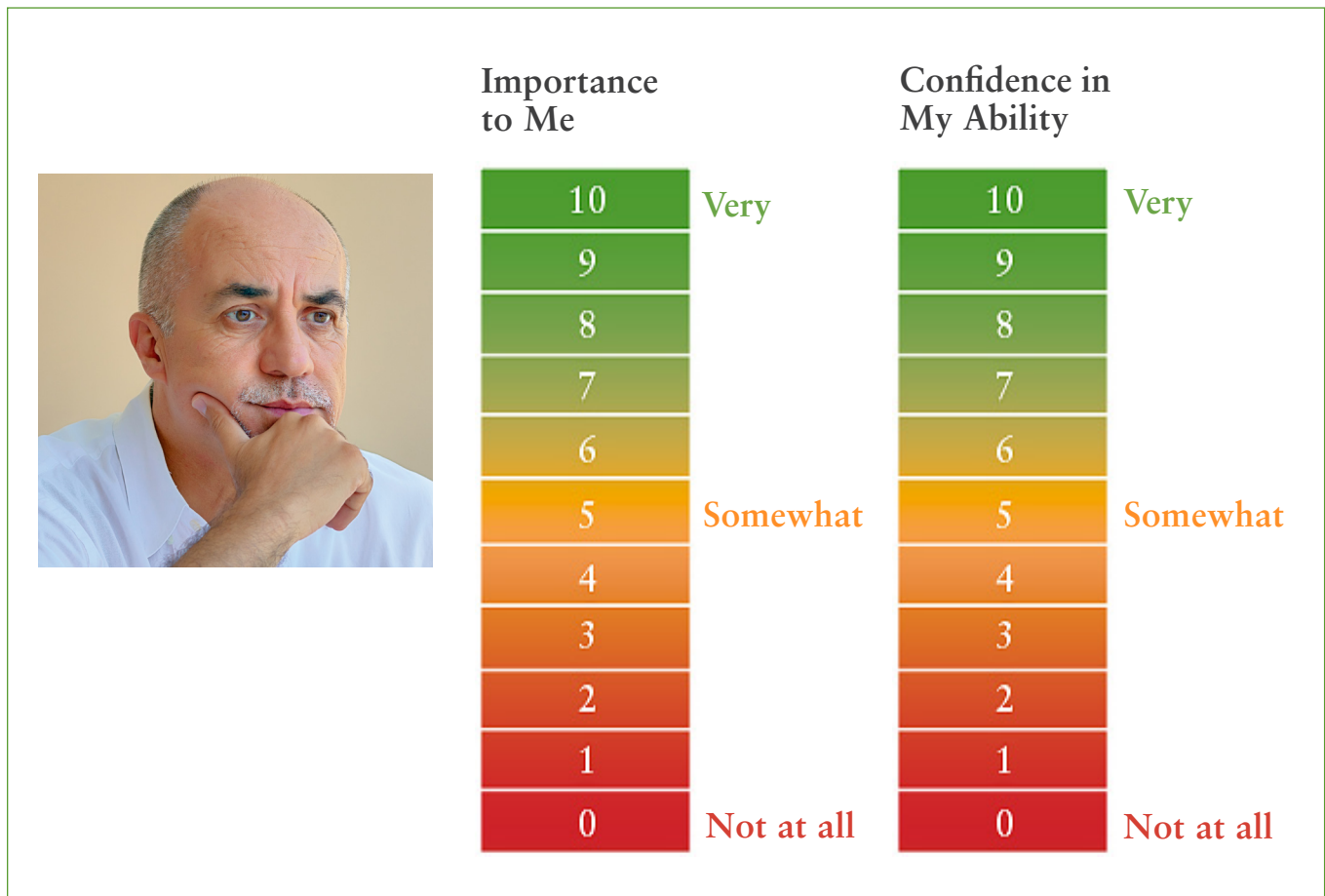


Measure Your Motivation

You can gauge your motivation, or readiness, to make a healthy change by^{1,2}:

- ▶ Writing down a healthy change you'd like to make:
_____.
- ▶ Examining how you feel about your ability to make that change using the readiness scale below.

- ▶ On a scale of 1 to 10, how **important** is this change to you? Circle that number on the scale below.
- ▶ On a scale of 1 to 10, how **confident** are you that you can make this change? Circle that number on the scale below.



Source: The ruler and grid draw from the work of Pip Mason¹ as well as William R. Miller and Stephen Rollnick.²



Assessing Importance and Strengthening Confidence

Did you circle a low number on one or both of the scales on the previous page? The following questions can help you identify specific issues and barriers that are getting in the way of you making that change.

Assessing Importance

- ▶ What made you rate yourself the number you chose on the “importance to me” scale and not a lower number?¹
- ▶ What would it take to get you to rate yourself a higher number?¹
- ▶ What positive things might happen if you make this change?¹
- ▶ What not-so positive things might happen if you make this change?¹

Strengthening Confidence

- ▶ What made you rate yourself the number you chose on the “confidence in my ability” scale and not a lower number?¹
- ▶ What would it take to get you to rate yourself a higher number?¹
- ▶ Have you had any success in making this change before? What helped you be successful then?¹
- ▶ What strengths do you have that can help you make this change?¹
- ▶ Suppose by this time next year, you have succeeded in making this change. What did you do to make this change happen? What words of encouragement would you offer yourself?²



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Set S.M.A.R.T Goals

You can help improve the likelihood of success by developing health goals that are S.M.A.R.T³:

- ▶ **S**pecific
- ▶ **M**easurable
- ▶ **A**ttainable

- ▶ **R**ealistic
- ▶ **T**imebound

To achieve your S.M.A.R.T goal, you will need an action plan that describes the specific actions you'll take. Pick actions you feel confident about, and evaluate your progress frequently.³

General Goals	S.M.A.R.T Goals	Action Plans
Lose weight	Lose 35 lbs in one year.	Lose 3 lbs this month by drinking water or unsweetened iced tea instead of my usual 3 soft drinks a day.
Get regular exercise	Over the next six months, walk thirty minutes at least five days a week.	Walk for 15 minutes after lunch on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays with my friend Sue every week this month.
Eat a balanced, nutrient-rich diet	Eat 5 servings of fruits and vegetables a day by my birthday.	Add a serving (1/2 cup) of fresh fruit, such as strawberries, to my breakfast cereal at least 5 days a week.



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Break S.M.A.R.T Goals Into Small Habits

If you are having trouble achieving your short-term health goals, try the Tiny Habits™ approach, which consists of three steps⁴:

- ▶ Break your desired behavior into small actions. For example, instead of aiming for 25 push-ups every day, start by doing one push-up a day.
- ▶ Tie the behavior to an anchor, or something you do every day, to help you remember to do this tiny habit. For example, perform one push-up after you brush your teeth in the morning.
- ▶ Reward yourself with a small act that feels good, such as giving yourself a thumbs up. This can switch on the brain's reward system, which will help wire the habit into your day.

Over time, adopting tiny habits can lead to the achievement of larger goals.⁴ The following example illustrates a tiny habit that may help set you on the path to achieving the goal of eating a healthier diet.

Tiny Habit	Anchor	Reward
		
<i>I'll take strawberries from the fridge...</i>	<i>after I pour cereal in a bowl...</i>	<i>Then, I'll pump my fist in the air!</i>

Source: Based on work of B.J. Fogg.⁴



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References

1. Mason P. *Health Behavior Change: A Guide for Practitioners*. 3rd ed. Elsevier; 2019.
2. Miller WR, Rollnick S. *Motivational Interviewing: Preparing People for Change*. 3rd ed. The Guilford Press; 2012.
3. Bailey RR. Goal setting and action planning for health behavior change. *Am J Lifestyle Med*. 2017;13(6):615-618. doi:10.1177/1559827617729634
4. Fogg BJ. *Tiny Habits and the Small Changes that Change Everything*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt; 2020.



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