



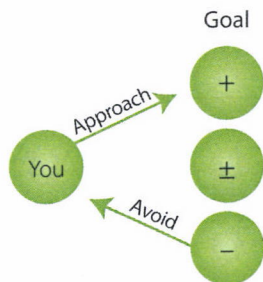
ALASKA
PREMIER
HEALTH

Embracing change

Resisting Change

It has been said that the only constant in life is change. If this is so, then why do so many people fear, dread and resist change? What thoughts come to your mind when you think of change—the unknown? A challenge? Do you feel anxious, or excited? Are you so frightened by the prospect of change that you will endure an unpleasant situation because it's familiar and predictable?

Everyone agrees that reaching new goals is highly desirable. Yet, reaching a goal always requires change. It is natural that while working toward even the most positive goals, you may feel ambivalent. You may desire (approach) and resist (avoid) the



Approach-Avoidance Conflict

same goal. Even with the most highly valued goals, there is a price to pay.

Conversely, even when you are unhappy with your current situation and wish to change it, there is frequently some positive aspect

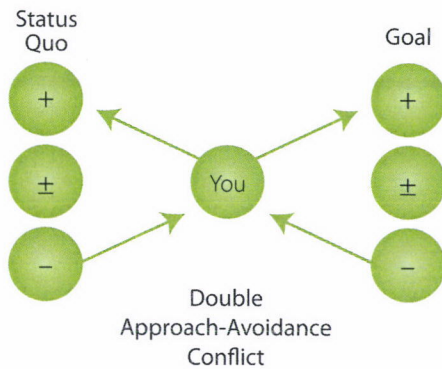
associated with it that is hard to let go. Letting go can be a very painful process. This represents a “double” approach-avoidance conflict. At the same time, you may desire (approach) and resist (avoid) your current situation and your new goal to change or improve the situation.

tools for success

- Identify the positive and negative aspects of achieving an appropriate weight.
- Recognize empowerment as both an enabling process and a by-product of change.
- Set a goal and develop a plan for a lifestyle change.
- Recognize the changes that you have experienced in your weight management efforts so far.

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2 Embracing Change



Up to this point, you may have focused on all the negative aspects of being overweight and wondered why you have had difficulty changing the behavior patterns contributing to it. Although there are several reasons why achieving and maintaining an appropriate weight has been difficult for you, one may be that you are experiencing an approach-avoidance conflict:

- Negative aspects of losing weight.
- Positive aspects of being overweight.

One reason for maintaining status quo is that it is familiar to us and we know what to expect.

"Pitchfork" or "Carrot" Motivators

When you resist change, you may berate yourself endlessly to move forward, but some part of you rebels. "Pitchfork" self-motivators talk to themselves harshly, with words such as "have to," "need to," "should," and "must." Focusing on the negative aspects of changing or not changing, creates rebellion and resistance within yourself. You often feel victimized and out of control.

"Carrot" self-motivators talk to themselves with words such as "choose to," "plan to," "want to," and "intend to."

Which sounds more empowering to you? Why?

It is important to realize that you rarely embrace a change completely and finally. Instead, you tend to alternate back and forth between embracing and resisting change.

Moving toward Resisting Change

In your weight management efforts, how can you tell when you are moving into a resistance phase?

What are your:

Thoughts

Feelings

Behaviors

Moving toward Embracing Change

When you become aware of moving toward or being in the resistance phase, what could you do to start moving back toward embracing your challenge?

What are your:

Thoughts

Feelings

Behaviors

Life Change and You

In the early years of stress research, scientists thought that stress resulted from accumulated life change or life events. You may have seen "life event scales" that asks you to add up points

Personal Contract for Change

It is just as important for me to be accountable and fulfill my commitments to myself as it is for me to be accountable and fulfill my commitments to anyone else. Therefore, I am going to do the following things by the date and time I have specified:

Goal

Considerations

Reasons for wanting change (in rank order):

What are my personal and situational obstacles?

What support do I need? Who can help?

How do I feel about this change? Positive? Apprehensive?

Actions

What am I willing to do?

What am I not willing to do?

Accountability

I fulfilled this goal.

I made honorable progress toward this goal.

I made little progress toward this goal.

Gaining and Losing

It's more than a matter of weight

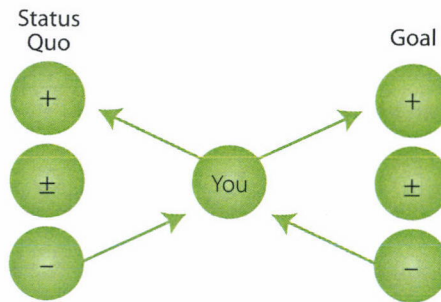
It is possible to both desire and resist your current situation and your new goal. List positive and negative aspects of your lifestyle related to weight management.

Maintain status quo

These pull you **from** your goal

Positive aspects of achieving realistic goal weight

These pull you **towards** your goal



Negative aspects of being overweight

These push you **towards** your goal

Negative aspects of achieving a realistic goal weight

These push you **from** your goal

Seeing the **Whole** Picture

Think of a significant change in your life that you felt deeply negative about when it occurred.

Think of a significant change in your life that you felt deeply negative about when it occurred.

Looking back with a truly open mind, can you now find anything positive about that same event?

What could you have told yourself at that time that might have made you feel more empowered to deal with the change?

Think of a significant change in your life that you felt strongly positive about when it occurred?

Looking back with a truly open mind, can you find any negative aspects associated with that change that you may have overlooked at the time?

How would an appreciation of those negative factors have helped you cope with the change more successfully?

Change is Multi-faceted

Changes in your life may have far-reaching and varied consequences, not only for you but also for others close to you. What change have you already experienced as part of your weight management efforts? What changes do you expect in the future as a result of your management efforts?

Mind — Self-concept, mental focus, preoccupations, self-talk, confidence, etc.

Body — Physical appearance, energy, clothing styles, health status, posture, exercise, etc.

Feelings — Emotions, moods, meditation, pleasures, disappointments, gratitude, etc.

Social Life — Social skills, public interactions, participation, activities, etc.

Behaviors — Routines, daily schedules, old and new habits, adventurous changes, etc.

Changes in:	Experiences to date	Goals
Mind		
Body		
Feeling		
Social life		
Behavior		

associated with events that had occurred in your life during the previous year, and obtained a score that predicted the probability that you would become ill during the next year. Events such as marriage, divorce, death in the family, birth, buying a house, changing jobs, and moving to another city were among the changes included on the scales. The scale implies change can make you sick, because it diminishes your ability to cope.

Research has suggested that this approach was greatly over-simplified. It completely ignored the individual's unique response to change.

The relationship between life changes and health outcomes has been found to depend greatly upon how positively or negatively the individual rates each event. There is a great variation in how different people view the same life changes. Those who saw their changes as strongly negative tended to have greater emotional and physical symptoms of stress. Those who saw their changes as strongly positive were less likely to experience poor health.

Change frequently has ripple effect, like a pebble dropping a lake. One major change in your life may have far-reaching and varied consequences, not only for various aspects of your own life, but also for others around you.

How do you typically react to change?

How are responding currently to your changing eating patterns, activity patterns, and body image?

How are others responding to your lifestyle changes?

Change and Empowerment

When you are facing a change in your life, whether you choose it yourself or it is externally imposed on you, you can respond in two ways:

- You can resist the change, which involves focusing on the negative aspects of the situation and closing your mind to the potential positive aspects of the change. You can “drag your feet” against the force of change. You will probably feel frustrated, helpless, and hopeless.

-OR-

- You can actively embrace the change, which implies opening your mind to all the opportunities inherent in the situation and appreciating the positive as well as the negative aspects of change.

If you focus in an “all-or-nothing” way on only the negative (or only the positive) aspects of the change, you may miss either the potential positives or potential negatives associated with it. Both must be fully examined and explored for the change to be an optimal experience for you.

When you choose to open your mind to all of the possibilities of change, when you choose to embrace change as a challenge for growth, you are empowering yourself. You will begin to see options and alternatives, where before you saw only obstacles and frustrations.

Components of Lifestyle Change

- **Set a goal.** Make a decision. What do you want to change. Be specific.
- **Learn from the past.** How have you attempted to reach this goal in the past? Has the solution you tried become part of the problem (made it worse)? What have you learned from previous failures?
- **Make a plan.** How can you realistically achieve and maintain this goal? List specific, concrete steps you are willing to take to accomplish the goal.
- **Motivate.** Forget what everyone else has told you about why you should change. Why do you want to change? This is a critically important step that is often overlooked. Write down all your reasons to change. Prioritize them by rank-ordering them by their

importance to you. Keep this list handy and review it regularly.

- Problem-solve. List your major obstacles to changing. Consider your beliefs and attitudes, your home, your family/friends, your job. List possible ways to overcome each obstacle.
- Consider timing. Timing is crucial. When do you plan to start changing? How long do you plan to maintain the change, or do you see reaching a designated goal as an end-point, signaling a return to your previous situation? Is the time right for you now? Why or why not? If not now, when?
- Commit. You may get stuck here. Do you think that if you want something badly enough, or if you think, worry, or talk about it enough, it will (or should) start happening? This is "magical thinking." Wishing does not make it so! No matter how much you say you want something, until you're willing to commit yourself to doing what it takes, you will remain "stuck," feeling frustrated and helpless. What are you willing to do to change? What are you NOT willing to do? What will you do?
- Get support. Who could support you in this change? What type of support would you believe most helpful? Examples: friendly reminders, reinforcement for specific behaviors, having someone to talk to, being ignored or encouraged by others after experiencing a lapse or setback. How will you go about getting the support you want?
- Be accountable. Monitor your progress in some objective way. Find the way that works best for you, but be consistent. How will you do this?
- Expect setbacks. Have a plan for how to handle setbacks. We're all human, so we all make mistakes. What is your plan for handling yours?
- Reinforce yourself. Reinforce each small success, no matter how trivial it may seem to you. You can do this through positive self-talk, a check mark or 'happy face' on a self-monitoring log, or a more tangible reward such as buying yourself something non-food related for reaching a pre-set milestone. You can even make one very rewarding activity a reinforcement for another, less desired activity.
- Take it one day (moment, hour, meal) at a time. Each moment is a new decision point.

key goals

Using the tips in this module, develop 2 – 3 goals to work towards.

1	
2	
3	

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