Pathway to Change

Lesson 1
Goals and Objectives

• To become more comfortable and confident with making changes in your life
  • To discuss the importance of change
  • To list one or more of your barriers to lifestyle change
  • To use a “behavior chain” to explore ways to break a bad habit
  • To develop a realistic goal to prepare for a healthy change in your life
What is Change?

- To make different
- To give a different position, course, or direction
- To replace with another
- To transition
- To vary, or break away from sameness or repeating
- To modify, or adapt to a new purpose

Why is Change Important?

• Sometimes our lives get off track and we have bad habits.
• Most people can think of something that would be a healthy change in their lives.
• Your behaviors have developed over a lifetime, so changing them will also take time.
• Behavior change and goal setting may be difficult, but it can help you to manage your health better, and may even prevent hospitalizations.
How Can You Create Change?

- Set focused goals
- Move toward empowerment
- Analyze and prepare for fear
- Change bad habits to good ones
- Focus on what you can do
- Unlearn “all or nothing thinking”
- Break behavior chains
- Stay positive
- Be mindful and empowered
Start With Goals

• Finding the right goals may not be easy, but it’s a place to start.

• Example: A person with low energy had a goal to pick up the garden hose in his front yard before the weekend.

• Another person who avoided exercise had a goal to sit on her exercise bike for 1 minute. The next day she used it for 1 minute.

• Sometimes the problem is not having “too little” motivation, but rather having “too much”, by setting the goals too high when starting out.

• Simplifying goals can increase the chance of success.
Set Focused Goals

- Make your goals specific, measurable, realistic, and timed:
  - **Vague goal** - “I want to eat more fruits and vegetables.”
  - **Specific goal** - “I will eat at least 5 servings of fruits and vegetables each day, at least 4 days per week.”
  - **Vague goal** - “I want to be more busy and active.”
  - **Specific goal** - “I will only watch TV for an hour at a time. I will go for a walk every day, or work on crafts.”

Gundersen Lutheran Medical Center. (2008, October). Breaking the behavior chain. Presentation at Winning Weighs Meeting, La Crosse, WI.
Move Toward Empowerment

- Empowerment is the feeling of having more control over what happens to you.
- It is a good feeling, but it also come with responsibility.
- When someone learns how to turn “wanting to do something” into “doing something”, it increases self-confidence and feelings of hope.
- Even unsuccessful efforts to change can open up opportunities for exploring other issues in a person’s life.
- Once change starts, the process of rehabilitation is renewed and you can begin to regain control of your life and health.

Analyze Fear

• Think of something you want to change.
• Explore both “up and down sides” because fear can be mixed up with positive emotions like excitement, and courage.
  – What is the most likely outcome?
  – What is the worst thing that could happen? How likely is that?
  – What is the best thing that could happen? How likely is that?
  – What if I don’t do this?
Prepare For Fear

• Use fear as a tool, to push you toward preparation and practice.
• Build a personal safety net or support system.
• Find a way to “test the waters” and take smaller steps.
• Preparation can increase feelings of self-confidence and empowerment.
• *What causes fear during your efforts to change?*
• *How can you prepare for the fear of change?*
Focus on What You Can Do

• Look at what barriers there are to changing your lifestyle - Do some problem solving to deal with them.
  – Old behaviors
  – Doubt or negative thinking
  – Busy schedules
  – Stress

• How can I best move forward?

• What is my destination?

• Be creative as you plan for change

Change Bad Habits to Good Ones

• Changing your habits gets easier over time, but when fears come back, ask yourself, “What is different now?”
• Remind yourself that you have a treatment plan to follow
• Ask for support from your health care team as well as your family or friends
• “Just stop doing it” can be the hardest way
• Instead, start by replacing unhealthy habits with positive ones
Unlearn “All or Nothing” Thinking

• Be realistic and practical - Don’t try to be perfect.
• Make goals achievable and specific.
• Work on consistency and moderation.
• Focus on your progress.
• Write in a journal or diary about your habits or behavior - good or bad.
• *It is unlikely you will meet your long-term goals right away, but you can take “baby steps”.*
• *If you are going in the right direction, and you keep going, you will eventually get there.*
Break Behavior Chains

• Change the steps leading to a behavior you want to change.
  – Linked behaviors can cause something else to happen.
  – Your emotions and behaviors tend to follow patterns in a series of events.
• Develop insight into your habits to help prevent relapses.
• If the chain of behavior patterns is broken at any point, it probably will not progress to the final behavior.
• The earlier the break in the link, the easier it is to undo a behavior chain.

Emotions and Behavior Chains

- Your emotions can cause unmet goals and relapse:
- “I need to exercise. I’ll walk 15 minutes 3 days/week.”
  - Housework to do - Too busy today - Will do it tomorrow.
  - Had argument - Bad mood – Stressed out – not today.
  - Too tired – It’s been rainy – I want to stay inside.
  - I’ll start next week – I’d rather watch TV this weekend.
  - Can’t meet goal - Why bother? – I give up.
Modify the Plan to Fit Your Life

• Getting more activity can be a struggle! But you can “break” behavior chains by modifying the plan:
  – Schedule physical activity into the day like an appointment.
  – Walk with a friend for more fun, or to help relieve stress.
  – Walk in place, do stretching exercises while watching TV, or continue to move while you are on the phone.
  – Park further away from where you are going, and take the stairs more often.
  – Or, change the goal to 5 minute walks (either inside or outside) - Increase the time after you are in the habit.
Stay Positive!

• If you get to the end of the week and didn’t meet your goal, you can still be positive:
  – Change can build slowly, “brick by brick”.
  – Exercising even one day is better than not at all.
• You have more information about yourself and your barriers - You can make a more realistic goal.
• Making even a little change in the right direction is all you have to do.
• Increase your self-awareness - Consider if logging your activities or symptoms would help.
Be Mindful and Empowered

- **Use all senses** when possible- seeing, hearing, smelling, feeling, tasting.
- **Be present** (don’t look backward or forward) and be aware of your surroundings - Do one activity at a time.
- **Be optimistic** - Think positively - “I can” rather than “I can’t” to increase your self-esteem and body image.
- **Take control** - Don’t be caught up in always wanting to please others, but strive to be healthy for yourself.
- **Find help, support, and resources.**
- **Set realistic, specific goals.**
Optional Web Activities

• Teens can go to Kidshealth.org website for Making A Change: Your Personal Plan at http://kidshealth.org/teen/your_mind/problems/make_change.html?tracking=T_RelatedArticle#cat20862
  Make your own plan for change

• Watch Keeping Well video (1: 51 minutes) by SenseAbility at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pA1BDlRJYlQ or learn about deep breathing for relaxation by watching Keeping Well Video (3:26 minutes) by SenseAbility at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2jK52Ac4YSQ
Conclusion

• Change can be good, especially when dealing with bad habits.
• With realistic goals, change is less “scary” and can lead to a healthier you.
• “Most people are consuming so much time and energy trying to do the impossible - to change and control the actions of others. They wrongly believe that they cannot do the one thing that is most possible - to change themselves.”
  - Albert Ellis (quote paraphrased)
Created by Mary Knutson RN, MSN 11-8-13. Revised 4-24-15.