

HEALTH GOALS: WHY SOME SUCCEED, BUT MANY DON'T

Each year, we have the amazing privilege of helping people to change their lives. To achieve amazing health goals – which are deeply satisfying. To create new futures. It's a joyful privilege to witness what people can do in their own lives. Everyday people with all sorts of barriers and challenges and disabilities. Over the years, we have learned a few things about what separates those who eventually succeed from those who don't. As you consider your own health goals, here are a few, critical tips from our most successful patients:

- They want it. A lot. They want it more than they want the security blanket of the status quo or repeating the past. Overall, people who succeed in changing their lives aren't smarter or luckier than the rest of us. They don't have easier or simpler lives. They still have kids and pets and in-laws and busy schedules and demanding bosses. They have fears and troubled relationships and bills to pay and hang-ups from their childhood. But making the change they want doesn't slot into their To-Do list somewhere between organizing photo albums and cleaning out the garage. It's at the top. Yes, the top. Above a whole host of errands and should-dos and have-to-dos and things they could choose to feel guilty about. They put themselves first. They stop waiting for time to focus on their goals; they make the time. They also know courage isn't about being fearless; it's about making your goal more important than the fear.

- They don't expect it to be easy. For most people, change is hard. Wanting it is easy. Talking about it is easy. Doing it is not. You have to be willing to keep going on the days that stink. Those who succeed are not derailed by struggle. Because they set realistic expectations, the hard days aren't a surprise or a reason to "give up". But they don't focus on the hard days, the slip-ups, or the missed opportunities. They don't worry about how fast or how perfectly they meet their goals. They keep visualizing what they want. They keep it alive with belief.

They also bring gentleness into the journey and make room for ups'n'downs along the way. Babies would never learn to walk if they got overwhelmed with guilt or discouragement every time they fell down. The only real failure is in Not Trying or Giving Up because the going gets rough.

- They tame the voice in their head. Even in situations where we are truly miserable, there is natural, tremendous inertia in our lives to keep things the same. We all have egos. You might think of them as sock puppets. Yours is that voice in your head streaming a constant litany of commentary, judging, justifying, and reinforcing our habits. Blah, blah, blah. In fact, we should expect this voice to push back on our efforts to change. After all, the ego's job is to keep everything in our lives anchored to repeating our past. The sock puppet has some well-worn commentary to try to hold us back e.g. "There's no way this is going to work. I just don't have the time. What if I inconvenience someone? What if they talk about me behind my back? I know I'm going to mess it up. See, there I go – failing already; let's have a cookie."

Infants try hundreds of times to grab their toes before succeeding the first time. Hundreds! Do you think they would ever succeed if their self-talk along the way was something like, “See, I’m useless. This is never going to work. Why am I even trying?” Attempts to silence that inner voice tend to make it louder. Instead, make friends with it. Find some humor in it. Give the loudmouth sock puppet a name. Then choose not to take it seriously. Remember that voice is about keeping you stuck in your past. That is the ego’s job.

Your persistence and commitment to yourself is The most important factor in your success. We can all act to Own the life we are living and mold it into what we desire. We just have to Choose to make it so.

WE BELIEVE IN YOU!

-ALL OUR LOVE-

JESS FINLEY & JESSICA KOS-BIRNEY