

## Making a Behavior Change: I Know What To Do But I Just Can't Seem To Get There

Do you know more about being healthy than sometimes your choices reflect? Why is it that you can know in your head what a healthily day of meals and physical activity looks like, but you struggle to eat healthy and exercise? The space between knowledge and practice can be vast and, at times, discouraging. It is in this gap that we get in the way of ourselves and our own success. This chasm is the breeding ground for self-defeating thoughts—mind games that can keep us stuck in inactivity. Identifying these negative thought patterns and developing a plan for solution-oriented, positive thinking can make the difference in knowing what to do and in developing those healthy habits.

### **Mind game #1: “This is too hard. It takes too much work.”**

This game actually is based in truth—the recognition that it does take diligent effort to be healthier, and that being less healthy is easier. Driving through a fast-food restaurant for a meal, taking it home and eating it while watching television is easier than stopping for a

walk on the track, studying the menu and making a healthier choice, or having healthy food stocked at home.

**Solution:** Think about your reasons for getting healthier—what’s in it for you? Do you want to lose weight, lower your cholesterol and blood pressure, reduce medications, sleep better, have more energy, keep up with your children or grandchildren, get into a certain clothing size, train for a 5K race? Writing a personal “wellness vision” that includes the results you would like to achieve can help overcome the “too much work” game.



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### **Mind game #2: "It's taking too long. I don't see results!"**

Again, there's some reality here. If only a few exercise sessions or a couple of weeks of healthy eating would bring immediate results.

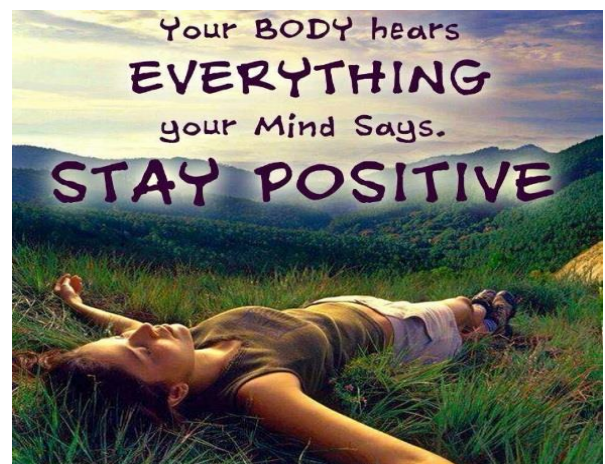
**Solution:** It took time to get where you are and it will take time to get where you want to be.

For results to be permanent, time is necessary to help shift your thinking so you can develop new habits. Focus on improvements and small accomplishments, like a 10 percent weight loss or being able to walk three miles in less time.

### **Mind game #3: "I've tried everything to lose weight and nothing seems to work."**

There are many sound approaches to weight loss based on the energy balance formula: calories in - calories out = what happens with weight. When you eat less and move more you will lose pounds. Making excuses and telling yourself that nothing will work will only keep you trying. **Solution:** Decide on an eating and exercise plan that will work in your life and make a decision to stick with it. Start with a realistic, daily calorie goal that allows for foods

that keep you from feeling deprived. If you don't like to exercise, find ways to increase activity in your day: take the stairs, quit circling for the closest parking space, take a 15-minute walking break at work. When the "nothing works" thought starts in your head, counter with "I knew you'd start again. I'm not listening to you anymore. This plan will work and I'm going to stay with it!"



### **Mind game #4: "I'll do it when I am ready!"**

In that gap between knowing what to do and doing it, is there a rebellious child inside you saying, "Nobody can tell me what to do!?" If



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you hear yourself, the first step is to recognize the pattern. Solution: "You can't make me" keeps the focus on the power struggle you are having with someone else, instead of focusing on what you need to do for yourself. Step out of the power struggle and take care of yourself. For change to occur, you may need to plan and get prepared: Gather information and start small. Any step in a positive direction creates change.

### **Mind game #5: "Yes, I know that would help, but I just don't have time."**

If some version of "Yes, I know that keeping records of what I'm eating would help, but I don't have time in my day to do that" sounds familiar, recognize that this game allows a person to make excuses for any healthy change. In this zone, any suggestion for improvement is met with resistance—not enough time, energy, or money to be healthier.

**Solution:** Stop yourself from engaging in "Yes (I know that would help), but I can't because (your excuse)." Find a way to get started.

Consult a dietician, a trainer, a wellness coach. Join a group such as Weight Watchers, Overeaters Anonymous, or Food Addicts Anonymous. Set a time to walk or ride bikes with a friend. Gather information from healthy websites or books. Prioritize your health and tell yourself you are worth the investment. Start today. Begin taking positive steps toward your goals to move you in the direction of who you know you can be.



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