

# Why is it so hard to change our habits?

Blog by Coach April Ringler  
Tuesday, Aug 1, 2023

*Elevating Purposeful Women*



#### 4. Ill-prepared.

We would not be able to replace our tire and fix our car if we didn't have all the tools, supplies, skills, or know-how, would we? Well, we also would not be successful in creating sustainable habit change without all the proper tools, supplies, skills, or know-how. Whether we are implementing a new diet or exercise regimen, trying to replace bad habits or stress less, we need the right support to accomplish the task. These can vary and be specific to the individual and the desired goal, but helpful resources can include knowledge, plans, systems for organization, tips, and tools. Our success is determined by having the right tools and skills, which can be gained from books, podcasts, youtube, a coach, or someone who's done it before. We need something or someone to help guide and support us, so we can rely on them to navigate through uncharted territory to achieve our goals.

#### 5. Overcommit.

Sometimes when we decide to make a change, we try to change everything, all at once. This can look like many well-intended New Year's resolutions of trying

to be healthier. That doesn't seem like a lot, but even if we join a new gym and commit to eating healthier, it can all add up to a lot of new challenges. Joining a new gym might mean changing our schedule, do you go before or after work? In addition to exercise time, do you have to allow for more time in your commute? Are you familiar with the exercises and equipment? Do you have support to help you overcome obstacles and hold yourself accountable?

Add all of this to trying to create healthier eating habits. Do you have your recipes and groceries ready? If you are preparing meals that are not familiar, it can take some time to get used to it which may take a bit more time and energy. It may be overwhelming to not even know where to begin knowing what to eat, what not to eat, and how to do it all. Trying to commit to all of this sets us up to have one bad day, where we are short on time, energy, or motivation so we don't go into the gym and we pull into a fast-food drive-through on the way home instead.

Change is simple, but not always easy, and committing to a lifestyle change is commendable. It can be done but trying to take on multiple behavior changes at once can lead to abandoning any or all of them. We have limited resources of attention, motivation, and self-control and if we try taking on too much, on top of everything else we deal with in our daily lives, we won't have enough resources to handle the changes. Plus, our brains are designed to pick the comfortable, easy path, with the least resistance and we all know that we can easily become distracted and motivation is unreliable. So, in order to make lasting changes, we should focus on one thing and take small steps toward implementing the habit into our lives. We can make small adjustments and replacements, incrementally as we build up and strengthen our willpower and discipline to follow through with habit changes.

#### 6. Unclear plan.

As I touched on in a couple of the other points, the idea of change can be quite simple. Want to stop smoking? Just stop smoking right?

But again, the action necessary to make the change typically is more complex and often we underestimate this. Habit change is never just one thing. It will typically involve a lot of connected pieces and requires several steps to actually implement and successfully create lasting change.

It can be a challenge to move the needle even a little bit, which is also why it's very important to have a good system or plan in place. Have you ever gotten into your vehicle for a cross country road trip and just started driving? No, of course not. What do we do? We pull up our navigation system and enter the destination to follow the directions. Change is hard enough and if we don't have a clear route or a destination, how do we know what the directions are to get there? This only further complicates the process and what happens when it gets complicated? We stop trying and give up.

This is why for habit change, it's very important to be very clear on our goals and understand the process. We need to know how we're going to get there. We should appreciate the complexity and the time it will take us to complete multiple steps that it will take.

