

Changes That Stick

A 6 Step Guide to Making Big Life Changes

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Academy Success



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Introduction

Hi - I'm Cody Wheeler. Founder of Academy Success, the place where people come to learn life skills they don't learn in school.

When I created Academy Success I had one large goal in mind - to make a significant impact on the lives of people that want to better themselves.

But not with just high level tips and tricks articles. The content within Academy Success is based on science, psychology, and research.

The free content rivals most self-improvement site's paid content, and the premium content can literally transform your life.

By the time you are finished reading this guide, making changes in your life will no longer be a mystery.

You'll have the framework to make any change you want to, at any time, based on scientific facts that just plain work.



It's Time to Make Some Changes

From birth to death, what will separate your level of success from the person next to you is one thing - the amount of change you undergo along the way.

We all start as a blank slate, learning, developing, evolving, forging ourselves into the person we desire to be along the way.

The amount of change you undergo is completely up to you. You are in control of it.

Some people decide to be stagnant, to go through life and never grow a single bit past general education.

But others, the most successful people in the world, are constantly challenging themselves to change and grow.

But change isn't always easy. Some of the challenges we face in our lives require a high level of discipline to accomplish, and it can be very taxing to always follow through on those challenges we create for ourselves.

But it's all for the greater good. Fortunately, there is a simple framework to follow to make change much easier.

And that's what this guide is about. Taking the large changes you would like to make in your life and using the psychological principles of productivity and personal effectiveness to allow you to make those changes - every time.

So without further ado, let's get started.

Step 1 - Identify Your Life Change

The absolute most important step to making any change in your life is the process of identifying the change you would like to make.

And right off the bat, this is where the science starts to matter.

When setting out to make a life change, many people make the mistake of setting change objectives that are WAY too lofty.

Now don't get me wrong. There's nothing wrong with making big changes. In fact, big changes produce big results.

But the caveat is, the bigger the change is that you try to make, the more difficult it is going to be to stick to, and the lower the likelihood is that you'll stick to it.

Big Changes, Without Making Big Changes

The best way to make big change occur in your life **is by making a series of consistent small changes**. Over time, these small changes will add up to your eventual goal.

Why not just do it all at once? According to a study by the American College of Sports Medicine, athletes viewed small fitness goals as significantly more achievable than large ones. The study showed that this was the case for not just athletes, but for anyone.

It follows that small changes are much more likely to succeed, or at least produce some sort of significant results. Consider this comparison to recent results in the software world.

In Agile software development (my primary profession), software is produced by creating a series of small stable releases with value added feature sets over time. This is counter to traditional software development, which releases a huge piece of software all at once.

The latter is often far less productive because it either has a high initial failure rate due to the complexity of a project that large, or it never gets started in the first place because the scope is too large.

This is why Agile software development teams focus on small milestones - because they're far more likely to produce some sort of tangible result.

You'll encounter the same phenomenon with life changes. **By breaking down your large change goals into smaller milestones - they'll instantly be more tangible in your mind**, your motivation to finish them will increase, and you'll be much more likely to produce a result.

Consider losing 50 pounds as an example.

Which of the below scenarios produces a better result?

Scenario 1 - Big Change

Bobby sets a goal to lose 50 pounds. He starts off very well, eating right, working out, sleeping more, and ends up losing 10 pounds in a few weeks. Awesome! But then realizes the past few weeks have been tough, and he is still 40 pounds away. He gets frustrated. His new lifestyle gets more difficult for him to sustain. He ends up falling off the bus after a month and gains it all back.

Scenario 2 - A Series of Small Changes

Bobby would like to lose 50 pounds, but knows it's a long journey. He sets an initial goal to lose 10 pounds. This is a simple tangible goal. He eats well, exercises, and hits his initial goal after two weeks. This gives Bobby a nice sense of accomplishment.

He sets another goal to lose 10 more pounds. He accomplishes it after a couple more weeks, and repeats the process another two times. Bobby decides that 40 pounds is good enough for him, and is now adjusted to his new lifestyle and is able to maintain his weight.

Notice the difference in psychology of these changes.

In the first, Bobby had one change goal, and had trouble with it seeming tangible in his mind. He could not see the light at the end of the tunnel, and because of this, became demotivated and failed, even though he was doing well.

But in the second, Bobby set several small change goals, achieved them in small increments, and was able to achieve 80% of his large goal by repeating the change process over time.

Even though he didn't meet his full change goal of 50 pounds, 40 pounds was still a huge achievement for him, and it certainly was a big change in his life.

Something is Better Than Nothing

That is the lesson from Step 1. When you are identifying your change, **it's OK to set a big change goal**, but make sure to break that goal down into smaller, much more tangible sub-goals.

The advantage is that these smaller milestones are highly achievable in your mind, and they also allow you to mitigate your risk of failure.

Even if you don't fully achieve your big change goal, much like the Agile software development team releases valuable features to it's users over time, you will have still created a ton of value in your life by achieving several small change goals that add up to a significant change.

So before you move onto Step 2, **choose a change goal to focus on with this guide** - something you would like to improve about yourself or your life.

When you have it, read on. I'll help you with identifying how to get there in Step 2.



Step 2 - Create Your Path to Change

Now that you know what you want to change, your next step before diving in is figuring out your path to get there.

A lot of people fail at this step. **This step of preparation is critical** to making life change happen.

A lot of people embark on a change without fully thinking about the “how” of getting there.

They’ll just jump right in, and a few days later they’re spinning their wheels trying all kinds of different things to achieve their goal.

That’s a recipe for failure.

Preparation is important here because it allows you to think about your most efficient path to success, as well as identify your potential failure points - and eliminate them up front before they’re encountered.

As you prepare, remember Step 1 - breaking down large change goals into smaller iterations. This will be a large part of your preparation.

Let’s take our example from Step 1 - losing 50 pounds.

We all know losing weight has a couple of vital components. A change in nutrition, and a change in physical activity.

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- What specific changes do you need to make with your diet over time in order to achieve your goal?
- What specific changes do you need to make in terms of physical activity in order to achieve your goal.

You'll need to make the same analysis for your life change.

- What specific changes do you need to make to the portions of your life that have an affect on your change outcome?

Make note of these specific changes before you start your change process. This will ensure you know exactly what you need to do before you get started.

The next piece of preparing for a significant change is thinking about your possible failure points, another large key to mitigating your risk of failure.

Step 3 - Freeing Up Time for Your Change

Time management is one of those skills that I love to teach on Academy Success, because it's what I call a skill multiplier. It increases the effectiveness of every skill you possess, because with each efficiency gain you achieve, you can leverage your skills that much more.

A lot of people, when beginning a journey to make a personal change, fail to consider that they may need to make a little extra time in their life in order to fit in the adjustments they must make to be successful.

For example, a recent fitness goal of mine required about an hour a day on average for 30 days in order to achieve it. That might sound like a lot, but I was able to easily do it because I was ready for it.

The thing about time that I constantly remind my readers of is this – we all have the same amount of it.

24 hours every day.

Whether you're a world leader, a college student, a busy parent, or a middle class employee, it doesn't matter. **Time passes at the same rate for everyone.**

Sure, some of us have more obligations than others, but what you do with your time is always your choice. No one is forcing you to do anything. We can all free up time, even the busiest people in the world.

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- A world leader might delegate more tasks to executive assistants or their staff
- A college student may choose to focus less on a class which doesn't provide as much value or interest to their education
- A busy parent may find after hours childcare
- A middle class employee may streamline their daily routine to be more efficient or reallocate their social life or leisure time

There is always a place to free up time, ALWAYS. You just have to find it. So go ahead and toss that “I don't have enough time” excuse out the window. Often it just takes a little bit of reallocation your daily routine.

Now ask yourself two questions:

- How much time am I going to need to accomplish this goal?
- What activities can I re-allocate in my life in order to free up that time?

A couple of tips here.

First, be careful not to stretch yourself too thin. Change goals are great, but eventually you need to have a normal schedule. If your change only requires a short term shift, that's fine, but don't get yourself into a situation where your change requires a long term shift that is not sustainable within your life.

This will often lead to failure.

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Second, be sure to allow time for leisure. If you can avoid it, don't take away too much from your relaxation time in order to achieve your goal.

You need downtime in your life in order to be successful. If you eliminate all of your downtime, you'll begin to resent your change, you won't look forward to it, and it will be difficult to progress.

This step is again about being prepared for what your change will require. Figure out the time you'll need, and where it will come from, and you'll be in a far better situation when making your change.

For additional time management training, check out my HD Video Productivity Course – [Output Overdrive](#) (this link contains a special subscriber only discount)



Step 4 - Create Simple & Repeatable Tasks

A lot of people get way too overconfident when approaching life change.

They want to change absolutely everything about themselves all at once.

They make a big giant list of how they're going to live their life differently, and they start being a new person.

They say things like:

- “It’s time to make some big changes”
- “Man, something’s just gotta change”
- “Tomorrow, I wake up a new person”

All of that is great, and it sounds good on paper, but the fact is, **you can’t change a lifetime of habits overnight.**

The effort that this kind of significant change takes is just not sustainable. We have habits in our lives for a reason.

Habits give us the ability to operate without thinking too much about what we’re doing.

Compare this to driving a car.

Remember how difficult it was to learn initially?

Even if you were good from the start, you had to think about a lot of things.

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- Signal when turning
- Look both ways
- 10 and 2
- Check mirrors periodically
- Check blind spot when merging
- Apply pressure to the pedal slowly

It was a pretty huge thing to learn. But eventually through all of that conscious effort, you did it enough that it just started to happen automatically.

Well imagine if you had to do that every time you drove. It would be awful, right?

That's what starting any new habit or learning any new skill is like. It's a very conscious process that you have to force yourself to do until it's ingrained in your behavior.

If you try to do too much at once, you'll get overloaded.

This is where task-based habit implementation comes in.

Task-Based Habit Implementation

Here's some more science for you.

It takes the average person about three weeks of repeated behavior to learn a new habit. Studies actually show that the neural pathways that create habitual behavior begin to form a couple of weeks into a new habit, and are pretty solid three weeks in. At this point, a behavior can become automated. But any less and you'll risk reverting to your old ways.

This is why so many people fail with life changes such as fitness and nutrition.

Because it takes a couple of weeks to get results, they assume what they are doing isn't working, and they start to regress before the new habit can form. This is why I recommend a task-based implementation system from the start.

Outline a few very simple key tasks that you need to do each day in order to ingrain your new habit. Make them as simple and as repeatable as possible. By doing this, you eliminate the mental barrier that will keep you from accomplishing them.

For example, let's say you're trying to get your lungs in shape, and you have a change goal of being able to run a 5k without stopping in 30 days.

A few simple tasks to help you might be:

- Set out run clothes so they're within easy reach
- Prepare pre-run snacks so you're fueled for your workout
- Walk to the end of the street to warm up

- Run 1 mile without stopping
- Walk home to cool down

These are all very simple and repeatable tasks that support your goal. Notice how that's different from:

- Run 1 mile each day

On the surface, it might seem simple, but any time you are creating a new habit, your brain will try to resist because it's not used to that habit.

It will manifest excuses. It will get in your way of success because it wants to stick to what it knows.

By being prepared with a simple task-based implementation system, **all you have to do is follow the steps you've laid out each day, and you will be successful.**

But keeping them simple and repeatable is absolutely key. This will ensure you're not overwhelmed and will prevent you from encountering barriers (more on that next).

Tip: It helps to get a **quick win** when you're trying to make a big change. In that case of running, you should aim to run 1 mile without stopping as soon as possible within your 30 days. That will be a nice mental win for you and will help you strive forward more easily.

Tip: A support system of tools can also help you. Set up reminders in your calendar, with your smart phone, or just a simple sticky note to help remind you of your tasks and support your efforts.

Step 5 - Eliminate Failure Points

One of the biggest reasons that people fail with significant life change is because they run into difficult points during their journey called “failure points” which derail their progress.

Failure points are almost always completely mental.

- On a journey to lose weight, this might be that plateau where you need to further adjust your nutrition.
- On a journey to earn a higher salary, this may be the point at which your boss says, “not just yet.”
- On a journey to receive a graduate degree, this may be the one or two classes that are just really tough for you.

These are mentally difficult to encounter, but if you have already thought about them and prepared to encounter them, **they are far easier to process when you do.**

Your task is to identify where you may encounter difficulty during your change, and mentally prepare for it. They’ll often come up in the form of “excuses” - or just nonsense reasons your brain tries to make up to resist change.

Anticipate what these excuses might be in this step.

You’ll need to do two specific things once you have identified your possible failure points.

- Is there any way you can prevent these possible failure points from happening?
- What specific actions will you take if/when you reach them?

By taking these steps, you'll have essentially already lived these situations, and you'll be as mentally ready as possible to conquer any difficulty you encounter during your journey.

The strategy in Step 4 can really help you with this as well.

When you're working on creating your simple and repeatable tasks to implement your new habit, **make sure you're addressing those possible failure points** along the way as your tasks change.

Notice how I did this with the running example. A few frequent excuses for not working out for a lot of people are "I don't have the clothes for it", "I should eat something", "I'm not warmed up."

By creating tasks around these mental barriers, you can make sure they're eliminated from your thought process altogether.

- Set out run clothes so they're within easy reach
- Prepare pre-run snacks so you're always fueled for your workout
- Walk to the end of the street to warm up

Of course excuses won't be all you'll encounter, but you get the picture. Just remember to anticipate possible barriers, and be ready for them if and when they happen.

Tip: When creating your tasks, make sure you are keeping them extremely simple. The quicker you can "finish" a task, the quicker you're going to experience **the motivation and momentum** that comes with getting something done.

Step 6 - Get Started and Repeat Your Tasks

If you'll notice something about the previous 5 steps, they were all very powerful, yet simple preparation tasks. A lot of people will tell you to just dive right in, that action is the only way to make significant change.

To an extent I agree.

Action is the only way your change will actually happen in the end, but what these 'experts' don't realize is that action without preparation often just ends up being 'stuff to do.' It's like taking a road trip without a map. Maybe it's cool for a little bit, but in the end you'll just end up trying to find your way back home.

These preparation steps will set you up to be successful from the start, so your risk of failure is heavily mitigated.

So up to this point you have:

- Chosen small milestones towards a large change goal
- Created your change path, or "how" you'll make your change
- Planned how you will free up the time to make your change
- Created a simple and repeatable task-based implementation system
- Eliminated your potential failure points

You've essentially eliminated all of the sticking points you'll have along the way, allowing you to focus solely on the tasks you need to carry out in order to make your change.

Now, Repeat Your Tasks

Remember the tasks you set for yourself in Steps 4 and 5?

These are the steps you will carry out each day in order to achieve your change.

Too many people get caught up in the end result of their change, that they forget that they need to take steps along the way to get there, as well as prepare correctly.

A star athlete focuses on doing the best they can from play to play, and the wins will take care of themselves.

The same is true for you.

Each task you created is designed to be small, simple, and repeatable enough that you can easily just follow the map you created for yourself, and your change will take care of itself.

You'll be completely free of worry.

Put these tasks somewhere in plain sight so you'll remember to do them, and now go ahead, get started, and simply repeat your tasks until your life change is complete.

It's that simple.

Conclusion

The main difference you'll notice in the strategy laid out in this eBook, is that it focuses on the use of science and psychology to help you make a change.

It's not just a few random steps pulled together from a few blog posts from dusty corners of the web. This is a tested strategy that I've used my entire life to implement life changes.

By focusing on making your change more achievable, outlining your path in advance, making sure you have the time to do it, creating your simple implementation tasks, and eliminating your failure points, you'll be set up perfectly to make your change.

If you simply follow this process, your change will literally happen on autopilot.

Help Change the World

If this eBook has helped you, please send it to a friend who you think it may help as well. Just open up your email program and send the link on over.

To Your Success!

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