

LIVE EMPOWERED!

October 2008

Written and Published by Linda T. Inatsuka, Ph.D. to inform, educate and INSPIRE!

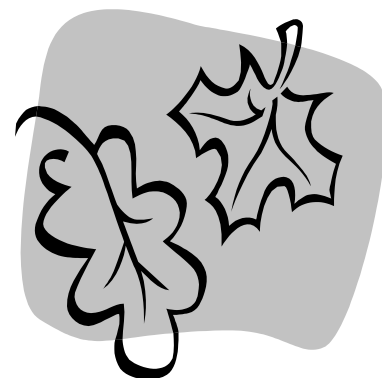
Special Points of Interest:

- Do you have difficulty making and sustaining positive behavior changes? Learn the steps to successful behavior change.
- Read a book about dealing with unexpected change. What you need to know during these challenging times.
- Our updated website is up and running!

A PERSONAL NOTE FROM DR. LINDA

Fall has finally arrived! For all you Floridians, it's hard to believe that the season has changed, as we continue to have "balmy" days. However, I've felt a slight cooling of the weather, and I can't wait until it's "brisk!" For those of you living up north, you may have already been experiencing the change in seasons from summer to fall with cooler weather and perhaps, the changing color of the leaves. The change in season usually means the end of a phase and the beginning of something new. Likewise, I tend to look upon fall as a time to make some changes, "to turn a new leaf" so to speak.

Over the past few weeks, many of my clients have had to deal with making behavioral changes—some minor and a few major ones. Most have had to evaluate their behaviors and come to the conclusion that these "ways of being" are no longer effective for them. Despite this knowledge, a number of my clients, perhaps like many of us, struggle to make these changes. This is most likely due to not wanting to leave our "comfort zones," or the fear of the unknown, or even the fear of failure. Making and sustaining behavior change is difficult, but there are strategies or supports that you can put into place to facilitate success. This month's article is one that I had written over a year ago, but I felt that it would be valuable to publish this again. I've also added more steps to it.



FEATURE ARTICLE: *7 Steps to Successful Behavior Change*

Do you have difficulty making behavior changes even though you know you should? Does the thought of making changes in your life overwhelm you? Have you tried to make changes only to fail? Well, you are not alone. Change is difficult for most individuals. Most people resist change because it is uncomfortable. Even though they know changing their behavior(s) will improve their lives, making and sustaining those changes seem to present more discomfort than continuing with the "old" behaviors. The following steps will help you to "set yourself up for success" when making positive behavior changes.

(continued on page 2)

Inside this issue:

Fall has arrived!	1
Feature Article: 7 Steps to Successful Behavior Change	1
Dr. Linda reads . . .	3
Upcoming Events	3
Food for thought . . .	3

LIVE EMPOWERED!

FEATURE ARTICLE: (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

1. **Set clear, positive, realistic goals.** When setting goals, make sure they are clear. Rather than stating, “I will lose weight,” your goal should be, “I will lose five pounds.” Or instead of “I will be more organized,” say “I’ll use a daily planner to keep my appointments.” Goals should also be positive. Instead of “I won’t eat junk food,” say “I will eat a balanced diet consisting of nutritious foods.” So, rather than focusing on what you *won’t* do, ask yourself what *will* you do instead. Keep your goals realistic. Setting a goal that you will run three miles in a week when you’ve lived most of your life as a “couch potato” is not realistic. But beginning a walking program working up to being able to walk three miles a day in two months may be a more achievable goal. Similarly, if you are working on being more organized, trying to be like Martha Stewart immediately may not be realistic.
2. **Monitor your progress.** “What cannot be measured, cannot be changed.” A lot of our thoughts and behaviors are unconscious or habitual. By monitoring your progress, you become aware of your behaviors. This will also help you to see how you are doing, and if necessary, make additional changes or modifications to your goals/plans along the way. You can monitor your progress by keeping a log, chart, or recording behavioral changes in your daily planner or calendar.
3. **Seek support from others.** Getting support from others not only helps when “the going gets tough,” but they will also cheer you on when you are doing well. They may also provide you with the accountability you need when you are “slipping” back into your “old” behaviors. You can seek support from family and friends (just make sure they are positive and invested in your success) or support groups.
4. **Develop positive self-statements.** Along with having a support network, you need to support yourself when making behavior changes. Using self-statements or self-affirmations empowers you and facilitates positive change. Again, these statements should be positive (e.g., “I am making progress everyday” versus “I am not doing [whatever behavior you are changing].”)
5. **Visualize yourself making these changes.** “If you can see it, you can achieve it.” Take 5-10 minutes each day, upon awakening and before going to sleep, visualizing yourself making and achieving the positive behavioral changes. For example, if you are making changes to lose weight or improve your health, see yourself exercising and eating nutritious foods. If you are working to be more organized, envision yourself living in an environment free of clutter or using a planner to keep your appointments/commitments. After all is said and done, what will these changes “look” like in your life? Be specific as possible.
6. **Identify and prepare for possible obstacles and setbacks.** Yes, this may sound like I’m contradicting myself about being positive. However, most people set out to change their behaviors and have good intentions of doing so, but “derail” when faced with challenges. Rather than “wait to see what happens,” prepare for possible obstacles. These are situations you have faced (or anticipate) that may lead you to quit or give up. For example, how will you incorporate exercising when you have to work overtime or finish a project? What can you do to maintain positive changes when you feel stressed and want to revert back to old behaviors? Most people also take an “all-or-nothing” approach. That is, once they revert back to their old behaviors, they feel they’ve failed and give up. So, the question to ask yourself is “If I have a setback, how can I get back on track?” Remember, setbacks are a normal part of life. It’s how you manage them that will determine success.
7. **Reward your progress.** We all need rewards to keep us going. You are more apt to continue with behaviors that are rewarded or positively reinforced. Using your log/chart (see Step #2), determine when you will reward yourself. For example, you may want to reward yourself at certain “benchmarks,” such as at the end of a week when you have exercised at least three times that week. Rewards can consist of items that require no money or are of little cost (e.g., reading a good book, taking a walk, buying a magazine) or those that are more costly (e.g., a new wardrobe, a set of golf clubs). Of course, you’ll probably want to give yourself the less expensive rewards more often than the costlier ones. The point is to reward yourself in regular intervals (at least once a week) to sustain your motivation.

FEATURE ARTICLE: (CONTINUED)

Finally, once you have your plan in place and start to make positive behavior changes, re-evaluate or re-assess your plan and progress at least every few weeks. If something is not effective, it may not necessarily mean that you need to start all over, but rather that your plan simply needs to be modified.

Making positive behavior change(s) (even though we know we need to) is difficult. However, with these seven steps, you'll have a plan that you can follow to help you be successful in reaching your goals. Also, note that these steps can be applied to practically any type of behavior you would like to change.

© 2008 Linda T. Inatsuka, Ph.D. (LTI Associates, Inc.) All Rights Reserved.

DR. LINDA READS . . .

Who Moved My Cheese? An A-Mazing Way to Deal with Change in Your Work and in Your Life by Spencer Johnson, M.D. (1998)

Speaking of change . . . Due to our nation's current economic situation, many of us have been faced with significant changes: the way we live, how we spend/save our money, how we run our businesses, etc. For most, these changes are not what we had anticipated. This book, though written a few years ago, speaks to how we can deal with change both in our personal and professional lives.

Written as a parable, this is a book you can read within an hour or two, maybe even less. (My kind of reading!) The story centers around four characters, two mice named Sniff and Scurry, and two "little people" named Hem and Haw. The characters all live in a maze, but initially in Cheese Station C where the "cheese" is currently located. As you might guess, "cheese" is a metaphor for what you want to have in life (e.g., a relationship, job, wealth, material possession, good health, etc.) and "the maze" is where you look for the cheese (e.g., company you work for, your community, family, etc.).

The characters are faced with unexpected change. Each has a way of dealing with this change, which reflects how you may deal with change. You will probably identify with one or more of the characters as to how they react to change. You may realize that "how you react to change" is something that "you want to change." There are also the many "Handwriting on the Wall," which are tips, or rather insights, which will help you view and cope with change in a productive manner.

I highly recommend this book, as it speaks to how we can deal with change and also anticipate future changes. Although I actually read this book a few years ago, I found it to be relevant even now, especially as we go through these challenging times.

UPCOMING EVENTS

The new, updated website is finally done! Check it out at www.liveempowered.com. The website now contains FREE reports, resources, and tools that are all downloadable. Of course, we will continue to update the website to include more resources and tools to help you "live an empowered life."

FOOD FOR THOUGHT . . .

"Change has a considerable psychological impact on the human mind. To the fearful, it is threatening because it means that things may get worse. To the hopeful, it is encouraging because things may get better. To the confident, it is inspiring because the challenge exists to make things better."
-King Whitney, Jr.

"It's not that some people have willpower and some don't. It's that some people are ready to change and others are not."
-James Gordon, M.D.

"Only I can change my life. No one can do it for me."

-Carol Burnett

Linda T. Inatsuka, Ph.D.

LTI Associates, Inc.

8066 North 56th Street
Tampa, Florida 33617

TEL.: (813) 985-6121
FAX: (813) 985-7149
E-mail: drlinda@liveempowered.com
www.liveempowered.com

Empowering individuals to live successful and fulfilling lives.

ABOUT DR. LINDA INATSUKA

Psychologist Dr. Linda Inatsuka (FL License #PY0005714) provides strength-based, solution-focused counseling services to empower individuals to solve problems such as overcoming depression and grief, finding relief from anxiety and stress, changing unhealthy behaviors, and rediscovering the joy in their relationships.

If you live in the Tampa Bay area in Florida and would like to learn how our services can help you, please call us for a FREE phone consultation at (813) 985-6121, or contact Dr. Inatsuka via e-mail at drlinda@liveempowered.com.

Live Empowered! is a monthly newsletter written and published by Linda T. Inatsuka, Ph.D. (LTI Associates, Inc.). To receive your FREE on-line subscription to this newsletter, visit our website at www.liveempowered.com.

You may share this newsletter with people you think may enjoy it. When doing so, please forward/copy it in its entirety, including our contact and copyright information.

Want to use the Feature Article in your newsletter, e-zine, or website? You may do so, as long as you include the copyright information and the following: "Psychologist Dr. Linda T. Inatsuka (FL License #PY0005714) provides strength-based, solution-focused counseling and coaching services to empower individuals to solve problems such as overcoming depression and grief, finding relief from anxiety and stress, changing unhealthy behaviors, and rediscovering the joy in their relationships. She can be contacted at drlinda@liveempowered.com or www.liveempowered.com."

Please send your comments or suggestions for future articles to info@liveempowered.com.

Legal Disclaimer: The contents of this newsletter should not be construed as "psychotherapy" or "counseling" provided by a licensed professional. This newsletter is published for informational purposes only. Therefore, this newsletter, although written and published by a licensed psychologist, does not render psychological, financial, legal, or other professional services. If expert assistance or counseling/therapy is needed, the services of a competent professional should be sought.