

Ask Your Therapist

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Baby Steps

Last month I wrote about the value of living in the moment and noticing that (most times) you are actually quite fine in the moment and it is the thoughts of the past or of the future which tend to keep us from being in a peaceful state right now. I know I am about to date myself but do you remember Ram Dass's book **Be Here Now**? He was on to this a long time ago, as were many wise people before him.

Incremental change, or baby steps as many people think of them, is a compassionate process of creating change that works on a developmental model which involves 1. identifying the change that is needed, 2. identifying all the steps that make up the change, 3. putting the steps in logical order and 4. taking one step at a time to achieve the change. It follows the concept that first we must crawl before we can stand and we must first walk before we can run.

Compassion is a major piece of successful change. Most folks find change to be very difficult and they would rather stay with that which they know rather than to risk leaving the familiar behind to move into something new and unfamiliar, no matter how much better the change might be for them.

Many people use external forces to help motivate them to make change such as using dates (New Year, by my birthday, before my class reunion) or money (when cigarettes reach \$X per pack, when houses drop below \$X, when I get my next raise) or the pressure of other people (before my in-laws visit, before my spouse finds out, before the secret comes out) to thrash themselves into instigating change but it is rarely pretty. How many people do you know who sickened themselves from crash diets or stopping drinking/cigarettes/drugs too quickly or without a plan and then returned to the old behavior?

So take whatever motivation you can find, define the change you want to make, map out the baby steps, put them in order with a REALISTIC timetable for successful implementation and get started. Then remember to acknowledge and appreciate yourself for the completion of each step, no matter how simple it is.

To read all the prior Ask Your Therapist columns go to www.krishnabai.com where you can also send Krishnabai a general question for her column.

Krishnabai, MSW is a therapist in Ashby and Wellesley Hills where she sees adults, older teens and couples. The core of her work is the discovery and expression of the Authentic Self. She focuses on the identification, expression, and resolution of emotions, commitment to honesty and the use of remedial education and information. The Ashby Center for Counseling 978-827-1181.