

Harness the Power of Choice

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“Insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results.” —Albert Einstein

We all have the personal power of choice, and we can use that power to stop the cycles of sabotaging behaviors that often become repetitive programs within our unconscious. To begin the journey of replacing negative behavior patterns and shifting into healthy alternatives we must embrace the “Three A’s,” which are Awareness, Acceptance, and Action. Used together, they establish a repeatable process that can break through the barriers that block us from fulfilling our highest potentials in life.

Awareness is moving from the unconscious to the conscious.

This is the first step to reclaiming your power of choice. You know that you are moving in that direction when you are no longer denying that the negative behavior is “just the way I am.” Begin by making a list of the behaviors that you recognize as harmful and hampering in your life and then prioritize them. For example, “making excuses” may surface as your biggest challenge when it comes to moving forward to meet your goals and live your dreams. Once you’ve identified the top offender, the next step is to bring all aspects of the behavior into your conscious awareness by looking at the feelings that come up when you are engaged in this activity.

Document the physical responses, emotions, and mental tapes that start running on autopilot when the sabotaging behavior crops up. For example, a physical response to making excuses might be sweating, an emotional response could be inferiority or guilt, and you may be playing a tape that says, “I tried before and it didn’t work” or “I’m afraid to tell the truth because....” Identifying the components of the negative behavior is invaluable so that you can recognize what you are doing, stop the cycle, and be ready to change by choosing to shift into acceptance. At any moment, once you are aware, you can stop making an excuse and accept that you were just making an excuse. The shift is to accept that you were doing the negative behavior—making excuses—again.

Acceptance is removing the resistance to “what is.”

Resistance is “yes, but...” Changing a negative pattern of behavior is a process that requires patience and understanding as you observe yourself. Acceptance is the willingness to believe that something is true, and willingness is voluntary. Here you are willing to release the power that the negative pattern held over you by owning that you did it and are doing it now. Now there is energy to invite the new behavior as a replacement of the old. What is the new behavior to replace making excuses? It is accepting responsibility for change.

Action is the willingness to do what it takes to live a new choice.

In this process, responsibility is the self-selected obligation to carry forward an assigned task and take the necessary action to a successful conclusion. One of the biggest challenges is having a blueprint of what you want the outcome to be and how to check along the way to make sure that you are on track. In other words, making a lasting change requires a plan. I recommend using the SMART model of establishing goals and objectives, which have the characteristics of being specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely (SMART). Select an area of your life (career, health, etc.) in which you want to make a change and write an outcome in the form of a SMART goal. Then you can monitor your actions. Are the actions leading you toward or away from achieving your goal? Periodic adjustments are part of the process.

You also can include affirmations to help you along the way. For the new choice of responsibility to replace making excuses, an affirmation could be, “I choose to respond with consistent actions and be responsible for my changes.” In my workshops, I use affirmations in combination with inspirational imagery from award-winning photographer Herb Cohen to help to reinforce the messages through visual stimulus. Changing your lifestyle is never easy, but even if you only spend 5, 10, or 30 minutes each day in the pursuit of your goals, you will be creating new and inspiring positive habits that will last a lifetime.

The power of choice is an ongoing process.

“Nothing can stop the man with the right mental attitude from achieving his goal; nothing on earth can help the man with the wrong mental attitude.” — Thomas Jefferson

You have the opportunity to apply the power of choice at each moment in each day of your life. By accepting that the process will be a series of starts and some steps back and then keeping a clear SMART goal as a guide, you can change any negative behavior into a new positive pattern of living.

“If you can imagine it, you can achieve it; if you can dream it, you can become it.”
—William Arthur Ward.

Linda Williams M.A., has spent the past 20 years focusing on the challenges of the change process, communication skills, leadership development, team building, and time management. As a mediator, she has extensive experience in conflict resolution, problem solving and decision making strategies. For more information on her workshops, including “Breaking the Barriers Through the Power of Choice,” a series of workshops developed in conjunction with photographer Herb Cohen, [contact lindawilliams.choice@gmail.com](mailto:lindawilliams.choice@gmail.com) or call 941-400-1270.

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