



**Mosaic Counseling**  
Employee Assistance Program

FOR EAP QUESTIONS CONTACT YOUR  
EAP ADVOCATE, CHRIS CLEGG  
MOBILE 906-440-3094  
CHRIS@MOSAICCOUNSELING.COM

# MOSAIC MENTAL HEALTH TIPS

THE OFFICIAL EAP NEWSLETTER FROM MOSAIC COUNSELING



## 5 WAYS TO MAKE CHANGES THAT STICK

By Elizabeth Lombardo Ph.D. Psychology Today - <http://tinyurl.com/MMHT-Jan24>

Whether it's a New Year's resolution or a resolution for a new you anytime of the year, sustained change can be difficult. One study found that 24 percent of people had dropped their resolutions by the time February rolled around, and, by six months, over half of people had given up. Luckily, it is not impossible to change your ways. And the best way to make that change? Drop the perfectionism and be better than perfect.

Perfectionism, or an all-or-nothing mentality, gets in the way of maintained changes. Perfectionism sounds something like this:

- "I had one cookie and ruined my diet, so I might as well eat the rest of the plate."
- "I don't have time to meditate as long as I want to, so I'm not going to do it at all."
- "I can't afford a gym membership, so I can't work out."

This all-or-nothing mindset gets in your way of making progress. The antidote to perfectionism, however, is not to give up. Giving up is actually a symptom of perfectionism. Instead, be better than perfect. Being better than perfect means you focus on the change that you want and why you want it. You take steps toward that goal, celebrating each step in the right direction. What's more, you stop judging yourself when you make a mistake.



## Here are five ways to make sustained change by being better than perfect:

**1. Focus on your why.** Frequently, when people are making a change, they focus on what they don't like about it. If your resolution is to exercise, you may focus on how much you hate running or going to the gym. The secret, however, is to focus on why you want to make that change. What are the benefits of making this change? Consider psychological, physical, relationship, purpose/work, spirituality. For example, exercise has been shown to be a great way to release stress and decrease depression. That's good for your psychological health. Regarding your physical health, exercise can help you not only lose weight and tone up your body, but also help you fight infection by boosting your immune system. Socially, research shows that people who exercise together are happier together. Regarding your work, exercise can help boost creativity and productivity, which helps you be a better worker. Financially, you can save money by being healthier. And spiritually, because exercise helps reduce stress, it can allow you to focus more on what is important to you – your values – as opposed to being overwhelmed with stress.



**2. It's not failure; it's data.** People often give up on a resolution or change when they revert back to their old ways. Maybe your resolution is to be more organized, and yet you realize at the end of the week that your desk is just as messy as always. Instead of beating yourself up and proclaiming, "This will never work!" use the situation as data. By data, I mean information that you can learn from to make positive changes. For example, if your desk is a mess, you may want to set a reminder every afternoon for you to take five minutes and clean it up. You can learn from what didn't work to make it work.



**3. Take – and celebrate – even small steps.** People often bite off huge goals for New Year's resolutions. Perhaps it is to lose a significant amount of weight or to never eat sugar again or to never fight with your partner again. While these are certainly wonderful aspirations, they are *significant* changes. As I often tell my clients, the way to get to the top of the Empire State building is not in one big step. There are a lot of steps that go into it. As I often tell my clients, the way to get to the top of the Empire State building is not in one big step. There are a lot of steps that go into it. For you, celebrate each step in the right direction. And if you revert to old ways, reread number 2, and apply it. apply it.



Here are some ways to take steps in the right direction without having to have things be "perfect":

- Don't have time to do 20 minutes of meditation? Take five deep breaths.
- Hate going to the gym? Try an exercise video on YouTube.
- Don't have the money to only eat fresh organic vegetables? Choose one or two that you will incorporate into your diet.

**4. Schedule it.** Sure, it sounds great to have a goal of lessening your stress, but how can you actually do it? The key is to figure out actionable steps and then schedule them. Perhaps you choose to wake up 10 minutes early to meditate. Or maybe you set a reminder midmorning, when you tend to be more stressed, to stop and just take five breaths.



You can also use an association method. For example, before I became a psychologist, I was a physical therapist. During my training, one of my clinical instructors pointed out what horrible posture I had. My goal was to have good posture, to sit up straight, but it was hard for me to make that change. So, what I ended up doing was associate every time I looked at my watch with sitting up straight. The more I did that, the more automatic it became, and then my posture got better.

**5. Get an accountability partner.** Choose someone to whom you will be accountable—whether it's your partner, a friend, or a coach. Sure, you may want to make the change, but when we are accountable to someone else, we are more likely to stick with that new behavior. 🧊

