

Change One Thing

Bill O'Hanlon, 223 N. Guadalupe #278, Santa Fe, NM 87501 USA
www.billohanlon.com, PossiBill@aol.com

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Sometimes we don't make changes because they are too difficult or daunting or we are "fixin' to get ready," as my friend Helen says. One way to get change going is to consider the smallest change you can make and begin. Often inertia will continue to take you in the direction of change once you start. If not, at least you are moving forward a little. As Milton Erickson used to say, "If you fall on your face, at least you are heading in the right direction."

Identify the smallest change you can make and begin

If you want to write a book and aren't getting it done, try writing one word a day. I used to recommend five minutes a day (which is fine if that works for you), but if even five minutes seems too much, start with one word a day. Clean up, organize, or toss one piece from that stack of papers/mail/magazines cluttering your house or office.

Commit to a limited period of time for the change

You could commit to walking for five minutes a day for the next week. Or de-cluttering that pile of papers for the next three days. Forever is too daunting for most. Time-limited often works better.

Focus on only one thing at a time

Stop multi-tasking and experiment with doing only the thing you are doing. Or attend only to the person or experience you are with at the moment. Listen to and watch the person you are conversing with (rather than texting, glancing at the television, thinking about what you will do or say next, etc.). Eat when you are eating. Drive when you are driving.

Build a new habit one day at a time

Do the new habit for 5 minutes each day until it becomes ingrained, then expand the time or effort you put in.

Dismantle an old, unhelpful or unhealthy habit one piece at a time

Change one small thing about the old habit. Drink half a soda and half a glass of water with a meal instead of a soda. Park a little farther away from the store or your workplace and walk a little. Eat everything that is unhealthy with your non-dominant hand.