



# What It Takes To CHANGE

An eight-step process for lasting success  
By Margaret Moore

**I**t used to be that people who were overwhelmed, overworked or overweight were told to “get a grip.” Now they’re being referred to coaches to “get it done.” Professional coaches are masterful in helping people grow and change for good by using techniques that are critical in personal training as well.

Imagine the influence you, the trainer, would have with your client if you not only implemented the steps to physical change but also used the techniques of professional wellness coaches to create emotional change. Here’s an eight-step process used by some of the best coaches today that will help you facilitate fundamental change in your clients. (Don’t hesitate to consult with a certified coach if you get stuck.) Lead your clients through the following questions to create instant dialogue and potential breakthroughs in their journey to become the best they can be:

**1. What’s working now in my health and well-being?** It’s important to keep looking at the bright side — what’s working, what’s good and what’s strong — and not just at what’s not working, wrong or weak. So first ask your clients to ask themselves and others who know them well, “What’s right about me and my life?” The answers may surprise them and will definitely make them feel better. When they feel good about themselves and their lives, they’ll be energized and more able to take on the challenges of change.

**2. What’s my vision for change?** A vision is a compelling statement of who you want to become, or grow into, and what health-promoting, life-giving behaviors you will be engaging in consistently when you get there. Ask your clients what kind of person do they want to be when it comes to their health and happiness. What would they look and feel like at their ideal? What would the person they want to be do? Help them clarify their vision statement until it’s simple and succinct. If they keep their vision in mind and, even better, in their heart, it will serve as a guide to making the many choices on their path that moves them toward their vision. Remind them to call their vision to top of mind in moments of decision to help them stay on track.

**3. Why does the change matter a lot to me?** For change to be successful, it needs to be aligned with your clients’ core values. So ask your clients — and encourage their honesty — “What do you value most about your life? How does your vision align with what you value most?” Another line of inquiry is to consider why they care about the change. What makes this change really important to them? Why do they really want to reach this goal? What good will come from successfully attaining their goal? Find the deepest motivation for change they can tap into. They’ll feel an emotional shift, and you may even notice a few tears when you, and they, connect with what they really want.

**4. What strengths can I bring to the change process?** Now focus on their strengths. What strengths and talents that they use in other areas of their lives can they draw upon to help them realize their vision and rise above challenges? How can the lessons from their past successes carry over to their current challenges?

**5. What are my greatest challenges, and how can I overcome them?** What challenges do your clients anticipate having to deal with on the way to reaching their visions? Generate multiple scenarios: Which concerns them most? Now it's time to strategize: What strategies may be effective to overcome these challenges and help them realize their goals? Don't forget their supports: What people, resources, systems and environments can they draw on to help them realize their vision and meet their challenges?

**6. What are my first priorities for change and improvement?** How can I turn them into specific goals for myself? Now it's time to make a list of those specific areas that they want to work on as they travel toward their vision. Those areas could range from eating breakfast every morning to doing more cardio on their own to recharging their batteries during the day to stave off overwhelm or connecting more with their mates or colleagues. Now prioritize: What's most important to begin with? Ask the following question: "What are you ready, willing and able to work on in the next three months?" Get specific as you list their goals. They should be SMART: Specific, Measurable (e.g. an increase from one to three servings of veggies per day), Action-based (specific behaviors), Realistic and have a Timeline (e.g. "In three months, I will be eating breakfast five days a week"). Goals should stretch them enough so they don't become bored but aren't too insurmountable so that they become anxious.

**7. How ready, confident and committed am I to take the first steps toward my vision?** They are almost there. But first, take a moment to assess their confidence. Think about the size of the gap between Point A (starting point) and Point B (their goals). On a scale of zero to 10, with 10 being really confident and zero having no confidence, how confident are they that they can close this gap and reach those goals? If they are at least a seven, it's a good time to go for it. If not, you may want to help them scale back their goals.

**8. What will I do next week?** Changes that last go baby step by baby step. As they say, Rome wasn't built in a day, so break down their goals into weekly stepping stones. And always be SMART in designing goals.

Real change toward your "best self" requires self-acceptance and courage. Help clients realize the journey is satisfying and rewarding as they navigate the challenges along the way. And if they should slip, help them fend off discouragement and remind them to never see themselves as a failure. Each slip is a valuable opportunity to learn and grow.

Make sure to celebrate your clients' successes — even the little ones. Remember, no success is too small to acknowledge and feel good about. Be your clients' cheering section, and invite others to cheer them along as well. Above all, encourage them to have fun. As coach Kate Larsen says, "It's about progress, not perfection."

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