

Making changes is one of the hardest things about living with diabetes. Things you used to do without thinking can start to feel like a chore. Hopefully, you have learned some ways to make changes more easily. You may have read some tips in this magazine or received some helpful advice from your diabetes educator. Perhaps you figured some things out on your own and learned what works for you. In addition, a recent study may give you some insights about how to make changes.

That study, published in the *Journal of Consumer Research*, was done among people whose goal was to save money. The researchers found that people who focused only on the concrete steps of how they would make a change did not do as well as people who were able to think more broadly about why they wanted to make that change. By understanding more about why they wanted to reach a goal, they were able to adapt more easily to situations in which their plan would not work.

Making changes is hard, but thinking about why you want to make each change can help make it easier to reach your goals.

THE BIG PICTURE

By Martha Funnell, MS, RN, CDE

HOW WILL I DO IT?

The study showed that creating a plan for how to make a change does help to make it easier. For example, if you want to lose weight, you need to create a specific plan to make this happen. You might decide to eat smaller portions at restaurants or order regular-sized items instead of the super-sized versions. Or you might decide to take your lunch to work. But what if the restaurant doesn't offer a smaller-sized portion? What if your co-workers invite you out for fast food at lunchtime? Even the best plans won't work all the time. When your plan doesn't work, it can leave you feeling down about yourself or like a failure.

WHY WILL I DO IT?

The study showed that it also helps to think about why you want to do something. If you know why you want to reach a goal, it may help you make better choices when things do not go as planned. For example, if you

think about why losing weight is important to you, you will be more likely to make choices in every situation to reach your goal. In the examples above, if the portions are all too large at a restaurant, you might choose to put half your food into a doggie bag before you start eating. If you decide to go out with your co-workers at lunchtime, you could choose to order a smaller portion or a healthier option from the menu. Even if your plan needs to change, you can still feel good about your decision because your actions will help you reach your overall goal.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO ME?

As you think about the changes you want to make, ask yourself why you want to reach this goal. For most people, the answers need to go beyond feeling better, being healthier, preventing complications and managing their blood glucose levels. Your reasons need to be very personal to you. Your goal also needs to be important to you, not your spouse, health care provider or others.



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Questions to help you decide how important making a change is for you:

1

What is inspiring to me about caring better for my diabetes?

2

What problem do I want to solve?

3

How do I feel about this goal?

4

Is this goal a priority in my life right now?

5

How will I feel if I am not able to reach this goal?

6

Am I ready and motivated to work on this goal?

7

Why is this important to me?