

# Getting started on the road to well-being



To get started with any endeavor, you need motivation. Motivation comes from the concept of movement — “to move.” Think about the driving forces behind your desire to achieve your vision of optimal well-being.

## There are two categories of motivational forces:

- **External motivation** occurs when someone else, for example, your boss, spouse or doctor, tells you what to do. You may act on external motivation to avoid conflict or to obtain a reward. Another type of external motivation arises when you act because another person believes the action is important. The act does not necessarily align with your core values (what’s really important to you). Someone else says, “You should.....” or “You ought to.....”. Although external motivation may work in the short term, it is usually not an effective form of motivation for the long term. You are likely to stop the action when the external pressure is off.
- **Internal motivation** comes from within you and leads to sustainable motivation. Connecting an action to something that is important for your future or something that fits with how you’d like to think and feel about yourself is the type of motivation that works best. This longer lasting, more meaningful motivation will help you stay on track while working toward your vision.

## Importance and confidence — Major components of motivation

Although internal motivation is critical to pursuing and achieving well-being, it is not enough if you don’t have confidence in yourself. Your motivation is the strongest when the opportunity is highly important to you and you are highly confident you can be successful. Use the tips below to build confidence in those important situations where your confidence is low.

### Tips for building confidence<sup>1</sup>

- Break larger tasks or goals into small, achievable steps so that you feel less overwhelmed and experience success faster. Success builds success!
- Draw on resources and skills that you already have.
- Learn and practice a new skill, if needed.
- Tell yourself you can do it – and you will.
- Focus on taking the first step forward.
- Celebrate effort as well as progress.
- Don’t expect “perfection.”

**Readiness for change**

Research has shown that making a change in your life happens in stages. The five stages are<sup>2</sup>:

**Stage 1:** Resisting change; not thinking about changing

**Stage 2:** Thinking about changing but not taking any steps to change

**Stage 3:** Preparing/planning to change, which may include trying out a new behavior

**Stage 4:** Actively implementing the plan for change on a regular basis

**Stage 5:** Maintaining the new behavior for the long term

It is easy to get stuck in the **second stage** — knowing that an action would be beneficial but doing nothing. An effective strategy for moving forward (internal motivation) is to weigh the “pros” and “cons” of the action. For any life area that you’d like to change, identify your “pros” and “cons.” Give this task some serious thought and make your list as comprehensive as possible.

**Activity: My “pros” and “cons”**

I want to improve my well-being as follows: \_\_\_\_\_

“Pros” (benefits and advantages)	“Cons” (barriers and disadvantages)

When the “pros” of changing are stronger than the “cons” for not changing, the balance tips in favor of the change and increases your motivation to move toward action and commitment.

Keep this list of “pros” and “cons” handy as you develop a plan of action. Knowing your “cons” will help you plan ways to overcome barriers. As you experience success, you will add many more “pros” to your list and delete many of the “cons.” Reviewing your “pros” is a good way to stay motivated and on track for the long term.



**Encouragement:**

When it comes to well-being, most people make the mistake of looking for a quick solution. Making change is difficult, but be patient with yourself and try not to get discouraged. You can change the course of your life.<sup>3</sup>

Sources:

1. INTERVENT International. Lifestyle management program: Feeling good about yourself, 2020.
2. Prochaska, JO and Norcross, JC. *Systems of Psychotherapy: A Transtheoretical Analysis – Ninth Edition*. New York City, NY: Oxford University Press, 2018.
3. INTERVENT International. Lifestyle management program: Welcome, 2020.

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