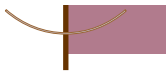




# HAVING TO CHANGE A BAD HABIT



**Being aware that you have to change a bad habit is a start but not enough!**

by PIERRETTE DESROSIERS, M. Ps.,  
Work psychologist, conference speaker, work coach

Although human beings are works-in-progress, it indeed must be affirmed that they do not change so easily and quickly. For example, many people are aware that they need to exercise, eat better and do their accounting on time, but getting started is another matter. There are sometimes very large gaps between our intentions and our actions. Although some bad habits are fairly harmless, like leaving our shoes lying around, others may lead to serious personal, family or business consequences. Changing our habits does not happen overnight. It is a process comprised of well-established phases.

## 1. Pre-intention

The first phase is avoidance or denial. Despite some clues, we don't recognize our problem or we even blame it on someone else or society.

In this phase, ask yourself these questions: do I always seem to be repeating the same mistakes? Do people always seem to be criticizing me for some fact or behaviour? Does it seem as though I am not progressing toward my career and life objectives? Discuss these questions with a friend or loved one who will be able to confront you in a friendly way.

## 2. Intention

We recognize that there is a problem and that we would like to change it. This is the "I should do this or that" phase. This is the phase in which many people make no headway, and they put it off until later. Awareness must be accompanied by an emotional charge strong enough for going into action. It must hurt, or we must have great hopes that we can change.

### Questions:

If I don't change, what will be the short- and long-term consequences for others and for me?

If I do change, what will be the short- and long-term consequences for others and for me?

## 3. Action

You are very motivated and finally ready to change. You have a plan: you set a date, place and schedule, and you have just the right means. In this phase, you must have confidence in yourself and in the measures that you are going to take. It is better to have several strategies instead of only one. Changing is far from easy. You will probably experience anxiety and frustration. They



*Pierrette Desrosiers*  
PSYCOACHING

**Pierrette Desrosiers, M.Ps.**  
*Work Psychologist  
Conference speaker  
Work Coach*

Email: [pierretted@lincsat.com](mailto:pierretted@lincsat.com)  
[www.desrosierspsycoaching.com](http://www.desrosierspsycoaching.com)

☎ 819 849-9016  
📠 819 849-9421

849, Rang 10  
St-Herménégilde, QC  
JOB 2W0

are often the price to pay for breaking old habits. Surround yourself with people who can support you.

#### 4. Setbacks

Remember the reasons why you want to change. Visualize yourself as having obtained the desired result, and sense the emotions associated with that change. Set yourself a reasonable objective to challenge yourself but one that is not too high, which could cause a setback. Make your desire for action or change known to reinforce your motivation.

Make changes in your environment to support your decision. If you want to lose weight, don't buy the little treats that will tempt you. Reward yourself for small advances. You did your accounting on time? Go see a good movie, take some time to relax or go see a friend.

#### 5. Maintenance

The maintenance or adjustment phase is one during which you can revise your objectives, define new phases and try out new strategies. It took you years to acquire some of your habits, so be realistic and give yourself some time to develop new ones. Remember the reasons behind the changes you've made and the benefits of those changes. Finally, remember that changing bad habits is hard, but keeping them can be even harder.

Comments or suggestions? Please contact Pierrette Desrosiers.

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*Pierrette Desrosiers*  
PSYCOACHING

**Pierrette Desrosiers, M.Ps.**  
*Work Psychologist  
Conference speaker  
Work Coach*

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