

DR. LOIS FRANKEL

Get and keep the job you want.

Making a positive and lasting change in behavior is difficult. One of our coaches, Dr. John Miller, has written “Succeed @ Work”, a workbook that helps people become successful at improving their behavior on the job. Here are a few of the tips that Dr. Miller suggests:

1. Clearly identify the specific behaviors that you want to change. If you’re like most people, only a small handful of behaviors are limiting your effectiveness. Therefore, don’t overreact to the need to change. Rather, identify the exact behaviors that are causing you problems on the job. To help you do this successfully, get input from a few trusted colleagues who routinely see you perform. Once you have gathered enough information, write a short and concise statement that clearly articulates the behaviors that you feel need to be changed.

2. Decide on the new positive behaviors that will replace the old behaviors. Now that you know what you need to change, you must itemize the new and more effective behaviors that you want to demonstrate in place of the old behaviors. Be specific and write these in behavioral terms such as, “I will express my opinion in a tactful but forceful manner when confronted by a bullying peer.” Think carefully about the exact behaviors that you want to demonstrate to ensure that they are realistic and achievable.

3. Increase your knowledge base where needed. If, for example, you want to delegate more effectively, you may need to read up on how to successfully make a work assignment. If you want to handle confrontation more effectively, you may need to learn more about different conflict resolution strategies. As a word of caution, some people get stuck at this point as they read endlessly on a subject. They choose to read rather than take action and implement their knowledge. Gaining needed knowledge is important, but don’t use it as a crutch to avoid taking action.

4. Watch others who are good at demonstrating your desired behaviors. You can learn a great deal about how to successfully act out positive behaviors by observing others who are unusually good at demonstrating the very behaviors that you want to adopt.

5. Visualize yourself acting out the new behaviors. Many athletes use visualization techniques as a way to mentally practice their performance. Visualization is a powerful tool that can also help you. To visualize, mentally picture yourself acting out the desirable behaviors in a variety of situations. See yourself being successful in demonstrating the new behaviors and then take a moment to appreciate how good you feel when you are acting in a more effective manner.

6. *Practice, practice, practice.* Behavior is generated based on the neurological connections or pathways in your brain. In this sense, behavior is largely physiological in nature. Over time, you have developed a strong neurological pathway that has resulted in your troublesome behaviors. The only way to develop a new and more effective pathway is by practicing the desirable behaviors over and over. Therefore, you must act out these new behaviors at every appropriate opportunity until they become automatic. Once this happens, the old behaviors will fade. But remember, it takes constant practice!

7. *Don't be discouraged if you are not completely successful at first.* The more deeply entrenched the old behaviors, the more practice it will take to replace them with positive new behaviors. Plan on failing, but don't let your temporary failure defeat you. Learn from your mistakes and try again. I'll make this promise to you: the more you try your new behaviors, the more effective you will become.

8. *Get others to hold you accountable.* More often than not, we tend to avoid asking others to help us change. However, studies indicate that we dramatically improve our chances of changing behaviors by enlisting others to give us on-going feedback about our success in demonstrating new behaviors. Find a few colleagues who are willing to be both honest and helpful, and enlist them as your helpers.

9. *Reward yourself frequently.* Successfully changing behavior is largely based on the frequency that you reward the desirable behavior. When you demonstrate your desirable behaviors, give yourself a mental pat on the back. Don't wait until you are able to demonstrate your new behaviors perfectly to reward yourself. A lasting change in behaviors is built on incremental improvements. Reward yourself for small but positive steps in the right direction.

10. *Keep change a high priority.* I have often stated that people tend to fail immediately after they succeed. That is to say, people take their short term success for granted. For example, anyone can go on a diet for a day, or go to the gym for a week or two. The secret is maintaining the positive behaviors over time. To be successful over time, you must incorporate your desirable new behaviors into your lifestyle. They must become a part of you. Therefore, be vigilant about your change process. Make it as important as anything else you do.

If you would like more information on Dr. Miller's book or to order a copy, please contact Corporate Coaching International at 626-405-7310 or by email at info@corporatecoachingintl.com.

Until next month, stay well.

Lois P. Frankel, Ph.D.