



A big sunny hello to you!

With the increasingly hot days, some of us have been looking forward to getting our summer wardrobe out and to wearing those generally brighter, lighter and tighter-fitting outfits that reveal so much more of our fit bodies. For others, however, this is more like the dreaded moment of truth when we can no longer hide under layers of clothes – the verdict can be harsh, and we might start wondering why it is that we have (yet again) let ourselves become so much out of shape. If you identify with the first group, congratulations, you probably have a good motivation strategy that keeps you fit throughout the year! If you identify more with the second group, you probably also have a strategy in place – a procrastination strategy! While that strategy might not have led you to the results you want, the good news is that there is a way to use it as a basis to move forward. Let's see how.

As a general rule, human beings have been proven to be more motivated by the desire to avoid pain than the prospect of pleasure. In other words, the stick of punishment seems to have more power in our lives than the carrot of reward. A person who procrastinates about something associates more pain to taking action now than to putting it off. By the same token, when they do take action, it generally happens after they have reached a pain threshold that has become unbearable to them: they might start being really concerned about how they will look for an important celebration like a family wedding coming up in two months; or they might start worrying about their health after someone in the family passed away as a result of a weight-related condition. With this type of motivation, the person is not so much moving *towards* a specific long-term goal as they are moving away *from* a given short-term situation. It follows that as soon as the wedding they prepared for is gone or as soon as the memory of that beloved family member's ordeal becomes distant, they might forget everything about their initial motivation and resume their old unhealthy habit – until the next "crisis" situation arises. Hence the never-ending yoyo cycle some of us are trapped in.

So what would be a more powerful and lasting alternative? As mentioned in the [last newsletter](#), to the extent that we get more of what we focus on, it seems that making our goals really compelling by asking ourselves what it is that we are truly looking to achieve in changing a behaviour is the key to our success. Someone who wants to lose weight might want to define not only the specific weight they are aiming for, but also what that would mean to them at a deeper level – how it will allow them not only to look great for a special occasion or to considerably reduce their chances of becoming ill, but also how it will positively affect their intimate relationship (or their prospect of one), how it will allow them to become a powerful role model for their kids and how it will increase their self-confidence at work and in social settings. This type of pleasure-driven motivation, where a change in behaviour is linked to our deeper values and more meaningful long-term goals, is what creates lasting leverage and inspired action in our lives. In other words, while the stick might be the trigger to get us started on the road to change, the carrot is what keeps us there. Of course, this applies not only to our health goals but to any important goal we might find we have not fully committed to yet.



Creating leverage: From stick to carrot...

Think about a truly *significant* goal you have been procrastinating taking action about. It could be a health-related habit you would like to change like smoking or exercising, a work-related habit like consistently working overtime, etc.

1- Ask yourself what you want to *specifically* achieve in that area of your life. Write your goal down in detail. How will you look like once you have achieved that goal? How will you feel? What will you be telling yourself once you have achieved it? What will other significant people say about you when you achieve that goal?

2- Now ask yourself what the current cost of *not* achieving that goal is. Project yourself one, two, four, ten, twenty years from now – write down what the cost of not achieving that goal would be in the longer run. How would you feel as time goes by? How would you look? What would you *not* get to experience if you didn't achieve that goal? What would the cost be to other people in your life – your partner, your children, your grand-children, your co-workers? Be really honest with yourself and get clear about what the costs would be.

3- Now ask yourself what will happen when you do achieve your goal. Write down how you will feel as you achieve it, one, two, four, ten, twenty years from now. What will you get to experience as a result of achieving that goal? Why are those experiences so important to you? How will they make your life truly meaningful? Who will you become in the process? Who else will you inspire along the way – your partner, your children, your grand-children, your co-workers? How might that impact those very people to take action in their own lives and maybe even impact other people as a result?

4- Make a list of what you are prepared to do to make that goal happen *NOW*. What are you prepared to say "yes" to? What are you prepared to say "no" to? Come up with an action plan that truly inspires you.

If you find you need further support in dealing with a challenging behaviour, feel free to book an introductory session via email at sophie@essencialcoaching.com or phone 604 985 4499. You will notice the difference focused action makes in your life!



"The secret of success is learning how to use pain and pleasure, instead of having pain and pleasure use you. If you do that, you're in control of your life. If you don't, life controls you." (Anthony Robbins)

Feel free to pass on this newsletter to anyone you know might be interested or invite them to subscribe to my monthly newsletters, at: [Essencial Coaching Newsletter](#).