

The Seven Cs of Successful Change

Taking charge of your health and your life

Many of us want to make changes in our habits. Sometimes it's a New Year's resolution; sometimes it's advice from the doctor. Sometimes it's just a desire to be stronger or have more energy. We want to eat better and be more active, but we don't always know how to make the necessary changes. Taking some time to consider these seven "C's" of change may help you understand how to get from where you are now - to where you want to be.

1. **Caring** enough to treat your body really well.

Caring about yourself is essential for making any behavior change. Self-care is not selfish - it is what we have to do in order to stop doing one thing and start doing another. Taking good care of yourself also helps you be in better shape to take care of those around you.

2. **Choice** to take small steps in a new direction.

Change is all about making choices. It is making the choice to do one thing (like taking a walk) rather than another (like watching TV). It doesn't mean that you have to give up all television programs. It just means that sometimes you make the choice to be more active.

3. **Creativity** to find a variety of food and fitness options.

The world is filled with stressful situations that can get in the way of our plans to eat well or to be active. The key is to stay calm and to brainstorm a variety of possible solutions. If you are out of fresh produce, you can still enjoy some canned fruit or frozen vegetables.

4. **Courage** for new adventures and everyday challenges.

There is no way around it. It takes courage to make a change. There are many ways to find the courage you need. You can discuss your struggles with friends or family; read inspiring stories about people who have made difficult changes; or find strength in faith and prayer.

5. **Comfort** through tough times with relaxation (or even pampering).

Change is hard work and can be stressful even when it is a positive change. When you are trying to do things differently, you need to rest and recharge your internal batteries. Take time to read a book, to take a nap, to play with the kids or just to do nothing for a while.

6. **Confidence** to take risks and to make normal mistakes.

Optimistic people are generally healthier than pessimistic people. Being confident that you can make positive changes is at least half the battle. Sometimes it helps to make a list of all the changes you have already made, like eating more whole grains or drinking less soda.

7. **Celebration** of the progress toward a strong and healthy you.

Rewards and celebrations are an important part of successful change (think about why we celebrate graduations or job promotions). Give yourself plenty of pats on the back just for moving a step closer to your goal. Gold stars on the calendar aren't just for kids anymore!

