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Feeling Stuck- Part 2: Tools to Support Change

By Brooke Loening

In the first column in this series (dated November 11, 2008, P. B3), I talked about the importance of creating small doable next steps when trying to make headway in a place where you feel stuck. Here are some tips on how to make your next step a reality.

Set your next step with your own success in mind. Create your next step so that it feels comfortable, and totally achievable in the next week. Setting too big of a goal may create panic and resistance and prevent any kind of movement.

Be specific: “I am going to spend a half hour cleaning the car”. This is a good small realistic plan of action. However being more specific will increase the chances of your success. “I will spend a half hour cleaning the car windows inside and out”. Much better. This level of specificity removes some of the feeling of “this is overwhelming” and makes it real.

When? Get clear on your time frame. That way you can block out the necessary time to take your small action. Without this time set aside, it will be much easier to avoid or forget about it. A time frame makes it even more real. “I am going to clean the car windows on Thursday right after I get home from work.”

Accountability: Making a commitment to someone or something outside ourselves is 10 times more powerful than making a commitment just to ourselves. My clients make progress because they make action commitments to me and feel accountable to execute. Someone outside the family is better than a family member because we can take family members for granted. Collaborate with a friend who is interested in the same type of growth, and pick a specific time during the week to check in with that person, and report progress.

Put money on it: If you really want to add incentive, putting money on a goal changes it from being an “item on your do list” to an “emergency.” Make a bet with your friend that you will pay a certain amount to them if you don’t do what you committed to do. My cousin uses an Internet site that will donate your good money to a charity that you do not approve of. The philosophy there: that that will give you much greater incentive to take action than if the money was going to a charity you love!

Brooke Loening is a life coach in Sharon who works with individuals, and runs weekly coaching groups on achieving growth in career, health and relationships. For more information and previous columns visit theloeningplan.com. Columns can also be found at tcextra.com