

## What are YOU Ambivalent about?

Ambivalence- mixed or contradictory feelings and ideas about something or someone

Change is always motivated by discomfort, but often times the discomfort just causes a person to dive deeper into their addiction. The human condition is to resist change as a natural defense mechanism. We may have been doing wrong for so long our own mind justifies our actions. To undo the years of negative, we must first realize it will not be a short and easy process, but nothing worth doing is ever quick and easy. A Journey of 1000 miles must start with a single step, and that step is getting past our ambivalence.

Just because a person hasn't changed doesn't mean they don't want or care to, but usually means they are in the early stages of changing, even if they are there for a prolonged amount of time. Usually, to begin the change process, a person must first believe this is possible. Because of this, positive reinforcement will always work better than negative. Telling one's self "just because I haven't doesn't mean I can't" is a good mantra to remember. If we convince ourselves we can not change, usually we will fail, mostly due to the self-fulfilling prophecy of doubt. All types of things can trigger change; weather it be loss, arrest, treatment, intervention, moment of clarity, or hospitalization, there are many situations which can often spark the fire to start the change. However, just because a person wishes to change, doesn't mean they will. The following are some great motivational strategies:

- take ADVICE and suggestions- listen to others who've come before you and can help in your journey
- removing BARRIERS- realize anything is possible and stop putting doubt in the way of progress
- providing CHOICE- know and act on other ways to enjoy life and find things you truly enjoy and love
- decreasing DESIRABILITY- see your past actions for what they truly were, and see the negative in it
- practicing EMPATHY- try to understand and share the feelings of others different from you
- providing FEEDBACK- be heard by others, and realize your words, thoughts, and feelings matter
- clarifying GOALS- clearly state what you wish to gain from dramatically changing your lifestyle
- active HELPING- give back to those in need, no matter how small, and realize it's internal rewards

Know first that *ambivalence is normal*. Anyone trying to make a major change in their life, no matter what it is, is going to question why they are doing it, allowing doubt to flood the gates. We realize early on we like the idea of changing more than the actual act of changing, especially since we realize the extent in which we need to change, and how difficult it will be. Usually we enter changing with conflicting emotions and motivations. (What are you conflicted about?) Our body is doing one thing, but our mind is headed in another direction, just biding it's time until it can return to how things use to be.



Before this, what's the most difficult change you've ever had to make in your life? How did you overcome it?

Realize change is a journey, not a destination. You must realize in the change process you will go through periods of high motivation, laziness, discomfort, struggle, joy, sadness, enlightenment, regret, willingness, and many more emotions. Again, know this is normal, and know most things, especially your reactions to situations, are in your control. Try to "play the tape out" and not only remember where negative actions have led you in the past, but where positive actions could lead you in the present and future. The urges you will experience to return to your negative lifestyle will be strong at times, but remember they are temporary. When your mind is remembering all the good times you had while in your addiction, try to then remember where it eventually led you, and why you decided to make change in the first place. Never forget what is truly important to you!

What are the pros and cons of changing lifestyle? Which seems more appealing?

Lastly, know ambivalence is generally a fear response, mainly the fear of change, the fear we may lose who we are in the process. Often times we feel like a deer in headlights at the prospect of change. If we face each situation and obstacle in our path of change with frantic and compulsive actions, we are liable to wind up roadkill. Much like the deer in headlights, we have to slow down, assess the situation, and make the best decision in order to avoid disaster. Make no mistake; if a person continues on a self-destructive path, the negative consequences are inevitable. The deer who continues to cross the highway will eventually get hit. Stop and realize there are other paths which can be taken, and life can truly be loved and enjoyed while living in the solution.