

The Ordinary Mortals ® Pathway to Mobilizing Motivation

Steven Jonas, M.D., M.P.H., M.S.,
Professor Emeritus of Preventive Medicine
Stony Brook University
Stony Brook, NY

steven.jonas@stonybrook.edu

www.ordinarymortals.net

January 16, 2014

Copyright, 2014

Designed by www.marknewmanstudio.com

What is motivation?

The longer definition: Motivation is not a thing. It is a mental process that links an emotion, feeling, desire, idea, or intellectual understanding, or a recognized psychological, physiological, or health need, to the taking of one or more actions.

The shorter definition: Motivation is a mental process that links a thought or a feeling to an action.

How people makes changes in their behavior.

One widely used approach to the understanding of the process is the “Stages of Change/Transtheoretical Model,” originally designed by Profs. Prochaska and DiClemente (Prochaska, J.O., Norcross, J., and DiClemente, C. Changing for Good. New York: William Morrow, 1994.). It has Six Stages. They are designated as: 1. Pre-contemplation, 2. Contemplation, 3. Planning, 4. Action, 5. Relapse, and 6. Permanent Maintenance.

The Six Phases of Behavior Change

This is my modification, both in the terminology and the concept, of the “Stages of Change” model. It moves forward from the Transtheoretical Model by recognizing that the key element in proceeding along the pathway towards Permanent Maintenance is crossing the bridge from planning to action. In my view, that requires the specific step of mobilizing motivation. And so, the Phases are:

1. Not on the radar screen.
2. Thinking about it.
3. Going to get going.
4. On the Ordinary Mortals® Pathway to Mobilizing Motivation.
5. Getting going!
6. Making it part of one’s life.

The Ordinary Mortals® Pathway to Mobilizing Motivation.

This, Phase 4 in my model, is the key to success in moving through the Phases of Change. The Pathway itself has Five Steps:

1. **Self-assessment** is asking yourself questions like: where am I now? How did I get here? What do I like about myself? What do I not like? What would I like to change? What is going on in my life that would facilitate behavior change? Inhibit it?
2. **Defining success** has to be done in the context of you as a person, what your measure of your innate skills and capabilities is. To work for you, "success" as you define it has to be something that is reasonable, realistic, and conceivably achievable, for you, given who you are as a person and what else is going on your life (see also 4, below). In defining success for yourself, you have to make sure that you are not setting yourself up for failure. Defining success productively also includes giving yourself permission to fail, assuming that you really did try.
3. **Goal-setting**, the central element in the Pathway, both by location and importance, is accomplished by answering questions like: to where do I want to get? Why do I want to get there? For whom would I be making the change; others, or myself? What do I expect to get out of the change, should I achieve it? What do I think I can reasonably expect to do? What are the "give-ups," and can I, do I want to, commit to them? Arriving at satisfactory answers to these questions for yourself is absolutely key. For doing so, answering the questions "what do I really want to do and why do I want to do it," provides the focus and the concentration you must have in order to have the best chance of success in your chosen endeavour.
4. **Establishing Priorities** among your specific goals and between your new goals and the rest of your life is central to making the whole process work for you. If you have set more than one goal, what is their ranking? Which do you consider to be the most important to achieve? Which the least? In addition, what about priorities between your new goal(s) and other important things that are going on in your life, like family, friends, other leisure time activities, and your job? (See also 2, above.) If juggling needs to be done, it will be very helpful to do some thinking about that and yes, set your priorities.
5. **Taking Control** means putting yourself in charge of the whole process, adopting an "I can do this" attitude and perspective, given that the first four steps have been followed. It means not depending upon anyone else, but also not taking anyone else's direction (advice on both process and content is fine, direction in the sense of "you must do this" is not), of accepting responsibility for both success and failure.

The Seven Keys to Taking Control

Since for most people, making change for themselves, not anyone else, is central to achieving a successful outcome, taking personal control of the whole process is essential. Taking Control itself has seven keys.

1. Understanding for sure that motivation is not a thing, but a process that links a thought or a feeling with an action.
2. Following the first four steps of the Ordinary Mortals® Pathway to Mobilizing Your Motivation, from the beginning.
3. Making sure to examine what you already do well: health- promoting behaviors that are part of your life.
4. Recognizing that gradual change leads to permanent changes.
5. Dealing with the fear both of failure and of success.
6. Being ready to explore your limits while recognizing your limitations.
7. Appreciating the process of psychological immediate gratification.