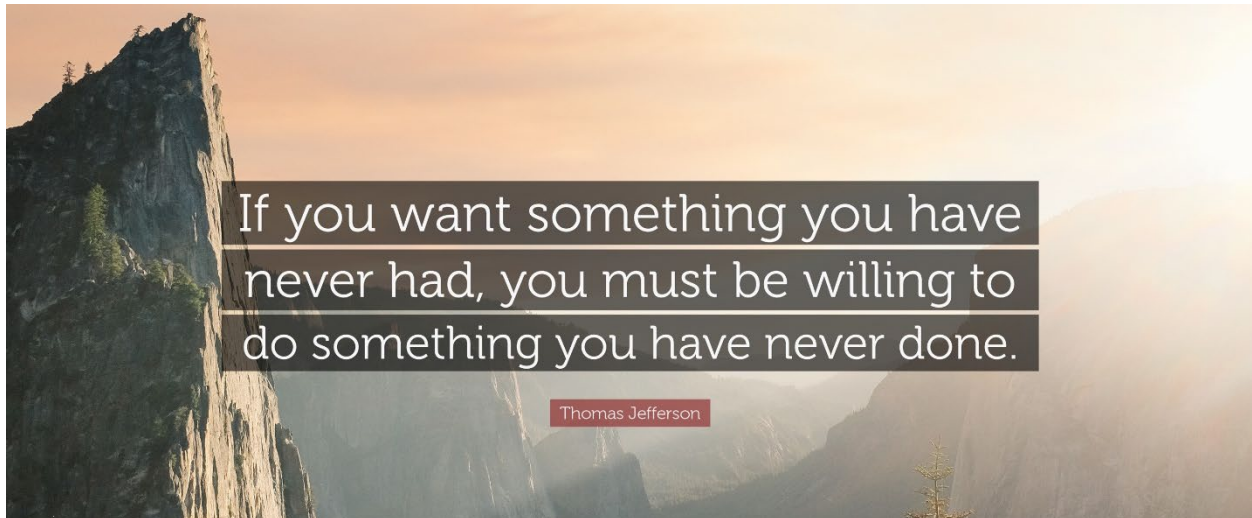


TOOLS FOR CHANGE



1. Prayer.

How often are you taking your concerns to the Lord? Are you believing AND trusting Him to answer you? I've heard people say in a frustrating tone, "I guess the only thing I can do is pray." Prayer is the most important thing to do because God is all-powerful. We are not. Nothing we *do* compares to what He can do.

2. Thought Stopping.

The Apostle Paul told us in 2 Corinthians 10:5 "...take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ" and Proverbs 23:7 says, "As a man thinks, so is he." We can do something about the thoughts that are not pleasing to God. We can do battle. Take control of your self-talk, your worry, your negativity, your grumbling. The Word of God and the power of the Holy Spirit will help you to take your thoughts captive and change them.

3. Put bumpers in the road.

Plan ahead. You know yourself well enough to know what you should and should not do. Choose to put up "bumpers" so you don't fall. Just like children use bumpers when bowling, we need to use bumpers to stay out of the gutters of life.

4. Establish a new routine.

Pay attention to your daily routine and if a certain time of day is most challenging for you, then choose to do something different at that time like going to the gym, taking a class or going for a walk.

5. Use breathing techniques to give you a pause.

This may seem super simplistic but we can slow our heart rate by focusing on our breathing. Take a deep breath and count to eight, then hold your breath for eight counts, and then release your breath for eight counts. Repeat it several times to simply slow down what is happening and gain control of your emotions.

6. Review the reasons you desire the change.

Write a list of all the reasons you want to change and all the negatives of not changing. Review that list often. Keep it in your phone, in the car, etc. so you can access it quickly.

7. Perspective mapping.

Putting things into perspective is key. Ask yourself, "Does this really matter?" "Am I getting overly upset over something that's not that important?" When we put things into perspective, we have better self-control.

8. Feel it and move on.

We can feel a desire but not act on it. So when you "feel" like doing something that is not in alignment with the person you want to be, then simply allow yourself to experience the emotion but not take action. The feeling will pass. You can choose to distract yourself by doing a task like going for a walk.

9. Watch your self-talk. Say "I choose" rather than "I can't."

If you say, "I can't" then you are in a depriving mindset but if you say, "I choose not to" then you are in an empowered mindset. Also cease using absolutes such as: always and never because they are seldom true.

10. Use symbolism to keep you focused.

Put up pictures or sayings that keep your mind focused on what you want. You can re-arrange furniture or paint a room to signify the change you have made in life. Some find it helpful to have a bracelet or ring that they know represents the "new you" that you are working towards.

11. Focus on today only.

We only truly have the present. Nothing more is guaranteed. So, try to not project out about concerns or stumbling blocks. Just deal with today and prepare as best as you can for tomorrow.

12. Track your progress daily.

At the end of each day track the progress you made that day. You will learn what works and what doesn't. You will get insights into yourself and others that you may not otherwise glean. Remember to practice gratitude each day by listing 3-5 new things each day. There's always something to be grateful for in life!