



10 POWER STEPS TO POWERFUL LIFE CHANGE



by Dr. Frank Smoot

"Ten Power Steps to Lasting Behavior Change"

By Dr. Frank B. Smoot, MA, DD

Whether we like it or not, winning at weight loss is going to involve **some** behavior change. Below you will find ten powerful, proven steps for making positive behavior change in your life.

Step One: Acknowledge The Problem

You can solve no problem until you **admit that it exists**. This is equally true for the drug abuser, the battered housewife, the bulimic/anorexic, the chronic womanizer, the workaholic, or the motorist about to run out of gas on the freeway. If you can't be **honest with yourself about your own problems**, you're never going to get where you want to go.

So your first challenge is to overcome your own **denial** (which is the most popular of all the ego "defense mechanisms") by acknowledging that, yes, a problem exists in **your** life.

You begin this process by taking an honest look at what's going on within you and around you. How does your life **feel**? What do the people closest to you **think** and **say**? If others have been trying to tell you something, now is the time to listen -- carefully. (Just be sure the ultimate authority and responsibility always remain with you.)

As with many of life's important changes, taking this first step is largely an act of **faith**. We need to admit that we don't know it all, that no one is born with all the answers, and no one person can figure it all out. Sometimes things that other people know can be of great value to **you**. Of course, you're always free to reject new information after you've considered it. But rejecting it beforehand is merely a sign of ignorance.

Step Two: Take Full Responsibility for the Problem

Taking this step requires you to overcome another extremely popular defense mechanism known as **projection**. If you're ever going to gain the power to deal with your problems, you'll need to stop "projecting" the responsibility for them onto other people.

There is a compelling "logic" that makes projection so attractive -- and so deadly: If you can blame someone else for your problems, then you can avoid feeling guilty or wrong. So you originally learned to project responsibility because it gets you off the hook.

But at the same time, it **robs you of your rightful power** to make positive changes. Only when you realize that personal responsibility *is* power will you stop projecting it onto others. Then you can reclaim this power and use it to create healthier thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and outcomes.

How do you take personal responsibility? Simply by saying to yourself, "I don't know how or why I created this event or circumstance in my life. But if I'm experiencing it, then I somehow created it. Now my job is to recognize the **role I've played.**"

Step Three: Take Responsibility For Finding A Solution

If you've made it to this step, you've gotten beyond the two biggest hurdles: denial and projection. Now that you've taken responsibility for **creating the problem**, you're in a position to **create the solution**. You're neither blaming others for what you experience, nor depending on them to change it. Instead of waiting or hoping for things to get better, you now can **make them better**.

By taking responsibility, you have gained the power of **positive action**. Instead of blaming others or insisting that they make changes, you have become willing to make the necessary changes yourself.

Step Four: Determine Specifically What You're Thinking or Doing That Isn't Working

The greatest challenge of Step Four is to dig deeply enough into your own beliefs and programs to identify **precisely** which thoughts or actions are causing your problems. This process can require courage because you're likely to discover things within yourself (thoughts, feelings, beliefs, attitudes) that you **won't like**, and may have trouble accepting or even acknowledging.

But unwelcome though this information may be, this is exactly the stuff that can **set you free**. After all, if you don't know what's broken, it's pretty hard to fix it.

You also understand that, because your ego is so fearful of change, it may try to prevent you from identifying your own self-sabotaging beliefs. If you have trouble doing so, try this "sneaky" approach: Simply look at the behavior you don't like, and then ask yourself, "What would a person have to **believe** in order to **behave** this way?" Then you will have a pretty good idea what your own self-defeating belief might be.

Step Five: Get Yourself Motivated for Positive Change With "The Cost-Benefit Analysis"

Any of your behaviors -- be they harmful or helpful -- can be **deeply entrenched**. That's because the beliefs that spawn them have probably been with you for many years, and may be all but invisible to you. So, before you can hope to replace them with healthier ones, you'll have to do **two things**. First, you must be fully convinced of what this particular belief/behavior combination has **cost** you so far, and how painful your life will be (or continue to be) if you don't change it. Second, you must be completely sold on the **benefits** -- how much better your life will be when you do make this positive change.

This step may require you to let go of some of your most cherished **illusions** -- about yourself, about your partner, about food, about relationships, about life. Just as the abuser who wants to get clean must give up his or her drug, you, too, must be willing to let go of whatever toxic beliefs are corrupting your thinking and fueling your problem behaviors.

Step Six: Find A Potentially Better Alternative

You've identified a problem belief or behavior. Excellent! Now it's time to ask yourself what you could be doing instead. What **specific changes** might produce better results? What alternative thoughts or actions would be more positive, more self-loving, and less self-destructive?

Or maybe you need to pay closer attention to your self-talk. Does your inner conversation need to be less self-critical? Maybe now is the time to get a bit of **professional help** for additional insight and support, and to greatly accelerate your progress. (For full details on the benefits of personal coaching, please [click here](#).)

Just keep in mind that the first new behavioral option you think of may not be the best one. It may not even work. You must be willing to use the **trial-and-error** approach. If the first one doesn't work, be ready to try something else. And if that doesn't work, try something else. But whatever you do, don't go back to the old ways.

You'll also need a way to tell if your new belief/behavior combo is a success. So before you try something different, decide **in advance** how you want the outcome to look and feel. How will it change your life? Will you spend less time being anxious? Will you be more patient or tolerant? Will you be healthier? Happier?

Will you stop wasting your time and money in self-destructive activities? **Knowing what you want to be different beforehand adds a much-needed dose of objectivity to a process that can be full of illusion and wishful thinking.**

*Congratulations! You're more than halfway through the ten steps at this point! If you find your commitment starting to fade, this a great time to remind yourself **who** you're doing all this work for, **whose** life will be positively affected by your accomplishments, and **who** gets to take their self-improvements with them everywhere they go -- for the rest of their lives. Baby, it's you!*

Step Seven: Believe You Can Do It

Before you can make any meaningful changes, you first must truly believe that you can. It's time to stop saying (and thinking) "I can't" and remember the times when "I did!" It's also helpful to recall any **past successes** and to stay focused on the goal rather than the hurdle. Read positive books. Hang out with positive people. Get yourself inspired!

And it's time to start **distancing** yourself from the negative people and other negative influences in your life. (And there may be more of them than you think.) The **last** thing you need during this fragile, vulnerable time is to be in the company of anyone who would undermine your progress, put you down, or make you doubt yourself.

In other words, **lose the losers**. If your friends drink, you'll have a hard time kicking that habit if you hang around them. If they make complaining and self-pity a way of life, it will be hard to get and keep a positive attitude around them. If they eat too much, well...you get the idea.

Step Eight: Make the New Alternative Behavior Happen One First Time

There's no question about it. The first time you try out a new behavior will be the toughest. This is the very point when **your resistance to change is greatest** and when your old, habitual, automatic behavior will seem like exactly the right thing to do...yet again.

A powerful way to break that cycle is to use something called "behavioral rehearsal." Behavioral rehearsal involves doing something in your mind before you do it for real. Like an actor learning a new part, you set the stage, maybe find someone to "run lines" with you, and envision yourself succeeding at the new behavior. Having **someone else actually play the other part** makes this process even more real, and therefore much more effective.

But whatever it takes, you **must** find a way to break your old, habitual behavior pattern at least one time and try out a new behavior under real-world conditions. Yes, you will be nervous and tentative the first time. Yes, it will feel awkward and uncomfortable. But if you're going to succeed, you simply must be willing to go through these feelings. **You will survive!**

Step Nine: Evaluate Your Results

This step is the simplest one. Did the new approach work better than the old one? If so, go on to Step Ten. If it not, go back to Step Six. It's not a crime to try something that didn't work. But it's **tragic** to quit before you succeed!

Step 10: Make the New Behavior a New Habit

Once you're convinced that the new behavior is better than the old one, you'll want it to become just as **habitual** and **automatic** as the old one was. You can do several things to make this happen.

First, make sure that you're fully **enjoying the good feelings** your new success has brought. You've done some good work, and you deserve to be rewarded. You also can take another look at the cost/benefit equation and make sure you're crystal clear about whether your life is better now.

You should also try to use your newfound skill every chance you get. Remember, many years of repetition is what made the old behavior so hard to get rid of in the first place. **Lots of repetition** is also the best way to solidify the new one.

The reason these Ten Steps work so well is because they deal, not with the symptoms of your problems (your behaviors) but with the **programming** behind them. As you now know if you've ready one of the free e books, a great deal of human behavior is mechanical and automatic, and is the direct result of self-sabotaging beliefs we don't even know we have. So the only way to make the new behavior as automatic as the old one is to **repeat it -- often**. In practice, these steps simply help you to replace one automatic behavior with a different, more helpful one.

Finally, you shouldn't kid yourself about the **commitment** needed to make meaningful changes. It can be difficult to do something new and different in the face of long-established habit. But it's either that or continued failure. As the old sales adage tells us,

*"If you always do what you've always done,
you'll always get what you've always gotten."*

In this case, you'll get more of the same old problems -- definitely **not** what you want.

If you'd like to stop doing what can never work, and start doing what's been proven to work, just send me an e mail [here](#), or call me personally at **540-567-2050**. Don't forget to ask about your **free** 30-minute introductory coaching session, and **start getting the results you deserve!**

Yours in total success...

Frank B. Smoot, DD, MA

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