

Reinvent Yourself

At some point in life, no matter who you are, you'll feel stuck. Want a change in your life? Make today the perfect time to make a change. If you've tried making changes in the past, you know getting excited or motivated about changing your life is the easy part. Fitness and makeover advertisements are everywhere. However, most of us who begin a program of self-improvement start making excuses after several weeks, finding flaws in our plan.

Change is difficult without an achievable goal and solid plan. Reinventing yourself is a challenge to improve yourself, your life and your relationships. It's not about being motivated by the fear of "what if I don't make a change," but rather about growing and learning something new.

All the wishing in the world will do little in helping you improve yourself without your effort to follow through. People who are successful with reinventing themselves are no different from you or me. Have a plan and stick to the plan with actions.

Below are five ways you can begin the process of reinventing

your life beginning now. No matter what area you're wanting to improve upon, it is the ACTIONS you take that begins the process of change.

Name the goal you want to achieve. No one is a fixed state of attributes. You're not doomed to be overweight, disgruntled or angry all the time. You can change your environment, and that changes everything. For example, if friends are sabotaging or holding you back, find ones that are supportive and uplifting. If your job is at a dead end, write a new resume and take actions to prepare yourself for something more suited to you.

Focus on your mental and physical health. No matter what area of reinvention you're focused on, you must take care of yourself. The gyms are full of people working out to get in shape this year. However, they fizzle out because they forget to begin small, growing weary when they can't keep up. Begin with baby steps. Walking 10 minutes a day is better than no walking. You're more likely to work out if you lay out your exercise gear

the night before, schedule the workout in your calendar and have a healthy lunch prepared.

Don't let old thoughts or your mood hold you back. It IS possible to reinvent the way you think. Neuroplasticity research teaches us that the brain can change negative habits no matter how engrained they are. You can teach an old brain new tricks. When your mind begins telling you, "You can't do this," or "You've never done this," replace it with a healthy habit instead of reacting to it and giving up. With practice, your new healthy behaviors will reshape the way your brain works like a smoker who begins chewing gum in lieu of lighting a cigarette. What may have seemed impossible a year ago is possible this year.

Learn something new. If you're reinventing yourself in the job market or going through

a relationship change, one of the biggest obstacles is negative thinking. Your thoughts change when you learn something new. Beginning a new book, an online course, or a volunteer opportunity can help you get back on track. New hobbies can improve your self-esteem and self-worth, making you feel more competent in achieving your goal. Never stop learning.

Any and all growth in an area you are working on is a success. Changing your expectations is not lowering them. Part of the reason people give up on reinventing themselves is because their expectations are out of line with reality. If you've been successful with your plan for two weeks, that means your brain is beginning to make changes. Don't get distracted and throw in the towel if you get off track one day. Get up the next day and make it happen. ♣



MARY JO RAPINI

Mary Jo Rapini is the co-author of *Re-Coupling: a Couple's 4 Step Guide to Greater Intimacy and Better Sex*. A Houston-based psychotherapist specializing in sex and relationships in addition to being a speaker and TV personality. maryjorapini.com