



***What everybody ought to know about change***

[Ada Luz Gonzalez, Ph.D., LMFT](#)



## Why is it so hard to change?

***How many times have you decided you need to change something and started your new plan only to abandon it after a few weeks? How many times have you made the same resolutions hoping that this time you will succeed, only to fail again? Do you want your life to be different? Keep reading!***

Contrary to the old saying that you cannot teach old dogs new tricks, the new brain research shows that we CAN teach old dogs new tricks. Not only can our adult brain change, but it keeps producing new neurons; which means that we also have the capacity to learn and keep learning, as long as we live. Why then is it so difficult to change? You only need to know HOW to REWIRE your brain's connections.

Through more than 25 years coaching and counseling people to change, I have heard every imaginable excuse about why people don't change. Here are just a few examples:

- I wish I could change and be more organized, but I have tried and I can't. That's the way I am.
- I can not help it. If my children would listen to me, I would not have to scream. They only obey when I yell!
- I know my wife wants me to be more affectionate, and I really love her, but I never saw people showing affection in my family and I just can't do it.
- Yes, I have lost 3 jobs in the last 4 months because I was late to work. But what can I do if I just don't hear my alarm? I am a very deep sleeper, I live alone, and there is nothing I can do about it.

What it amounts to is that because of life circumstances, or what important people in their life have told them, or due to society's stereotypes, many people learn early that they are helpless. As much as they don't like to feel this way, it is an easy road, **because it does not require any effort.**

The reality is that if you looked at any of the previous excuses with a positive attitude and in a problem-solving mood, you could find a way to change. **If you are serious about change, you first need to believe that you are not helpless and stop fearing success.**

Therefore, the first important thing in rewiring your brain is a check on your attitude! What are the words that usually come to your mind when you think about change? (No editing here!) If you think it is hard or impossible, it will be more difficult to make any changes or keep any resolutions.

Let's review some of the reasons why change seems so hard. You can add to the list your own reasons. . . .

# Why is it hard to Change?

## 1. Too Busy.

By focusing so much on being busy, you have no time to focus on the changes you want to make or the objectives you want to reach. You don't take time to make a feasible and detailed plan. By don't focusing on visualizing and practicing the new behaviors you want to establish in your work or personal life, you certainly make sure you don't make changes.

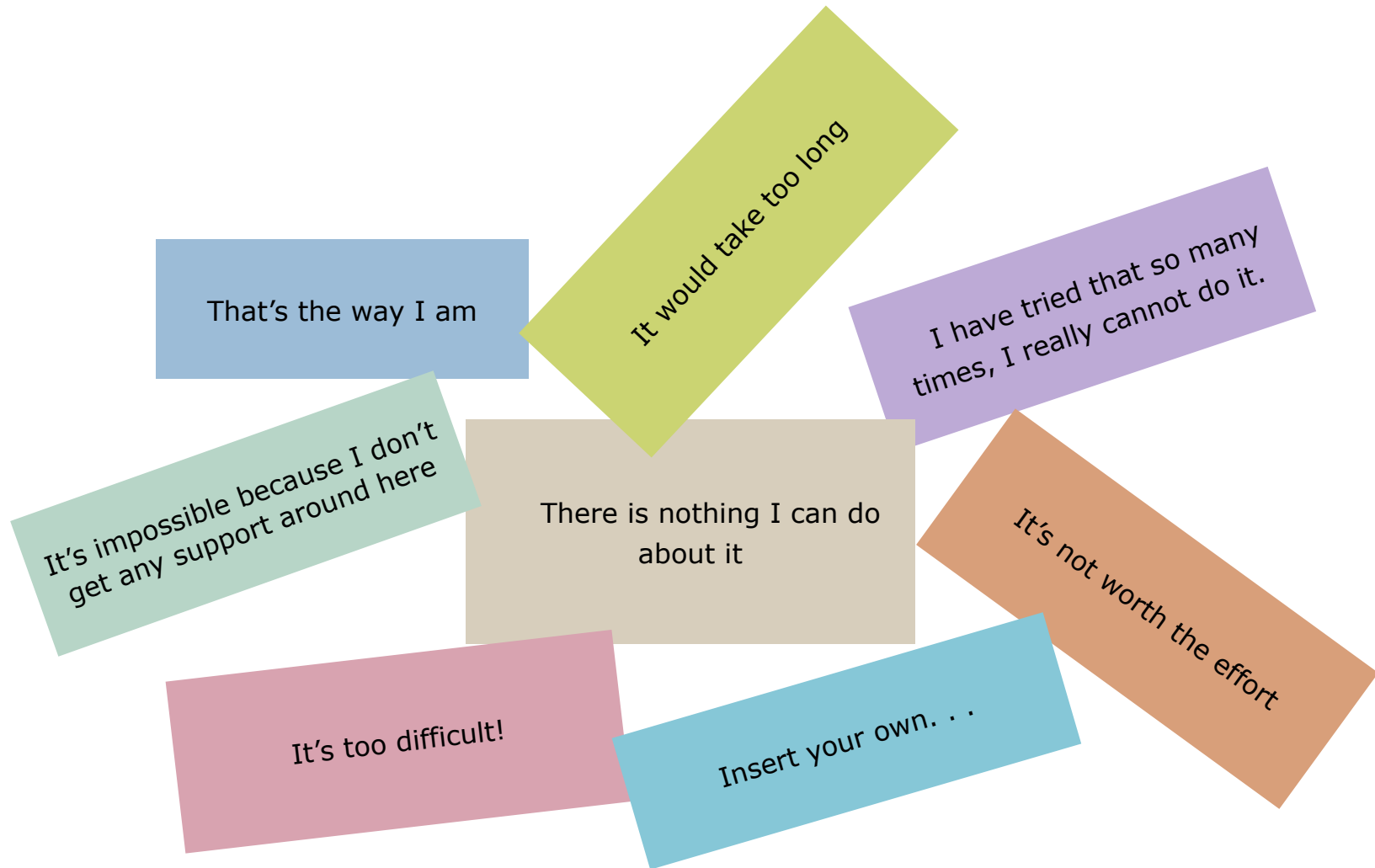
Sometimes keeping busy is just a convenient excuse to:

evade hard work required

not try something you really  
don't want to do

Ignore your  
fears and  
postpone your  
dreams

## 2. Negative Thinking.



### **3. Information overload.**

We think information will help us change. Although gathering information is helpful, information alone will not make change any easier. Too much information can clutter and paralyze your brain.

Information overload:

- Takes away time.
- Makes it harder to take action.
- Makes it difficult to decide what is the best way to proceed.
- Brings too many options.
- Makes you confused.
- Feels overwhelming.



Image courtesy of [sleepyneko](#) via flickr

#### **4. In a rut.**

Have you ever seen a dirt path that cuts through a field? Have you ever wondered how it got there? By constant use, of course. The path becomes so familiar that we don't have to think about where it goes or pay attention to the turns that come along the way.

Our thought patterns are formed much like a well worn path. You have repeated your patterns of behavior so many times that they become familiar habits formed by regular use. We form our reasoning based on what we've experienced in the past and habitually use.

Although this facilitates work and life in certain ways, if left unchecked our thoughts will travel a familiar path unhindered. It won't even occur to us to stop and consider a different way of thinking and behaving.

If you are not giving attention to your thought patterns, it will be impossible to make any changes.

If you want to do anything different in your life, get out of your familiar paths and explore new territory!

You form new paths by repeatedly walking over the same field in the same way. All it takes is the decision to start in a new direction and then the effort to do it.



Image courtesy of [sergeant killjoy](#) via flickr

## **5. Lack of Clarity.**

We tend to focus on the new action we want to adopt without any real, thoughtful analysis of why we want to adopt it. Not only that, we fail to analyze what kept us from adopting it last year, and the year before.

We are also too vague. "I want to improve my health," or "I want to eat less chocolate" will not do it.

Think about it. If you were planning to go on vacation, you would not just say: "We are going to go somewhere for a vacation." You will probably be very specific about where, how long, how to get there, where to stay, and the amount of dollars you can spend.

Another way we lack clarity is when we use words that do not have an active decisive meaning. Words like:

- I want to. . .
- I will like to. . .
- I guess. . .

Better to use words like I WILL do (or not do). . . , I DECIDE to. . . , or I CHOOSE to. . . .



Photo by Dr. Ada taken in Santorini, Greece.

Many times, we say something like, "I wish I could eat healthy." Or, "I wish I could exercise more," like I have said to myself many times. But when I say, "I wish," I am not making a firm decision. To signal a firm decision, it will be better to say, "Today (or tomorrow) I am going to do X or Y."

Let me try to explain in a somewhat simplistic way why this lack of clarity is a problem. Each neuron in our brain responds to the strength or weakness of our decisions. It has the properties of a transducer, a conductor, and a transmitter of electrical impulses converting energy from one form to another.

As a transducer the neuron converts the stimulus energy from the outside world (in this case my weak or strong decision) into electrical signals. As a conductor the neuron propagates or 'conducts' the signals from the dendrites to the cell body and then down the axon. As a transmitter, the neuron converts the electrical signals into chemical messages and 'transmits' them from one neuron to a neighboring neuron.

When I say, "I wish," the electrical impulse that I am sending to my neurons is weak. However, if I make a firm decision, then I send a stronger electrical impulse to my neurons toward doing what I am saying I am going to do. The difference is as if I were trying to see my stairway with a light bulb that is only 20 watts, versus one that is 100 watts.

The flow of information takes place from the dendrites to the cell body and then along the axon to the dendrites of the next cell.



## Rewiring your Brain for Success



The brain is constantly changing. It can alter its structure, generate new neurons, adapt, heal, renew itself after trauma, and change deep-seated emotions and behaviors throughout life.

Brain cells are undergoing continual remodeling and reorganization as a result of thoughts and experiences. Research also teaches us that in order to change the brain, you have to harness

the power of the mind, and especially focus your will and attention in the right way.

To be successful at changing anything in your life, you need to understand that the secret is to keep doing the new behavior you want to establish (and stop doing the old, if that is needed) no matter how hard it is or how long it takes, until it is not hard anymore, because it has become a new habit. It has become hardwired. That is the trick.

Repetition is what strengthens the connection of the neurons, making it easier for the brain to use that path in the future. Just like a well used trail is easy to see and follow, a well used path in your brain is also easier to use.

The problem is that while the path is being developed, you have to put a lot of effort and focus. Many times we become discouraged, and stop the process just as we were getting close to the point when it would have become easier.

The reason why most people find it so hard to change is they have forgotten how exciting it can be. All you have to do is remember childhood. . . Have you recently observed a child learning to walk? They are totally focused on walking. They want to try walking every second of the day. They want to hang on to the fingers of whatever adult is around to practice walking. They try to do it alone even when they have many setbacks. Bumps, and hurts don't matter. They keep trying, and enjoy doing it, until the moment comes when they get it. The beauty is that once they get it, they have it for life!

As adults, we do not have to think about moving one foot in front of the other, or keeping our balance, unless something happens -- we have an accident, or a stroke-- and then we have to relearn. Otherwise, it is there forever.



Image courtesy of Spigoo via flickr

That same total joyful focus, for a significant amount of time, is what is needed to be successful in sustaining new changes or creating new habits.

## Strategies for Effective Action

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There are important, powerful strategies for making change easier and effective. To help you remember them better, I have used the acronym **REWIRE**.

Readiness

Engagement

Work

Imagination

Repetition

Enjoyment

In the next page I explain the meaning of each word.

## Strategies for Effective Action

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**Readiness:** The first step on getting started in reinventing yourself is knowing where you are in the continuum of readiness. If you are just contemplating change, it's useless to make a specific resolution for change. Your resolution should be to get ready. Your mind has to be ready to make a focused, no barrels hold, commitment to change.

**Engagement:** Refers to engaging both sides of your brain for successful change. **First**, you need to *plan carefully*. This engages your analytical side. A good plan facilitates success. **Second**, listen to, understand, and consider your *emotions*, finding ways to make them your ally instead of your enemy. This relates to your intuitive side and your emotional centers.

**Work:** Change requires work, but it has to be intelligent work, not just busy work. To achieve real behavior change, and facilitate the strengthening of the connections in your brain, you have to know how to set and pursue goals with decisive action and focus. These will make change easier.

**Imagination:** Use the power of your imagination and dream boldly. You have to see yourself exhibiting the new behaviors and what is possible. Taste the success. Dream big, not small.

**Repetition:** Hang in there! To be successful at changing anything you need to **keep repeating the new behavior**, no matter how difficult it is, until it is not hard anymore. **Don't stop** until it becomes easy, until it becomes an automatic habit. That is the only way to rewire your brain creating new patterns, new habits, a new future!

**Enjoyment:** Learn to enjoy fully, not only the end result, but every step of the way. The change needs to feel right. You need to take the time to enjoy your success every day, so you will not give up.

## Helping you

If there are changes you need to make, but you find it difficult to take action, I'm here to help.

I've developed a coaching program based on the REWIRE process you have been reading about. I work successfully with my clients to help them overcome the obstacles to change. Working with me as your coach you will learn HOW to apply powerful strategies for making lasting change easier.

To find out more, simply click [here](#), or call me on: 302-399-3915. You can also [email me](#) with any questions you might have regarding the program. I look forward to hearing from you.



Author enjoying a change of scenery in Rudesheim, by the Rhine River, Germany