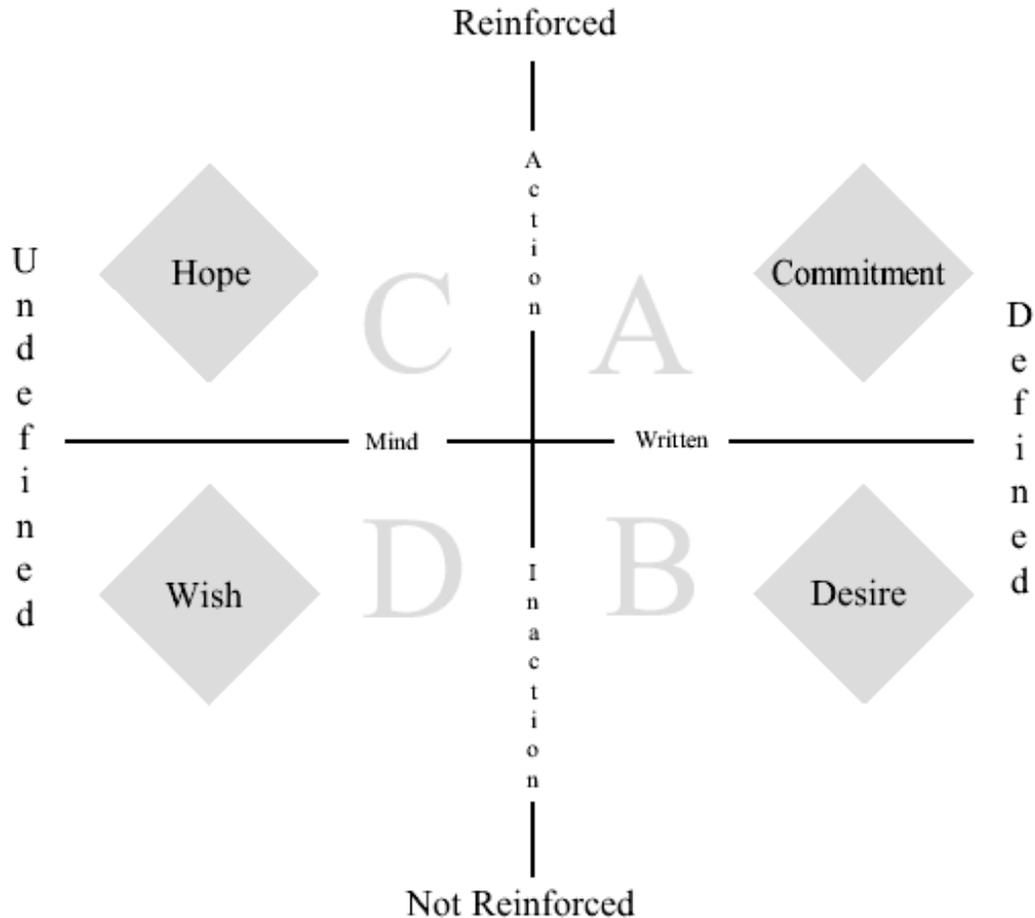


The Lasting Change Chart

Change is such a key ingredient in helping you discover and achieve success, and adaptability to change is vital to coping with some of life's most common challenges. Now it's time to really assess where you are on the transformation scale. How badly do you really want to change? Take a look at the change chart.

Change Chart[®]

Do You Really Want to Change?



The closer you find yourself to the top right quadrant of the Change Chart, the more likely your changes will stick long-term. If you've followed the advice given thus far in this chapter, you have a well-defined commitment to change that is reinforced by well-planned action. It is also likely that your goals are actually written out and in a place where you can review them often. All of these elements must be part of the equation if change is to be successful. Is this where you find yourself?

Now, take a look at each of the other quadrants. Action without definition will only yield frustration over lots of running around and arriving nowhere. What is happening in your life? Is it activity or accomplishment? A defined desire, no matter how strong and distinct, will remain just that—a desire—if you never get up off the couch. And lastly, if you just have vague hopes with no plan of action, your yearning will amount to nothing more than a puff of smoke. Hope without a plan is a form of delusion. We can all think of different situations that fit into each category. Reflect back on those experiences and consider what your end results were in each area. It will not take you long to see that you must be in that top right quadrant of the Change Chart if you hope to really see the results you're looking for.

When we have the necessary desire and plan to change, it's time to be brutally honest about the real reasons behind the behaviors and situations we don't like. For example, you may say you're overweight because your depression makes you overeat. But why are you really depressed? Smoking, family tensions—the list of bad-habit inducers goes on and on. You've got to be ready to admit that your habits were formed for a reason. If you can uncover that reason, you know what kind of battle you're up against. And the more you know about what you're dealing with, the more empowered you become to change the results. This transformation mentality also involves changing your thinking. You

cannot defend or justify old habits. The more you can change your point of reference, the more you will expedite change. Sometimes, this change incentive is just a new outlook; other times, it means changing your environment or even your friends.

Before you attempt to overcome a bad habit, be sure you have a well thought-out plan in place, one that you are committed to being accountable to. For example, don't try to just drop a bad habit cold turkey. Instead, replace it with something else that is both positive and productive, something that will be rewarding to you. Stop focusing on the past and how you used to do or enjoy something. Instead, focus on the future. It will feel awkward at first, just like when you try to throw a ball with your non-dominant hand. It will take some time to get used to, but you will eventually become accustomed to it. If you can keep yourself constantly engaged in things that you find rewarding and invigorating, you will no longer have the need to avoid your problems.

Understand that you can only change certain things in your life. Some things you should not change or you simply cannot change. If an acorn wants to grow up to be a redwood, it's not going to happen because it's simply not what nature intended. If you are the size of an offensive tackle in football, you probably will never be a professional jockey. You will find what is possible if you really put your mind to it and follow your heart. Your heart will tell you what you can or cannot do and will guide you toward the path you should take. Take time out to be alone with your thoughts. Turn off the TV or radio in your car. It is OK to be alone. It's perfectly acceptable to listen to your thoughts and to find out what your heart is telling you. If you never allow yourself any alone time, you might never find out what your dreams, desires or passions really are.

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