

Mind Over Matter – The Key to Lasting Change

Learning about food labels, nutrients, and meal planning is key for an optimal nutrition and weight management, but implementing behavior change is often the struggle. The expression “mind over matter” is operative as many of us know what to do, we just cannot seem to do it.

The concept of *Mindset Training* may help to explain individual barriers to lasting change. *Mindset* is a studied concept in the field of cognitive psychology used when trying to understand how one’s beliefs influence one’s behavior. To understand behavior, it helps to realize that people see their world in different ways. Because of these differences, strategies for approaching lifestyle changes may also vary from one person to the next. Successfully changing one’s behavior is also related to an individual’s belief that they possess the ability to create meaningful change.

There are many “negative” mindsets that affect the ability to stick with an exercise or nutrition program. Acknowledging these may be the first step toward what may help people make changes. Common negative mindsets that might be a barrier to behavioral lifestyle change:

- **All or Nothing Thinking** – A person sees a change as only black or white. They do not see the value in small steps and gradual progress, so a small misstep can derail their progress.
- **Overgeneralization** – A person views a negative event as an example of a never-ending pattern. They tend to extend a negative view to other areas, and this impedes change in other areas of their lives.
- **Mental Filtering** – A person dwells on the negative. They cannot see the positives in their lives and how these could move them toward lasting change.
- **Jumping to Conclusions** – A person makes quick judgments based on little fact and may also quickly predict something will not work before even trying.
- **Magnification or Minimization** – A person either blows situations out of proportion or shrinks their importance. Either way, a situation is not seen as it truly exists.
- **Emotional Reasoning** – A person’s reasoning is based mainly on emotion, not necessarily, fact. Emotions guide their actions and they cannot see the situation from a more broad objective perspective.

- ***Personalization and Blame*** – A person may blame themselves or other people for things not entirely their fault, which *prevents* them from moving past things out of their control and focusing on what they can change.

Even with an understanding of different negative mindsets, lifestyle and behavior changes are difficult. But, seeing some of these in yourself or others may be the start to understanding what gets in the way of lasting behavior change. With awareness you can begin to navigate around these barriers and get on with healthy behaviors that positively influence your life.

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References:

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