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# The 3 keys to successful lifestyle change



Paul Taylor reveals the three keys to permanent, positive change.

**The Body-Brain Performance Institute recently completed a 12- week lifestyle intervention with 23 obese employees of Woolworths and the results were truly outstanding.**

Nineteen of the twenty three participants met the criteria for Metabolic Syndrome at the start of the study, a condition which increases the risk of cardiovascular disease and chronic kidney disease by 200 to 300 per cent. By the end of the 12 weeks, nobody had Metabolic Syndrome, two had stopped smoking, three had come off antidepressant medication, and weight loss achievements ranged from 8kg to 25kg. So what were the key tips for successfully achieving permanent lifestyle change? It turns out that three things were very important:

## 1. Find your why

Goal-setting is very important for success, but even more important is to find a strong emotional reason why you want to change – for you, not for anyone else. It helps to think of all the ways that your life will be better, and try to find the one thing that resonates with you emotionally. Often it's things like self-esteem, being a role model for kids, or something similar. Once you have found your why, you then need to remind yourself of it, every day. To do this, you need to create rituals or habits, which can be done through a Ritual Board™ (see [www.ritualize.com](http://www.ritualize.com) for tips to creating this).

## 2. Exercise your brain

One of the biggest benefits of exercise is often overlooked. And that is that regular exercise has a direct impact on the brain. As well as releasing a host of feel-good chemicals, exercise also strengthens the areas of the brain involved in willpower, meaning that you will tend to stick to a new lifestyle more effectively. It has recently been shown that the right prefrontal cortex – the area for willpower in the brain – increases in volume with regular exercise.

## 3. Accountability partners

One of the most critical elements for success in our Woolworths study was that we helped the participants to organise themselves into support groups. This meant they were able to keep each other motivated. In addition to this, our regular group catch-ups identified that participants felt a duty to follow through on what they said they would do. This social support and element of accountability turned out to be very effective, which is a common theme in workplace health interventions. There are, clearly, many more things that went into the success matrix, but anyone can increase their chances of success by following these three golden rules.



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