






## A New Year's Resolution: Mental Fitness

Many of us focus on making changes with the start of the New Year. How about a resolution to improve your mental fitness? Mental fitness (positive mental health) is the capacity to feel, think and act in ways that enhance our ability to enjoy life and deal with the challenges we face. Every one of us has the need to: be recognized for our strengths and good qualities (competency), feel that we belong (relatedness) and make choices (autonomy). (Deci and Ryan, 2007).

If this is something you might consider, below are some stages that you will go through in making a change and some ideas to help you along.....

-  Step 1- If you're not thinking about changing anything right now, here are some helpful ideas: do some research and reading about mental fitness, make a list of all the things that would be positive if you improved your mental fitness, ask yourself what it means to you if your present state of mental fitness stays the same?
-  Step 2- Thinking about changing? Start by pondering the positive things that mental fitness can do for you. This stage may last for a few weeks or months.
-  Step 3- Get ready to start the new behaviour. Pick a date to start one new activity that will increase your mental fitness. Consider the changes that you will need to make and plan how you will fit it into your schedule. Get necessary supplies if needed.
-  Step 4- Take action for the change that you have planned. Example: Make connection with an old friend that you have lost touch with, learn a new activity or allot more time to a hobby or passion that you have, make some choices based on your own needs that will be positive for you.
-  Step 5- Maintaining the changed behaviour for 6 months or more helps it to become part of your normal life routine.

(Applying the Stages of Change Theory, Peterborough County-City Health Unit)

If you come upon some difficulty, take a detailed look at your plan;

- Do you have the knowledge you need to help you make the change?
- Are there supports or services that can help you?
- Do you have the emotional support and encouragement from your family and friends?
- Does your physical environment help or hinder with the change?

Alter your plan accordingly.

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