



## Changing Behaviors

Behavior change programs are a critical element of effective corporate wellness programs. Although someone may be sincere about needing to change their behavior, they may not be ready to make commit to making change. Attending a Lunch and Learn, Wellness Seminars, or an exercise class can signify good intentions, but there is much more to long-term lifestyle changes.

Envisioning participating in a new behavior is a positive step in making a behavior change. Once the decision is made to make a lifestyle change, action is required. No matter how hard you try to change your employees' behavior, the decision to take action will have to be theirs. Behavior changes do not happen overnight or in a week or even a month. Behavior change takes time.

Things like weight control, exercise and nutrition can be difficult to adapt and maintain over a long period of time and require more intensive behavior change programs. In order to have a program that produces long-term change, design programs with effective support systems such as concrete incentives and personal follow-up.

Past experience and current participation in healthy behaviors is a good indicator in predicting how likely people are to change. An employee's past experiences can provide the skills that are necessary to change behaviors. Positive past experiences and good attitudes can lead to behavior modification.

*Behaviors change because of intrinsic or extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation is doing something because you want to. People that are intrinsically motivated change for the benefit of themselves. Extrinsically motivated people change their behavior because there is an incentive such as a prize or contest. Some people will be intrinsically motivated; however, many will need extrinsic motivation initially in order to change their behavior.*

There are many different stages to go through before changing behavior. Sometimes the most difficult step is recognizing that a change needs to take place. It is possible for someone to change because others want them to although, they will be more successful if they are making the change because they are ready to change behavior.

**For assistance providing behavior change programs for your employees, contact Sharon Rateike, corporate wellness program coordinator at (920) 568-5018 or [Sharon.Rateike@forthc.com](mailto:Sharon.Rateike@forthc.com).**

