



Eating and Body Issues: Coping with Change

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Have a think about something in your life recently that has changed. How did you cope with it (the change)? And more to the point, how would you say you coped with change in general?

Recent psychological research suggests that people are able to change throughout their lives –you probably behave differently now in your life compared to 10 years ago, and across different situations. But it is more difficult to **change** for someone else. Change is best tackled when you feel ready for it personally, not when someone else says you need to change.

Despite this, change can be interesting, difficult in some cases and sometimes uncomfortable. There was an article written in 1986 and its title said everything: *A fate worse than death: The fear of changing*. And if you have had a habit for some time in your life and want to change it, it can present all sorts of issues!

Changing patterns, thoughts, feelings and behaviours in relation to not eating well, or body image concerns, can be a daunting task. How you approach it is vitally important for success in the long run. Here are some tips for getting the change you want with eating and body issues:

Tip 1. Take stock of past experiences

Think about 3 major attitudinal or behavioural changes that you have made so far in your life? Think about what was happening at that time (were you working or at school? What were you doing? Who was around you?) Did the changes come about when you were feeling cared for, or because you felt threatened?

Tip 2. Face the fear

What are your **fears** about changing your eating and body image concerns? Think about what **exactly** it is that you are trying to change? What will life be like without these concerns and behaviours? Brainstorm as many possibilities as you can as these will form the basis for what you become.

Tip 3. Comfort versus Sacrifice

Ask yourself what are you willing to pay for what you want? Sometimes the comfort of staying where we are in life and not changing is more appealing – but only in the short term. If things need to change with your eating and body concerns, what are you willing to start with at least in the beginning?

Kayla had struggled with liking her body shape since she could remember. Now at age 16 she really wanted to improve her self esteem and feel better about herself for once and all. She knew it was easier to eat sweet foods when she felt lonely and depressed, and she knew it was FAR easier to hide in the background at school so no one noticed her. But deep down she wanted to have more in her life and these things would have to change. She started slowly and safely at home, by firstly identifying the type of person she DID want to be. She wrote a list of characteristics which included being more assertive, having more confidence and dressing more for her age (she used to wear clothes which made her look conservative, boring and older than her actual age).

Kayla found some great books in the local public library about improving self esteem and read these at home. She started trying to do one thing differently in her life every week. While it was some time before she wanted to be noticed at school or asked out on a date, she knew every step she was taking was going to result in change – and she actually enjoyed it!

Dr Peta Stapleton and Terri Sheldon are two well known Australian psychologists with 35 years of combined clinical experience. They have developed the SlimMinds Program that teaches the latest effective psychological techniques to break out of that YoYo failure cycle that so often occurs with traditional weight loss programs. See www.slimminds.com