

The Power of Tracking Yourself

Description

I have always believed in diagnosing before treating. When we want to get better in some area, whether itâ??s in how we lead or outside of work, we first need a realistic picture of our challenges. Tracking ourselves is a great diagnostic tool. It shows us exactly what we are dealing with!
One of my issues is I talk way too much. In fact, I was born talking. All my relatives would complain and say to my mother, â??Doesnâ??t that kid ever shut up?â?• My mother thinks itâ??s funny that something people complained about ended up being beneficial. My love for talking has allowed me to provide for my parents and relatives. Unfortunately, I sometimes talk *too much*: When I have an idea, I donâ??t have the self-restraint to be quiet.
Have you ever watched the show *Welcome Back, Kotter*? Iâ??m the Horshack character. Something Iâ??ve done over the years is to make a checkmark every time I talk in meetings. Every time I speak, I put a little mark on a paper. That helps me monitor how much I am speaking. I might even put a mark when other people in the room are speakingâ??not because Iâ??m evaluating their speaking but because I want to balance the amount of my own talking with the rest of the group.
In fact, sometimes I even write a little note to myself and I use the initials KMBMS. And if youâ??re wondering what that stands for, itâ??s â??Keep my big mouth shut.â?• I want to be a better listener, so this is a chance to break a bad habit. Itâ??s a way for me to see that Iâ??m dominating the conversation by overtalking and not giving other people a chance.
There is real power in writing things down. Letâ??s say you have an employee who seems to come in late to work quite a bit. Until you actually start documenting the occurrences, you canâ??t tell if the tardiness problem is real or just an impression you have. Sometimes, our mind plays tricks on us.
The same holds true in our personal lives. Tracking helps us to succeed at goals we really want to work on. Think about how we use calorie counters and fitness trackers to monitor our food intake and exercise. Food journals are another great example. Studies show that those who keep food records tend to lose more weight than those who donâ??t.
Why does tracking work so well? Partly itâ??s because it provides a true picture of whatâ??s happening. Data doesnâ??t lie. You might have the impression that youâ??re not eating much throughout the day, but when you write down every bite you take, you might come to see you really are snacking too much.
Also, tracking holds you accountable to yourself. You can better resist the urge to cheat if you see your actions there in black and white. It will also help you identify patterns. Are there certain times of the day when you eat more? Are there certain types of meetings where you talk more? Because of the accountability factor, tracking is a great tool to help you set and celebrate goals.

Itâ??s not just good for stopping things, either. It can help you make sure you are doing the things you intend to do. In the same way we track ourselves to break a bad habit, we can track ourselves to create the kind of life we want. We can figure out what we are doing that keeps us away from the things we enjoy. In a very real way, it gives us some time back.

Here is a technique I picked up when I was in behavioral health that can help you not move away from what you enjoy. When people would come into treatment, they would be asked, â??What do you love?â?• And people would talk about how they love fishing or how they love cooking. They love being with their family. They love traveling. And then they were asked to answer the question, â??When was the last time you did that?â?• And theyâ??d realize, even though they said they loved it, they hadnâ??t done it in a while. Of course, the reason they hadnâ??t done it in a while is because their addiction took them away from doing a lot of things they loved.

Now, we all have challenges with our balance of life. Or rather, we have challenges with our *blending* of life, if you donâ??t like the word â??balance.â?• How do we blend all our activities? I think one of the things thatâ??s nice to do is to take time to answer the question, â??What are the things you really enjoy?â?• Write down your answers. And then over the next couple of weeks or months, track when you do those things. I think if you are like me, it will help you start to realize â??These are some things I really enjoy doing, but Iâ??m just not doing them right now. Or Iâ??m not doing them often enough.â?• When we see on paper what weâ??re doing that we donâ??t want to doâ??and weâ??re not doing what we *do* want to doâ??it can really inspire us to make some changes. We can stop doing things that arenâ??t productive and start doing things we really want to do. This is how we start to take back our most valuable commodity: our time.

Ultimately, we are responsible for living the life we want to live. No one else can do it for us. We need to own our own well-being. Self-monitoring helps us to do that. Tracking ourselves is a powerful toolâ??one thatâ??s life-changing when we make the effort to do it regularly.

Date Created
April 5, 2021
Author
quint-studer