

Episode 0011

Planning and Preparation

Show Transcript



Presented by Dr. Gala Gorman
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00:04

Dr. Gala Gorman: How do you go about planning? One of the things that professionals talk about when they talk about this planning process is that it is the “Monday stage.”

00:19

Announcer: You've tuned to Awareness Addicts with Dr. Gala Gorman. Here, you'll find Sage Advice for taking inspired action. Awareness is the key. With this key, it's easier to navigate in the human world with all of its detours. It requires that we get to know ourselves intimately. If you choose to join us, this just might make you an Awareness Addict ... alive, alert, awake and aware of life's possibilities.

00:48

Dr. Gala Gorman: This is Episode 11. In the last episode, we learned to embrace failure. If the objective of good planning is to avoid failure, why bother? Should we just skip the planning and take things as they come? I think we can agree that failure can be quite painful. We want to make sure we're squeezing all the value out of it if it is inevitable. So, while you can't plan for every possibility, planning IS critical to get the most out of every failure. I'm Dr. Gala Gorman, and this is the Awareness Addicts show.

01:27

You may have heard me talk about my husband Charlie Frangos. He is a psychotherapist and he specializes in addiction and trauma. We discuss addiction and its effects on families at RecoverYES.com. I also host another show specifically for recovery stakeholders, called Recovery ReLOVution.

If this is something that you or somebody you know is dealing with, I'd love it if you point them in that direction. They can use all the help they can get. So, we are intimately familiar with the stages of change model that professionals use to help motivate their clients to make changes and deal with addiction problems. Fortunately, the model can easily

be adjusted and applied to any habit, once you understand how change happens.

02:25

I pulled something up from Psychcentral.com on the stages of change. I wanted to talk to you a little bit today about how change happens ... once we understand the process of removing the obstacles that are keeping us from making the changes we'd like to make in our lives.

This particular section talks about "Determination: A commitment to Action." It says, "Deciding to stop drinking is the hallmark of this stage of change. All the weighing of pros and cons, all the risk-reward analysis, finally tips the balance in favor of change. Not all ambivalence has been resolved, but ambivalence no longer represents an insurmountable barrier to change." So, ambivalence accompanies the contemplation stage. The stages are pre-contemplation, contemplation, determination, action, maintenance, and termination. A lot of times, this is referred to as a 5-Stage Model because they really don't count termination. Meaning, you are done and it is over. They don't count termination as a stage of change.

03:59

In pre-contemplation, you are not even thinking about making a change. So it is kind of a non-stage as well. The contemplation stage is the ambivalence stage ... weighing the pros and cons. You can't make up your mind. The determination stage is often referred to as the planning and preparation stage.

The post goes on to say that "Most individuals in this stage will make a serious attempt to stop drinking in the near future. Individuals in this stage appear to be ready and committed to action. This stage represents preparation as much as determination. The next step in this stage is to make a realistic plan." Again, this is all part of the same stage and they are calling it "determination" but it's also often referred to as "planning and preparation."

04:57 “Commitment to change without appropriate skills and abilities can create a fragile and incomplete action plan. Often with the help of a treatment professional, individuals will make a realistic assessment of the level of difficulty involved in stopping drinking ... stopping whatever it is that we want to stop. They will begin to anticipate problems and pitfalls ... and come up with concrete solutions that will become part of their ongoing treatment plan.”

05:24 I hope that you can see how this can be applied to any sort of change of habit that we want to make. It is extremely helpful to acknowledge what stage we are in because that will inform us how we need to deal with it. For example, a lot of people present themselves to my husband in his practice who are struggling with addiction. They think that they really are beyond this determination phase. They are in action. They think they are in recovery if you will, but they really are still struggling. And, my husband helps them see that actually they are not even in the planning and preparation stage ... that for the most part, they are still in contemplation. They are still weighing the pros and cons. They are taking a little bit of action to see if it is too painful to continue on the path of making whatever change that they are trying to make.

This can really be helpful and inform us ... making change a lot easier.

06:45 Let's take a moment to develop awareness. This is something you can practice anywhere . . . anytime.

Begin by noticing where your breath is landing in your body? Are you feeling your breath in your chest? Is it expanding your rib cage? Or, even your belly?

Just become aware of your breathing.

Now, we're going to breathe intentionally. We'll start by breathing deeply into our belly. Breathe deeply . . . expanding your belly. Notice how it feels for your belly to

expand. Then, pull your abdomen in so that all of the stale air gets pushed out on the exhale.

Let's do that again. Breathe in deeply . . . all the way into your belly. Expand your belly. And again, breathe out and flatten your tummy. Squeeze all that air out.

Next, we'll move the breath up to our rib cage. Intentionally expand your ribcage with the breath. It may feel like your ribs are stretching out on both sides . . . or you may feel it expanding your back. Just notice how that feels. You're stretching your lungs to the side and creating flexibility in your ribs. Take another breath into your ribcage.

Now, let's go back to how you were probably breathing when we started this practice. Breathe into your upper chest. You can feel your breastbone raise and lower with the breath. Notice how it feels to take a shallow breath now that we have expanded the breath into our belly and rib cage.

We have sent a clear message to our brain and nervous system that we can take control. Let's use this feeling of empowerment to practice Aware Appreciation.

What is ONE BIG THING that you appreciate right now? And, keep this in mind as you notice more things to appreciate as you move through your day.

09:03

One of the reasons we avoid making any significant change in our lives is the fear of failure. Failure can be quite painful. Since it is inevitable ... and part of the process ... we want to make sure we're squeezing out all the value that is being made available to us. So, while you can't plan for every possibility, planning IS critical to get the most out of every failure. And, good planning and preparation makes change much easier.

09:33

I often say that this is the most important stage of change ... this planning and preparation or determination stage. You may have heard the phrase, "Failing to plan is planning to fail." And, creating a plan can seem a little time-consuming.

When we've gotten to the point of being determined to make a change, we want to just launch into it and take action. The problem with that approach is that all these obstacles ... all these reasons why we didn't already make the change ... start bombarding us making it really difficult, if not impossible, to stay the course. We want to actually put the horse before the cart here and create a plan. I like to call it a blueprint. It's going to make the change easy.

10:32 In this blueprint, we are going to actually identify the obstacles that we anticipate experiencing. We can start this process by visualizing ... or at least attempting to visualize the outcome. What is our life going to look like once this change has been made and really integrated? As you begin to visualize this experience, there will probably be scenes that will present themselves to you, indicating what sorts of obstacles you are going to encounter along the way.

11:20 Most likely, if you are trying to envision yourself ... let's just say you are 50 pounds overweight and you want to envision yourself 50 pounds lighter and looking great in a swimsuit on the beach ... you may be able to get there with that image. But then your mind is going to start pummeling you with all these images related to times you've tried in the past, or what you look like now. Or comments you may hear, whether it's that small voice in your own head, or comments from outside of yourself, "You can't do it. You've never done it before. You are going to have to give up all these things you love. You will never be able to sustain that."

12:14 There is all sorts of information available to you in this process that then needs to be incorporated into your blueprint. How are you going to deal with all of those experiences as they present themselves to you? If we go into this thinking that you'll just take it as it comes or it's not going to happen this time, that's really naïve and is a recipe for failure. We know that planning is the stage that everybody tends to spend the least time on and it probably deserves the most time. I believe this is because it really

doesn't feel like you are doing anything. You are not taking action. "Why am I still eating Oreos when I'm creating a plan to lose 50 pounds?"

13:12

Now, there is some validity there. If you know that not eating Oreos is going to be part of your plan to get rid of 50 pounds, then you could go ahead and get that process started. There are some things you could do to support yourself in the planning process. But, the most important thing is, if you are sitting there planning and eating those Oreos, taking the information that you're being provided. "Why am I choosing to eat Oreos rather than some other healthy snack? What am I going to do to make sure that I have really healthy appealing alternatives as soon as I do flip the switch and launch in to the plan."

14:03

Planning is going to dampen your enthusiasm for taking action because as you start planning, you are going to start seeing all the reasons why this is not going to just be a cake walk. I personally am part of an odd group of people that love to research and really don't mind planning. I would put lots of time and energy into planning. But, I know that I am not in the majority. Most people just want to make a decision and take off. As my husband Charlie likes to refer to it, "fartlek" their way through it. I think one of the reasons why this is the case is because "I don't want to face all the reasons why I can't do it. I just want to do it."

15:00

The problem is, if we go into it with a half-baked plan ... as enough of those reasons why we can't do it present themselves, one of them is going to present itself at a weak moment and we are likely to cave. With an appropriate plan in place, with some advance planning and preparation, we're going to anticipate that happening and know where to turn when it does. How do you go about planning? One of the things that professionals talk about when they talk about this planning process is that it is the Monday stage. "I'm going to start this program on Monday, at the New

Year, or the day after my birthday, after the wedding, or when I get back from vacation.”

16:01

The Monday stage is not a bad thing. Actually, the Monday stage is part of the plan. I know that it is unrealistic to think that I’m going to start a diet right before I go on a cruise. If I need to diet before I go on a cruise, I’d better get that started three or six months in advance. The Monday stage is not a bad thing and it actually indicates that you’re in reality about this process. You also need to identify why you need to change ... not just the obstacles or the reasons that are going to make the change hard. But, you need a big why. Why is this change going to improve your life to such a degree than it makes it worth it?

The other thing that I suggest as part of this planning process is that you declare your goal or intention publicly. By publicly, I’m not saying that you announce it on CNN. But, you do want to find a group of people that are supportive but not going to let you off the hook without some pressure if you are finding it challenging to stay the course. We want this group to be an accountability group. So, it is probably not best that it be your mate. It may not even be best that it is a really good friend because a good friend is likely to just love you the way you are and say, “Oh well, I love you anyway ... even if you don’t stay the course on this.”

17:50

Finding an accountability group to help when you’re struggling is going to be really critical to making this process stick.

18:06

What’s your takeaway for today? One little “aha” and your time will be well spent.

I personally thought it was interesting to couple determination with planning and preparation. That was a new discovery for me. I had not heard the word “determination” used interchangeably with planning and preparation. But, it makes sense that you reach a point

where you are determined to make a change. So, the planning and preparation that is required needs that level of determination. As you can see from what we've just discussed, the planning and preparation is going to bring up all the challenges that you are going to face.

It is also important that you have some sort of coach for this accountability process that I was just talking to you about. The most successful people employ coaches. So, having a coach or accepting that you need help and you can't do this on your own is certainly not something to feel shame about or to look down on yourself about. It is something to pat yourself on the back for. And, to just make sure that you've got this accountability piece baked in to your blueprint, also known as your plan.

19:49

Question: I haven't had much success with goal setting. It seems like I'm just setting myself up for disappointment when I set a goal. And, what if I change my mind about what I want to accomplish? How do I set goals that actually motivate me to do things I want to do but wouldn't necessarily focus on otherwise?

20:14

Dr. Gala Gorman: First, thanks for submitting your question. Goals can be tricky. There's a reason why so many abandon their New Year's resolutions within a few days of the start of the new year. As we learned in this episode, determination is a key component if a goal is to be accomplished. To be truly determined requires that we have a strong "why?" behind our goal. The goal isn't the motivator. It's just the means to the end. Once we know why we **MUST** make the change, the goal just helps us take the necessary steps. And, effective goals have a comprehensive plan and typically quite a bit of preparation. For example, if your goal is to run a marathon, it would make sense that there is a strong "why?" that is your driving force. Your "why?" is uniquely yours. Even with

a strong driver, you still need a plan and lots of preparation ... in the form of running many miles. So, focus some awareness on your “why?” and see where that takes you. A goal with a strong why behind it is unstoppable.

21:27

Announcer: Are you ready to create an attitude adjustment? Practicing Aware Appreciation will make a positive difference. You can access the Aware Appreciation Worksheet by visiting AwarenessAddicts.com/AA. In just a few minutes a day, you'll stop negativity in its tracks . . . and gain some insight and awareness in the process.

Your feedback makes a difference. What part of this episode helped you the most? Join the Awareness Addicts Facebook group and share your thoughts. Make sure you leave a review wherever you've accessed the show. And, if you know others who could use some divine inspiration, share with them! Remember, all the links and resources are available at AwarenessAddicts.com/Episodes. Don't waste another moment feeling confused and stuck. As an Awareness Addict, you're alive, alert, awake and aware of life's possibilities.

22:24

Dr. Gala Gorman: Are you content with your life just the way it is? Well, if you're anything like me, there's always room for improvement. There's new places to explore and experiences to be had. Our fellow humans may heap a bit of shame on us for failing to appreciate what we have. What if contentment is the trap? Freedom lies in our discontent . . . or what I like to refer to as Divine Discontent. In the next episode, we'll explore what it means to be free. You don't want to miss it.

22:59

Announcer: This was Awareness Addicts with Dr. Gala Gorman. For more information and to find any resources mentioned in

this episode, visit AwarenessAddicts.com/Episodes. Thank you for tuning in.

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