



CHANGE: THIS/THAT RULES

Tool Overview

This tool is to help you be more specific when setting goals and designing more thoughtful changes in life. The idea is that you should create statements about things you want (*this*), and about things you don't want (*that*). This way you are more clear and focused on your journey to change.

This tool will help you begin making real choices by creating rules of change for yourself:

1. I want this, not that.
2. Do more of this, no more of that.
3. When this happens, do that.
4. Always choose this, not that.
5. Do this now, then that.

These statements will make more sense to you as you read the following pages.

Take your time and make this a thoughtful process by thinking about major goals you have in your life.



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1. I want this, not that.

Before you plan anything, be razor sharp about what you want and what you don't want. It's astounding how many people don't deeply consider what they really want. They rush toward some goal or objective and often hit it, only to be miserable at the end. This is the cliché of the guy who wants a million dollars and works so hard to get it and does—at the cost of his real passions, his health, and his family. He winds up a millionaire but realizes that money wasn't the only thing he wanted from his life. Imagine if he had said, "I want to have a million dollars in my bank account in ten years [this], but I don't ever want to get stuck doing administrative stuff I don't love; I don't want to get fat and unhealthy; and I don't ever want to work weekends or lose connection with my family [that]." If he'd had the vision to keep this in front of him and follow through on it, his life may have turned out differently. Sometimes it's important to keep one eye on the moon and another on the dial that tells you if you're in trouble.

Based on this principle, the rules I'm going to setup for myself regarding the new change/challenge/goal I'm going after in life is...

The reason these rules are important to me is...

2. Do more of this, no more of that.

To reach any desired goal, we have to start or continue some things, and we have to stop others. Being clear about these start-stop actions is critical to know as you plan your route to victory. Let's continue with our friend who became a millionaire at the expense of his passion, health, and family. Wouldn't he have been better off if he had set a few rules that said: do more delegating. Do more creative work that engages you. Do more healthy meals. Do more date nights with your wife and more weekend outings with your kids. No more can you allow others to own your agenda and dictate your work and passions. No more can you eat fast food or miss an entire week at the gym. No more can you forget birthdays.

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3. When this happens, do that.

There is often incredible power in asking people to hook a new behavior onto the back of an existing one—what we call a “habit hook.” For example, let’s say you have a client who is a mother of three, works from home, and wants to lose some weight. She’s tried dieting and exercise, but she can’t seem to find rhythm or results. One move would be to find out what her routines and habits already are, then “hook on” other new habits to those. You might find out that she drops her kids off at school every other day, alternating with her husband. If your plan for her involves exercise, you might suggest that she hook exercise onto her habit of dropping off her kids. Her new rule becomes this: When I drop my kids off at school [this], then I will immediately go to the gym from there [that]. Our miserable millionaire could have created rules like these: “When I break for lunch every day, I’ll text my wife and flirt with her. When I go into meetings, I’ll always share at least one idea I’m passionate about. When I leave work, I’ll pick up some fresh vegetables on the way home. When I get home, I’ll immediately greet my kids and ask how their day went, and I’ll be present and actually hear their answers.” Hooking new habits onto old habits is beyond powerful, and you should take some time to think about how you can do this when creating your plan for change.

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4. Always choose this, not that.

Not everything goes to plan. Storms blow in; tactics fail; good intentions bring bad outcomes. That’s the way of the world. In times of uncertainty, conflict, trial, and failure, what kinds of choices will you make? This rule is meant to help you set some ground rules that you can refer to when trouble arises. Consider what would have happened for our miserable millionaire had he made the following rules:

- Always choose my passion [this] over short-term profit [that].
- Always choose a salad [this] rather than fries [that].
- Always choose the games I’ve committed to attend for my kids [this] over the random work opportunity [that].

Rules like these are a blast to think about and write down, because they automatically call forth our highest standards and character.

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5. Do this now, then that.

Most of the tough choices in life have to do with the now-versus-later dilemma. Without consciousness of this fact, and a good set of rules, we're constantly in turmoil about when to act. To complete our miserable millionaire's story, imagine if he had started with his own set of rules that said this: I'll run the company for the next five years [this now]. Then I'll delegate more and have someone else running it by the seventh year, when my kids turn ten [then that]. I will start cardio exercise once a week this week [this now]. Then, after the fourth week, I'll add strength training [then that]. Take two weeks vacation with my family this year [this now], and then next year add another two weeks [then that]."

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