

I'm feeling stuck!

Most people have experienced the feeling of being “stuck”. It's when you feel you need to make a change in your life but for some “unknown” reason that change doesn't seem to be happening, or it happens briefly and you slide back into old patterns of thinking and behaving. I believe that change is really hard. My experience is that people really change to avoid pain. It's as if things have to be so painful in our life (physically, mentally, spiritually, or relationally) before we create change. Think of change= avoidance of negative stimuli. If you are an athlete, you probably don't hesitate in seeking consultation from a coach or trainer when you need to improve your game or training routine. If you have a physical ailment, most people seek advice from a physician. Dealing with emotional pain or seeking behavioral change is not so different. A psychotherapist can really be your coach: someone who helps you create a plan for reaching your goals and helps you get there.

A coach holds her trainees accountable. If the trainee wants to improve her time in an event, the coach is very clear about what the trainee is doing well in her program and where the areas are where she needs improvement. This approach is considered Solution Focused Psychotherapy. An effective treatment plan in this approach is based on deciding what the goals of therapy are and how are you going to get there. Sometimes the approach involves learning new skills or changing old behavior. Other times it involves exploring family history and patterns. In general, Solution Focused Psychotherapy is very positive, forward focused and involves active participation from both the therapist and client.

All therapists develop their own treatment style and you may find that consequently you quickly “connect” with one therapist and not another. Research on the effectiveness of psychotherapy has proven over and over that it's more important for the therapist to effectively connect with clients emotionally, than to implement any specific treatment approach. Thus, if after a few sessions, you are not feeling that you connect with a therapist, please say so! Any seasoned therapist will not be offended in this situation. A good therapist will talk through your concerns and help refer you to another therapist who may be a better fit.

One interesting aspect of change is called “ambivalence”. This is what I call that emotional place where you say you want to change something in your life and cognitively you know what you need to do, yet you don't “seem to” follow through. I think we all have been in this place! We say we want to exercise more, but every day we create many reasons in our mind as to why we don't have time, or it's not a priority today. In the moment, one day of not exercising doesn't feel like you are derailing your plan, but string many days together and suddenly you realize that you are stuck in ambivalence. I find that a psychotherapist can be so helpful in these times. I think we are all so adept at our own mental mind games, that it takes the objective view of the therapist of help us recognize that perhaps we are not ready to make this change, or we are self-sabotaging our own efforts at change. A psychotherapist can act like a consultant in our attempts to be who we really want to be.

If you are interested in creating change in your life, psychotherapy can assist you. Stephanie Delmore MA, LPC is a Licensed Professional Counselor who has been in clinical practice since 1996. Stephanie is currently accepting new patients at the Ommani Center of Integrative Medicine in Pewaukee. To schedule an appointment, call (262) 695-5311. [www.ommanicenter.com](http://www.ommanicenter.com)