



You can get new kicks from the life you already lead.

Why Going Big Can Sometimes Backfire

Wanting to make sweeping changes is a natural urge, which is intensified by our all-or-nothing culture. "Strangely enough, it feels easier to make a big shift than to buckle down and deal with day-to-day issues," says Los Angeles life coach Amy Applebaum.

Another factor: Our brains are wired to romanticize significant transformations. In other words, when you daydream of moving to California and becoming an actress, your mind focuses on the sun, the beach, and your first onscreen kiss with Ryan Gosling. "You don't think about the traffic, the high cost of living, and how much you'll miss your friends and family until you're there," says Dan Ariely, PhD, professor of behavioral economics at Duke University and author of *Predictably Irrational*.

Sure, life-altering moves like leaving an unhealthy long-term relationship or a dead-end job really are merited at times. But typically elaborate, large-scale plans require so much effort to pull off that you might get frustrated and fail to act altogether. And then you're right back where you started.

The Power of the Small Shift

Tiny tweaks, on the other hand, can be incredibly potent. "Deep down, what makes us happy on a daily basis are the little events that take place in our routines," says Sonja Lyubomirsky, PhD, professor of psychology at the University of California at Riverside and author of *The How of Happiness*. "We just don't realize the cumulative impact minor things like an afternoon piece of chocolate or waking up next to our partner have on our well-being because we take them for granted day in and day out." So the goal is to start making subtle changes that will give you a fresh perspective—without completely taking you out of your comfort zone.

According to researchers, the most effective tweaks are those that alter your schedule or put you in a new environment. For example, going to the gym in the morning instead

Dial "1" for a Good Mood
Check in with loved ones a few times a day. Simply being interested in what they say can make you happier in just one week.

SOURCE: UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA STUDY

How One Tiny Tweak Can Change Your Life

When things get stale, you may feel an overhaul is in order. Instead, learn how the most minor adjustments have a major impact on your happiness.

BY HOLLY EAGLESON

Everyone has had a "My life sucks and I need to change it this minute!" epiphany at some point. Maybe yours came while you were stuck at work for the third late night in a row. Or perhaps it was when you realized that your hang-out time with friends had devolved into telling the same five stories over the same drinks week after week. However it happened, the feeling is the same: You didn't sign up for this kind of life, and you want out, pronto. So you resolve to revolutionize—I'm really moving to Paris to go to art school, damn it! But despite the allure of a revamp, experts say that when it comes to change, bigger isn't necessarily better.