

By Lacy Wolff, ERS Health Promotion Administrator



In January, many of us feel determined to improve ourselves. We create vision boards, buy gym memberships, sign up for meal delivery services, participate in juice cleanses, detox diets and decluttering programs. Unfortunately, most of us are unable to maintain the change we desire unless we put systems in place to keep us moving in that direction.

In his bestselling book, *Atomic Habits*, author James Clear writes, “*You do not rise to the level of your goals. You fall to the level of your systems.*”

Goals vs. Systems

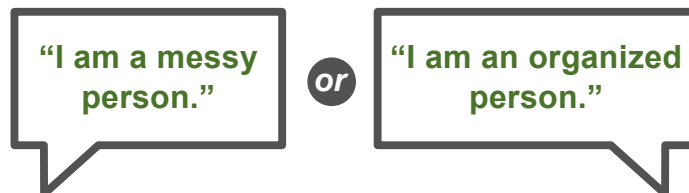
“*Your goal is your desired outcome. Your system is the collection of daily habits that will get you there,*” according to Clear.

Consider this example. You are frustrated by the fact that your desk (or computer desktop) is extremely messy and set a goal to **establish an organized work space**. After spending an hour clearing the clutter, you feel great about the result of your efforts!

Now, without a system in place for **staying organized**, your desk will be right back to where it was. Setting aside five minutes at the end of every workday to organize your space is a system for keeping you organized for the rest of your life. This system might include habits like putting files away in folders, straightening the items that belong on your desk, and taking your water glass or coffee mug to the kitchen. Over time, this system has helped you become who you want to be...an organized person!

Identity-based Habits

How we identify ourselves determines much of our behavior. Continuing with the same example, how do you view yourself in terms of organization and tidiness?



If you view yourself as an organized person, you will be (or already are) more likely to build the systems to illustrate this in your everyday life. If you don't view yourself as an organized person but aspire to be one, ask yourself, “What would an organized person do right now?”

The same idea applies to behaviors that affect our health. Embracing small changes in identity can play a major role in helping us to build our systems, habit-by-habit, for long term success.

Here are few health related examples:

Instead of thinking this:	Tell yourself this:
“I am quitting smoking”	“I am not a smoker.”
“I have a sweet tooth”	“I am a healthful eater.”
“I need to work out”	“I am the type of person who never misses a workout.”

The more we identify with the person we want to be, the more our systems will follow.

Behavior change and building new habits is challenging. It requires introspection, reflection, support and practice. In 2022, we will provide you and your organization with resources to support you in becoming the best possible version of yourself through webinars, podcasts, articles, and challenges. We hope you can join in and share these resources with your family members and loved ones!