

Are You Feelin' the Pain?

Did you resolve to start, stop, or do something differently in the new year? Did you vow that 2010 would be the year you quit smoking, lost weight, spent more time with the kids, made more sales calls, left the office on time, took a vacation, etc.?

How's that working out for you? If you're like most people, you began the new year with the best of intentions, and then by early February (or for some, the second week of January) those good intentions vanished. What happened to them?

Well, the good news, according to the book *Following Through* by Steve Levinson, Ph.D. and Pete Greider, M.Ed., is that it's not your fault! They propose that the human species wasn't designed for following through on intentions. Our brains are marvels at many things, but always doing what we know we should do is not one of them. In fact, squirrels are better at follow through than we humans are.

Here's more good news -- you can do something about it! You just have to find ways to outsmart yourself.

One technique is to make the "pain" of not following through greater than the "pain" of taking action. For example, every couple weeks for the past two years, I have an hour phone conversation with my accountability partner, Donna. During the call we report in about the tasks we said we would complete from the last call. Because Donna and I are friends, it would often be easy for me to confess that I didn't make my goals. Her response was, "That's ok--just do it by the next call." Because there wasn't a great amount of "pain" attached to not following through, I didn't have any hard core reason to always do what I said I would. However, last September that all changed.

I now have a \$20 bill hanging on a wall by my desk. On the bill there's a sticky note that reads "SHRED?". On another sticky note are the tasks I promised Donna I would complete by our next call. Every time I look at my \$20 bill, I'm reminded of two things. One, all the tasks I need to complete; and two, I will have to shred \$20 while Donna listens, if I don't complete those tasks

by our next call.

Now, the thought of shredding money makes me cringe. So the idea of shredding the \$20 bill causes me more “pain” than actually having to follow through on the tasks I promised Donna I would complete. I’ve been living by this model for six months, and I’m proud to report I’ve never had to shred my \$20. I never intend to either.

So, where can you “bring on the pain”? What are some ways you can get yourself to follow through on those resolutions? Be creative – you know what works best for you. Come up with a plan, find someone to hold you accountable, and then run with it. You will be amazed at the changes you can achieve by learning simple tricks to help you follow through.