

## **Affecting Lifestyle Changes in Chronic Illness**

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Often a practitioner will recommend herbs, supplements, lifestyle, and dietary changes to a client. In many chronic issues, lifestyle changes may be key to achieve long-term health. It is often difficult to attain client compliance in making and maintaining new habits. This lecture is about the ways I have found to help with long-lasting lifestyle changes.

Many of my chronically ill clients have not found help through other means, and are serious about taking positive steps towards their health. Still it is difficult to change the way you live.

Some “red flags” in patient compliance: How did they come to see you? If they were coerced by family members or friends and are not interested in visiting you, then the lifestyle changes will be hard to accomplish. Lecture will include an example about a daughter calling for her mom, and students learning to take intakes.

Students will often wonder how I get clients to fill my 11 page intake form. If they won't fill out my intake, they most likely will not quit drinking coffee for me.

If the client keeps missing appointments, this is a “red flag” concerning compliance with your plan. Lecture includes case history of re-occurring migraines in a vegan.

With new clients, it may be best to address one of their major complaints, even if it may be a symptom of an underlying issue. “Reel them in” by helping put out the most bothersome complaint; this helps build trust. They will be more likely to make changes or take tonics that address underlying issues, recommendations that may take weeks or months for a noticeable effect.

Be an educator, not a parent. Ask the client, “What are you willing to do? Are you willing to take supplements or herbs, etc.? Are you willing to change what you eat?” Explain to the client why they would want to take an herb or a supplement. What symptoms do these address? How long will they need to take them? I regularly get clients to take EFA's for three months and then re-assess. Saying EFA's may make your skin and hair look healthier helps with compliance.

I will not “just do” a diet diary. This can be a big deal for the client. I usually wait until after we uncover and discuss the important dietary issues. If the client then agrees that a diet diary is the next step, I will give them a one or two week diary.

Be support for your client. Never judge them. Things come and go in waves. Symptoms may get better, then worse, then better again in cycles. Clients may eat well, then eat poorly for a few days, and then follow the plan again. I tell my clients that every time I do something good for myself, and every time I don't do something that is unhealthy for me, it counts. If they have fallen off the plan, I say just get up and start doing the good stuff again. I focus on the addition of positive changes rather than the removal of bad habits. The bad habits either will then fall away or can be approached from a position of stronger health.

When giving directions for taking daily tonic formulas or supplements, I suggest taking them five times a week. Every day is better, but if they can do it five times a week, this will work. Overall consistency is the goal. This way, if the client forgets to take their tonics for a day or two, they haven't "fallen off the bandwagon," and are more likely to continue with the plan.

I like to focus on the addition of good stuff rather than removal of bad. If a person living on a sugar diet focuses on adding protein, it will be easier to stop living on sugar. Lecture will include two illustrative case histories about adding proteins to sugar or carbohydrate diets.

Many of the clients I see eat very little protein. A protein meal doesn't appeal to them, and would make them ill if they ate it. Case history: Add one bite a day of protein. Chew it up and eat it, or spit it out if it seems bad. Usually after two weeks, the client is eating protein every day. It will feel good to them, and they will notice that they want to eat it every day. At this point, it is not an issue. It no longer requires a thought to do it. This is the time to add another change.

Follow-ups are critical. For new chronic clients, or clients wanting help with lifestyle changes I generally schedule a one week follow-up, at least by phone, then every two weeks, graduating into monthly maintenance as needed.

Make it easy to track their food or symptoms with exciting and helpful forms. My diet diary is embellished with a food list that helps the client remember the possibilities.

Monitor symptom pictures through short intakes that require numbered responses. This gives a number that aids in showing clients how they have progressed over time. Many clients will not realize that they have improved unless you show them.

Clients often know best what they need. Be sure to ask them. A client recently said to me, "I know what makes my ear infection re-occur every year." Offer to help them through tracking and reminders.

Case history of chronic eczema and the addition of eggs into the diet.

It is not my job to make sure that the client lives a healthy lifestyle. I am giving them the keys and tools to help them achieve and maintain their own health.