

## 10 Mistakes in Behavior Change

One of the most valuable aspects of mobile health technology is its success in encouraging sustainable behavior change among preventative, wellness and chronic care populations. GenerationOne recognizes the importance understanding participant behavior to drive meaningful behavior change and is incorporating research from Stanford University's Persuasive Technology Lab and B.J. Fogg, to help counsel organizations with their mHealth Connect programs. One particular study, [10 mistakes in behavior change](#), outlines perceptions and practices that should be avoided when implementing change-based programs.

## 10 Mistakes in Behavior Change

From the Stanford University Persuasive Technology Lab

1. **Relying on willpower for long-term change.** Implementations that require willpower alone such as asking participants to change their habits without reinforcement or reward—are destined to fail. Imagine willpower doesn't exist, the Stanford group advises. That's Step #1 to a better future.
2. **Attempting big leaps instead of baby steps.** Pursue tiny successes, one after another. For example, instead of asking patients immediately to give up all carbs, start with pasta. Then move on to other foods over time.
3. **Ignoring how environment shapes behaviors.** Change your context and you change your life. Compliance is very different for someone who commutes every day to an office vs. someone who is homebound.
4. **Trying to stop old behaviors instead of creating new ones.** Focus on action, not avoidance. Instead of asking a patient to stop sitting around the house so much, create an incentive to walk in the neighborhood, perhaps to visit an entertainment or recreation center.
5. **Blaming failures on lack of motivation.** Make the behavior easier to do. It may be difficult for people to remember and act on every occasion when they should measure their blood sugar, for example. Use technology to remind them and ask for input.
6. **Underestimating the power of triggers.** No behavior happens without one. Instead of simply encouraging people to eat less, for instance, first explore the triggers that cause them to turn to food.
7. **Believing that information leads to action.** We humans aren't so rational. Information only helps for those already motivated to act. Reward, pleasure and a sense of progress/achievement work better to prompt action.
8. **Focusing on abstract goals more than concrete behaviors.** Abstract: Get in shape. Behavior: Walk 15 minutes today.
9. **Seeking to change behavior forever, not for a short time.** A fixed period works better than forever. Create a program to increase walking distance and time over the next 10 days, or work out a 30-day diet. Then build on that progress.
10. **Assuming that behavior change is difficult.** It is not so hard when you have the right process. When individuals have support—both personal and technological—they can change behavior more easily.