



GardenShrink

Tending Real Change — Expectations & Reality Check (Worksheet)

Purpose: Notice where your beliefs about change help you persist—or quietly set you up to quit when the boring middle shows up.

Part 1 — What Do I Actually Believe About Change?

Change is...

- Easy if I'm serious
- Often hard, uneven, and slower than I'd like

Progress looks like...

- Strict adherence with few slips
- Some inconsistency with return-to-plan built in

Success depends on...

- Willpower and motivation
- Systems and design

People who succeed are...

- Stronger / more disciplined than me
- Better supported by conditions and habits

Failure means...

- Something is wrong with my character
- The system needs adjusting

Real change is...

- Finishing the goal on my plan
- A lifestyle I'll need to tend and maintain

When motivation drops...

- The change probably isn't for me
- This is normal; structure carries me

One slip means...

- I failed
- I re-tend and keep going

Part 2 — Expectancy & Confidence

Confidence I can keep following my plan when it's boring (0–10): _____

What makes this higher than 0?

What would raise this by one point (design/support/structure)?

Part 3 — How I View Others Who Succeed

When I see others succeed, I tend to think:

What parts of their success might be design, support, and time—not just discipline?

Part 4 — Finish-Line vs. Lifestyle Thinking

_____ Short project to “get through”

_____ A lifestyle I'll need to tend

Staying changed in 6 months looks like:

Part 5 — Friction I May Be Underestimating

Underline any you might not have planned for:

_____ Boredom/slow payoff _____ Social friction _____ Identity friction _____ Energy dips

_____ Environment redesign _____ Re-tending after slips

Biggest friction + one small design change:

Part 6 — Lapse vs. Failure

If I slip, I tell myself:

A more helpful version:

Part 7 — Time Horizon & Payoff

Underline one: ___ Days ___ Weeks ___ Months ___ A season or more

Payoff I expect too soon:

How much better will life be? ___ A little ___ Moderate ___ Dramatic / “everything will change”

What problems this won't solve:

The Plain Truth About Habit Change

Real change rarely moves in a straight line. Habits don't stick because of willpower alone; they stick when people build systems that carry them when motivation fades. Progress is uneven. Slips happen. The work often feels boring long before it feels rewarding. That doesn't mean change is failing—it usually means learning is happening the way it actually works.

People who maintain change expect friction. They design their environments, plan for boredom, and treat slips as feedback rather than proof of failure. The goal isn't perfection; it's re-tending the system so growth has room to take hold. Change becomes durable not when it's exciting—but when it's supported.

Realistic expectations matter because what we tell ourselves shapes how we feel—and how we feel shapes what we do. When our thinking about change is distorted (“This should be easier by now,” “If this were working, I'd feel more motivated,” “A slip means I'm failing”), discouragement usually follows. And discouraged people don't tend to keep tending—they withdraw, avoid, or quit. Clear, accurate self-talk doesn't magically make change easy, but it does keep frustration from turning into false conclusions about yourself or the process. When your thinking stays grounded in reality, your feelings are steadier—and steadier feelings make it more likely you'll keep showing up, even when progress is slow.

Disclaimer

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