Often when trying to change an unwanted habit or behaviour we tell ourselves what to do, how to go about it, lecture ourselves, often believing much effort and determination will be required, at times battling against ourselves and criticising ourselves if not making enough progress.

This approach is like trying to bash a screw into a piece of wood with a hammer. Hitting the screw harder and harder we get nowhere. The hammer is not the tool for the job.

By nature human beings are resourceful and creative. We do know how to overcome unwanted habits, to move forward more easily, in more satisfying ways, but often are too busy telling ourselves what to do, too busy criticising and doubting ourselves. We need techniques that help us connect with our knowing part rather than get caught up in the ineffectiveness of analysis and emotionalism.

To connect with our wisdom we need to replace self-criticism and directives (telling ourselves what to do) with … the facts. We need to replace self-doubt and negative predictions with … the facts. We need to replace analysis with … the facts.

Example:

Ineffective – “I shouldn’t be smoking (directive). I’m stupid (criticism). It will be very difficult to stop (negative prediction).”

More likely to be effective – “I’m smoking (fact). I’d like to stop (fact). I’m not sure how I can do this (fact). At times I feel daunted by the prospect of stopping (fact). I am very interested in stopping (fact). I’d really like to be free and healthy (fact).”

The role of the conscious mind is not to find a solution but to stick to the facts. The conscious mind cannot take all factors in to account and is at risk of making assumptions, which lead to responses which are ineffective, which in turn leads to feeling overwhelmed, confused and despondent. Such feelings in themselves can become a secondary problem, even greater than the first. The role of the conscious mind is to simply note the facts and hand them over to the unconscious mind for processing. We could refer to this role of the conscious mind as “accurate data entry”.

Our unconscious mind is able to acknowledge and appreciate simultaneously all our feelings, life time experiences, what we truly value, and come up with a solution that fits. We’ve all had the experience at times in our life: “That’s what I need to do” and it’s not a thought, it’s not an emotion, it’s a true feeling. This intuitive process is facilitated when the conscious mind is more still. Sticking to the facts relieves our conscious mind of the responsibility to find a solution and helps hand over the task to our unconscious and intuitive processes.

**Practical Exercise**

Be aware when you are telling yourself what to do, when you are self critical, when you are doubting yourself, or negatively predicting the future. Replace such thoughts and reactions with facts – all of the facts, both what might seem negative facts but also what are positive facts. Make a commitment to yourself to do this for a month. See what happens.