

## External Triggers Promote Client Success

By Erna Kriigel



Coaches help clients to understand, identify, create, specify, strategize, and complete their significant personal goals. The internal motivating factors for completing individual goals can vary widely. Current motivational theory

informs us that people will work toward goals that are meaningful, reduce tension, meet needs, fulfill inner dreams, align with values or provide rewards. Highly motivated clients begin the coaching process at a mad dash, with great effort expended early on in the coaching, whereas, other clients start out on their new journey slowly, just picking up one foot after another, with a faint glimmer of hope in their heart. After a few successes under their belt, the slower ones gradually pick up their pace toward goal completion.

For many of our clients the journey to goal completion becomes long and arduous after a while. Small wins begin to fade in the distance, exhaustion sets in, and the current reality begins to dampen the idea of a promising future. Highly motivated clients running at full speed begin to feel the aches and pains of the change process and slow down to a painful walk. The slow starters, who have achieved great and even heroic strides, once again return to their distressing pace. Whether our clients start out fast or slow, eventually their internal motivation seems to be used up. The question becomes how can we, as coaches, help our clients regain some momentum that will ultimately result in them completing their goal. One answer lays with the establishment external triggers of motivation.

### Using Triggers

External triggers are structures or systems that help our client stay on track. They are called external because they do not exist within the person. External triggers are environmental clues, organizational methods, or systemic structures that can act as reminders or set the stage for the desired action. Once clients understand the idea of external triggers they can come up with some very creative ways to help themselves stay on the goal journey. Here are some interesting examples of external triggers. If you or your client came up with a good external trigger, drop me a note and share it.

### Visual External Triggers

- Charts, graphs, time lines and symbols
- Photographs, posters, screen savers

### Kinesthetic External Triggers

- Absence or presence of specific items, where located and how obtained
- Filling or emptying containers of jelly beans, water, or stones to mark progress

#### **Auditory External Triggers**

- Inspirational tapes, sermons, recorded affirmations
- Computer alerts, cell phone alarms

#### **Written External Triggers**

- Stamped self-addressed postcards, sticky notes
- Magazine subscriptions related to the goal

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