

Habits

We are a culture of now. When we want a habit changed, we want it changed yesterday. Unfortunately, human nature doesn't always work that way: It takes six to eight weeks for a new habit to become second nature. But often, especially when we're stressed, we revert to the old, behaviors. Then we think we've failed and give up trying to change altogether. And so starts the cycle all over again — but it doesn't have to. Keep in mind that changing habits takes time and perseverance, and you're halfway there. Follow the four steps below to finish the course:

- Step 1:** Keep a notebook. Whatever behavior you're trying to change, write down your plan and track your progress every day.
- Step 2:** Make your intention real by coming up with a concrete plan of attack. Turn that desire into a plan by saying: "I will work on eating healthy portion sizes by..."
- Step 3:** Be flexible. When you run into obstacles, don't resign yourself to failure and decide your habits are your destiny. Try this: Say to yourself, "Oopsies, not the best, but next time I will do better". Life is about Persistence Not Perfection.
- Step 4:** Acknowledge your success. It's easy to lose your motivation when you don't see results as fast as you'd like them, so give yourself a pat on the back for every small success.



A Plan of Attack

The trick to breaking habits is deciding what you're going to do instead.

Picture yourself in the middle of your habit.

How does it make you feel when you do it?

Is there something you can do instead that will give you that same feeling?

Planning to do the "instead" action is your plan of attack.

Look at this list of examples for inspiration, and then write down your own plan of attack:

Habit: Mindlessly eating after dinner.

How to better it: Busy your hands with a craft project. Better yet, go for a walk!

Habit: Eating huge portions.

How to better it: Relieve some of that super-hunger by eating smaller amounts of food throughout the day.

Habit: Taking an all-or-nothing approach to exercise.

How to better it: Set smart, slow goals do not expect too much and set yourself up for failure.

Habit: Skipping exercise sessions.

How to better it: Schedule exercise, and treat it like you would any important appointment.

Habit: All or nothing dieting.

How to better it: Don't think of it as a diet.

Instead, dedicate yourself to good health and smart eating and exercise choices.

Habit: Counting on junk food.

How to better it: Plan ahead by always having healthy snacks available.

Habit: Not eating breakfast.

How to better it: Always have delicious, healthy, filling, fast breakfast choices available.

Habit: Skipping doctor's appointments.

How to better it: Find a doctor you really like, so the appointment isn't such a drag.

Habit: Avoiding the scale.

How to better it: Consider the scale a friend instead.

It gives you feedback on how you're doing in your efforts to be healthy.

Habit: Not eating fruits and veggies.

How to better it: Try two or three new fruit and veggie dishes per week, so you can find a few you like.

Habit: Drinking only carbonated and caffeinated beverages.

How to better it: Start by making a deal with yourself: One glass of water for every soft drink or cup of coffee.

Habit: Not getting enough sleep.

How to better it: Go to bed at a decent hour every night, even if you're not tired. No TV, no books, no lights.

Control Your Habits!

Behaviors can be changed — even yours.

It's just a matter of starting and sticking with the steps necessary to change them.

