

Habit Change

- Habits are formed when we have repeated an activity enough times on a regular basis to actually “re-wire” our brain. This allows us to perform the activity on auto-pilot.
- Habits are so difficult to change because we generally like to take the path of least resistance. Research shows that when faced with a difficult choice or decision we tend to stick with the “default” behavior, because this will take the least energy.
- If we want to create or change a habit we need to set the stage to make it as easy as possible to repeat (or avoid) the activity until it becomes a habit.

Try This!

Use the worksheet on page 2 to write down your plan.

- 1) Think of one habit you’d like to change. Start with something small and well-defined (for example, I want to stop eating candy after lunch, or I want to start drinking water during the day).
- 2) Write down why you want to change the habit. What is your motivation? If the habit is part of a larger change you want to make (for example, eat better or lose weight), write the motivation for the larger change as well. Place this piece of paper somewhere you will see it every day as you work to change your habit.
- 3) Figure out what you can do to make it easier to do the thing you want to do or harder to do the thing you don’t want to do. For example:
 - *If you want to start exercising in the morning, lay out your exercise clothes the night before.*
 - *If you want to stop spending money online, cancel any saved credit cards online and put your credit cards somewhere they are hard to obtain.*
- 4) If you are trying to stop a behavior, decide upon a replacement behavior – what will you do instead? For example:
 - *If you are in the habit of going to buy coffee and a cookie after lunch, replace it with a trip to the coffee bar or lunch room to get ice water or hot tea.*
- 5) Share your plan with a friend. Ask them to check in on your progress once a week for 4 weeks.

