

HABIT BUSTING!

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This is the full version of an article on *Habit Busting*
<http://www.realpsychsolutions.com/freeresources.html>

It was Aristotle who said, "We are what we repeatedly do," but certainly there are habits that we may not want to define us.

"Good" habits actually let us accomplish things efficiently. We need to stop, sometimes, to reflect on the order in which we do things. Most of us have a routine for even the little things like setting the table or washing up at night. Habits allow us to be economical with our time, and reduce the stress of having to make a myriad of trivial decisions every day. You CAN break bad habits!

"Bad" habits, however, can infringe on our ability to be creative, effective and functional. These 'bad' habits can hurt our health, lifestyle, happiness, and relationships. The far extreme of "bad" habits would be obsessive-compulsive behavior which can paralyze us into stultifying, repetitive routine.

Eating fast food every day, for example, is a habit that can eventually impact on our health. Some habits are based on things that worked in the past, but these also can negatively effect our well being, like, for example, automatically putting salt on our food without first trying how something tastes. These kinds of habits usually don't change without medical admonitions or interventions.



The good news: you can change "bad" habits that are detrimental to you

You may have supported bad habits at one point in your life, but those habits are likely doing you no good today. For instance, if you used to eat heavily late at night, continuing that habit may lead to discomfort and unwanted weight gain.

Habit busting starts with education and self-awareness. It is easy to be in denial about how bad your habit really is if you have derived significant pleasure from it. Feedback can break down that denial. If you asked two or three close friends to identify what some of your good and bad habits are, you may find their input valuable.

Overall, habits are very hard to change. For some people, it may take years to change their bad eating habits, especially without the help of a habit-busting coach. As it could take years to perfect lifestyle habits, a considerable amount of time can be reduced if we consistently try to visualize how we want to change, and live and practice new habits. Even though habits can be slow to change, you need to change your habits that are detrimental to your life.

Keeping a journal is another way to change habits by writing about how each day went. If you are truthful to yourself, you will soon see written proof that certain actions are not useful.

Doing one thing differently, or **substituting** one thing or action for something "bad" each day or week are other ways to change unwanted habits. For example, taking an apple to work for a late afternoon snack can help curb a late afternoon candy bar habit.

More Suggestions

1. **Be prepared to grieve** because it can be hard to say goodbye to even a "bad" habit.
2. **Set a target positive goal** and write it down like "I want to eat more vegetables" or "I want to get out and walk more." Once you see the positive goal written down you will slowly see your habit change.
3. **Write a list of positive justifications** and reasons why eliminating that detrimental habit would be the best thing for you now. This list will help you to see the bigger picture and feel more committed to take positive steps.
4. **Find a new routine** or substitute routine. For instance, if you eat more during a particular time of day, you may want to begin a different type of activity rather than eating during that time.
5. **Empower yourself** by saying to yourself each day, "I can do it; I am getting closer to the very goal I want." By talking to ("coaching") yourself you will slowly break ties to all of the triggers that foster your bad habit that got you off track.
6. **Encourage support** by telling the people you care about that you see yourself making this change and need make this change and want their support.
7. **Set your boundaries** with people who may try to sabotage your motivation to change. Asserting your position will help people respect your need to change.