

From the desk of
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Habits – can be good and bad

I remember reading once that it takes 21 days to form a new habit. This really got me to thinking about habit and lifestyle. It made me realize that so many of the things we do are because we have conditioned ourselves into them by making them habits.

This can be good and this can be bad. We all have bad habits like nail biting and we all have good habits like getting regular exercise. But if you really think about it your entire day is filled with habits; you wake up and you brush your teeth, habit. You put your seat belt on, habit. This list could go on and on and would vary for each of us. The point of all of this talk of habits is that I think it is an important realization when it comes to making healthy changes in our lifestyle.

For instance, many people say one of their big culprits is that they eat in front of the television at night for reasons other than hunger. Because this has become a nightly habit it is not enough to simply say that you will stop doing it. Rather it needs to be replaced with a new habit so that your results are long lasting. If watching television is a non-negotiable, than you need to come up with something to do while you are watching television that is not eating.

Some ideas are drinking herbal tea, always having water beside you to sip on, chewing gum, maybe taking up some hand craft or my personal favorite do a core exercise during the commercial breaks or a crossword or jigsaw puzzle. I have a friend who liked to relax with a glass of wine every night. When she decided that she wanted to stop doing that she did not just stop that habit, instead she still gets out her wine glass and fills it with a sparkling juice or flavored water. It may sound silly but she realized that it was the routine of having a glass of something that was the real pull, not the wine.

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It takes time to form an exercise habit as well. Often people start out strong and quit just as strongly. Here again, tell yourself that you will take three weeks to fit it into your schedule and allow it to become a routine. It can become as normal as anything else you do in a day, a wonderful habit.

Obviously the way we eat is all out of habit and lots of times its left over habit from our childhood. The way we are fed as children has a lot to do with the way we eat as adults unless we do the work to change it. I think that this is pretty overwhelming to many as we like what we like and often don't leave our 'circle' of favorite foods.

If you told me when I was younger that I would be eating and loving a diet consisting solely of vegetables, fruits, tofu, tempeh, brown rice and beans and whole grain pasta, bean sprouts, live grain breads, nuts and nut butters, etc. I would have thought you we're out of your mind!

But the reality is that this is now so normal for me that I cannot imagine eating any other way. My old eating habits have been replaced by my new eating habits, thankfully. So I guess it's good that we all ponder this subject a little bit.

What habits do you need to replace?

Give yourself 21 days and make it happen!

In good health,

Barry

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