

Breaking Bad Habits and Making Good Habits

Know Your Triggers for Bad Habits

Triggers can be small things you are not aware of or do not expect. They can be places, sounds, people, smells, or emotions. For example, for people who smoke, triggers may be going in their car, being worried or stress, or the smell of cigarettes.

To break a habit, it is important to understand what, how, and when these triggers happen.

My triggers are:

Avoid and Change Triggers

When you know your triggers, the next step is to avoid (stay away) and change. For example, if you eat unhealthy snacks when watching TV, then watching TV is your trigger.

Your options are to not watch TV or change when and how you watch TV. For example, watch in a room you will not eat in, or change the habit that comes with that trigger. For example, eat healthy snacks or drink water when watching TV.

Ways I can avoid and change my triggers are:

Plan for Change

It is important to make a plan of action so you can replace your bad habits with good ones. The best plans are specific, can be achieved, and are realistic. This means they will be easier to follow, and there is a greater chance that they will become regular. For example, if trying to eat healthier, you can plan out healthy snacks in advance over the weekend.

Making emergency plans for times that may trigger bad behaviors may also help. For example, you can try to eat fruit instead of candy whenever craving something sweet.

Another plan to help is to delay, distract, and decide when you have an emergency.

For example, you can delay a craving for 5 minutes and plan to distract yourself by taking some deep breaths and playing a game on your phone.

If the craving is still strong after 5 minutes, you can decide to repeat these steps, try something else to change the craving, or to give in and plan better for the next craving.

In a time of an emergency I will:

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Keep Watch of My Behavior

When you know what causes your bad habit, you can keep watch of yourself. See when you have triggers and tell yourself not to do the behavior.

Keep watch for slip-ups. Ask yourself what is getting in the way, and plan around the things that get in the way. It is important to see why you are not changing your habits.

Remind yourself of the important reasons why you want to make this change. Tell yourself that you can and will be able to make the change.

Reasons I want to make this change are:

Reward Progress

Starting a new, healthy habit may be hard because it may not feel good right away. One way to motivate yourself to have good habits is to give yourself a reward. For example, when you exercise, listen to your favorite music or watch your favorite show to make it more rewarding.

Another way is to set small rewards after you have done the good behavior for a set amount of time. For example, if you do not eat when watching TV for 1 week, you can treat yourself to a movie over the weekend.

I will reward my progress by:

Know the Long-Term Negative Effects

Learning about the negative long-term effects of your bad habit can help you change that behavior. Ask your doctor about the effects of your bad habit.

My doctor says my bad habit can cause these problems:

Do Not Give Up

It can take 2 weeks to 6 months to make or break a habit. It is more likely that good habits will become automatic if done on a regular basis. Even if you fail the first few tries, it is important to stay motivated and not give up.