

# Habits Getting in Your Way?

Many of the things we do each day are habitual. Usually habits form through repetition over periods of time and they become automatic. We don't even have to think about it, we just do it. From the time you get up until the time you go to bed, how many habits can you identify? Habits are not necessarily bad. We have some habits that serve us well and others we would rather retire. This article focuses on changing a habit that no longer serves you. It gets in the way of living your life the way you want to.

One example of a habit could be you driving home from work and when you get there you have no memory of the actual drive itself. You were cruising on your brain's autopilot, because you no longer need to think about what you do. This does not mean your drive was unsafe, but being on autopilot means you have no awareness (memory) of what happened moment to moment. Trying to change a habit from this (unconscious) place will not work.

Changing habits is not easy. It takes time and diligence. The general guide is 20-30 days of applying your new behavior daily will form your new (and improved) habit. Deep rooted habits may take longer. By the way, your other half or your friends can be a great source for identifying habits.

One of my habits that annoyed my wife and caused me unnecessary stress was being 10-15 minutes late all the time. I always found just one more thing I could do before leaving or getting ready for a meeting, the movies, or a date. The solution was relatively easy – create a plan: how long to get ready, how far do I need to go and what is traffic like, add a bit of a buffer, and voila. I stumbled many times and now I am on time most of the time. Even to this day I set myself an alarm to make sure I give myself plenty of time to get to a meeting. I check my calendar often to avoid surprises. My wife is much happier and others view me as reliable and trustworthy.

## Step 1:

Identify a habit you want to or need to change because it is upsetting you and/or the people around you. If you are new to this pick something that is easy and manageable. If you wanted to start making hiking part of your life you would not want to start with a 10-day journey your first time around either.

## Step 2:

What will you replace the habit with? What can you do that helps you remember? You could put up a visual reminder on your bathroom mirror or add something in your calendar every day. If it is for instance wanting to save more money you could have the bank set up automatic withdrawals.

## Step 3:

Staying aware of the old habit can be really challenging. Give yourself a pat on the back each time you remember the old habit and each time you replace it with the new one. Even if you remember you forgot, you did remember and that is an important step towards creating more awareness around this habit.

## Step 4:

At the start make a note to check with yourself in for instance 20, 30, and/or 45 days to see if the new habit has formed or the old one is still operating. If you find it too challenging, but you still want to change the habit, seek help. Some habits can be deeply rooted and are protected by beliefs that need to be addressed first.