

NEW habits for the NEW you!

Selecting and embedding new habits to be your best self
and create your best life

What are habits?

According to the Merriam- Webster dictionary...

A habit is –

1. A settled tendency or usual manner of behaviour
2. An acquired mode of behaviour that has become nearly or completely involuntary
3. A behaviour pattern acquired by frequent repetition or physiologic exposure that shows itself in regularity or increased facility of performance

Synonyms

practice · custom · pattern · routine · convention · policy · way · manner · mode · norm · tradition · rule · tendency · propensity · inclination · proclivity · proneness · disposition · predisposition

And according to James Clear, author of Atomic Habits...

"Habits are the small decisions you make and actions you perform every day. According to researchers at Duke University, habits account for about 40 per cent of our behaviours on any given day.

Your life today is essentially the sum of your habits. How in shape or out of shape you are? A result of your habits. How happy or unhappy you are? A result of your habits. How successful or unsuccessful you are? A result of your habits." James Clear [Habits Guide: How to Build Good Habits and Break Bad Ones \(jamesclear.com\)](https://jamesclear.com)

In the simplest terms – habits are things we do often and over time they become embedded, and we become better at them!

In essence, our entire lives are made up of habits, so if you want to improve your life then the first step is to improve your habits.

Why are habits so important?

We all know there are good habits and not so good habits. Good habits help us to take care of ourselves, achieve our goals and define our lives. Bad habits can lead to poor outcomes or destroy our health and our lives.



Habits are beneficial in other ways. They reduce decision fatigue once they are ingrained. You don't need to think about them or decide whether or not to do them. This reduces your cognitive load and frees your brain to do higher-value activities and be more creative.

10 benefits of good habits

1. **Help us reach our goals** – habits are the building blocks of bigger goals and can be selected specially to contribute to our overall purpose
2. **Help maintain action** – when motivation is low, we can still perform our ingrained habits with ease
3. **Support our best selves** – the right habits help us to become the best versions of ourselves
4. **Can replace bad habits** – it is easier to release yourself from bad habits when you replace them with equally rewarding good habits
5. **Improve our mood and mindset** – being disciplined about the small things creates a positive feedback loop that increases positivity
6. **Increase energy levels** – when good habits are ingrained, our minds are freer and have both the space and the energy to think better
7. **Improve our productivity** – habits can be selected to support productivity through planning, prioritising and focus
8. **Increase our performance** – when you align your habits to your purpose you can optimise your performance
9. **Improve our health and longevity** – people with purpose and discipline live longer, healthier, and happier lives
10. **Increase the quality of our lives** – being disciplined about our habits and actions has a multiplier effect that increases our overall wellbeing

Good habits versus bad habits

So why do habits feel so good and why is it so challenging to break the bad ones?

The National Institutes of Health, part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has funded scientists searching for these answers. Our brains respond to habits once they have formed which makes them difficult to change. This understanding provides clues as to how we can stop our bad habits and also on the other side, as to how we can adapt and amplify good habits. [Breaking Bad Habits | NIH News in Health](#)

Pleasure based habits (eating chocolate, smoking and drinking) are so much harder to break because they trigger the release of dopamine in our brains, and dopamine creates the craving to do the habit again, that's why it is often referred to as the 'happiness hormone'.

As human beings, we have other regions in our brains that support changes to our behaviour, and it is especially helpful to replace a bad habit with more positive behaviours that also provides rewards. For example, you can replace sitting on the sofa eating chocolate every evening with a brisk walk. With this positive new habit, the brain releases dopamine and also gets support from the pituitary gland that releases endorphins (another type of 'feel-good' hormone).

Break Bad Habits	Create Good Habits
Avoid tempting situations	Set realistic goals
Replace unhealthy behaviours with healthy ones	Plan for obstacles
Prepare mentally	Track your progress
Enlist support	Get help
Reward yourself for small steps	Reward yourself
	Add variety

Selecting identity-based habits

These are the most powerful habits. When you link a habit to your identity it is much easier to maintain.

Understanding your purpose and the way you want to live your life through your BE statements <https://www.basaltgroup.global/purpose-meaning/> will provide the foundation for you to build upon with your habits. Your current behaviours are a reflection on who you are, so get really clear on who you are and why you are here, and it will be easier to curate your habits to support your identity.

You have the ability to select, delete and edit your habits to ensure they support your purpose and your identity.

Often at the beginning of the year or when we have a major life event, we get really energised and start doing things better. It can be really difficult to maintain our enthusiasm and commitment and it's more likely that this time next year you'll be doing the same things that you do now rather than performing a new habit with ease.

It is easier to maintain your motivation and commitment once you have awareness of your current habits and specifically commit to a new set of habits that support your identity. When it is part of who you are, rather than something that you must do, it becomes much easier for new habits to stick.

This activity is designed for you to consider your current habits and then to specifically select, delete and edit your habits based on who you are and your reason for being.

Step 1 - Habit Audit

The **first step** is to become aware of your current habits and behaviours and the simplest way to do this is to undertake a Habit Audit.

Take some time to sit and bring your awareness to all the habits you perform each day. Write them down with no editing and do your best to capture ALL the habits – big and small. Everything's from waking up to going to sleep, from checking your phone to waking to brushing your teeth when you retire.

Capture all these habits in a list at the end of each day for a week. You need a large notebook and should use one line per habit, you could end up with a list of 100 habits each day and it is more effective when you cover a week of habits as this caters for different obligations and situations. Make sure to leave some room to evaluate your habits in step 2.

Some people like to develop a specific habit tracker and fill it out. Something along the following lines generally works well and you **only fill out column 1 in this step.**

HABIT	+/-	MON	TUES	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT	SUN

Step 2 – Habit Edit

The **next step** is to review your habits and then decide if they are positive or negative in terms of your overall purpose and identity. If you consider a habit to be neutral, then you can give it an initial rating of 'N' and come back and move it into the positive or negative status later.

Once you have rated all your habits then you can come back and reflect on how many are positive, negative, and neutral.

If you have a lot of neutral habits then these could be time wasters, consider each in turn and rate them again as either positive or negative.

The aim is to remove or replace the negative habits with something that will positively contribute to your purpose and identity.

A separate worksheet to provide room to capture the new habits that will replace your negative habits is useful. Simply remove the negative habits that are easy to stop immediately and then transfer the more challenging negative habits to the new worksheet. **Only fill out columns 2 and 2 in this step.**

OLD HABIT	NEW HABIT	LIMITING BELIEF	EMPOWERING BELIEF

Step 3 – Habit Tracking

The final step is to develop strategies to support the establishment of the new habits.

If you are replacing a negative habit then go back to the negative habit worksheet and consider the old limiting beliefs that created the habits originally, and then replace these with new empowering beliefs that will support you to adopt and maintain the new habit.

Take all the positive habits and create a new habit tracker. Now that you have your edited list of positive habits that support your purpose and identity, it is useful to track your progress with the intention of becoming a little bit better every day or every week. Now you can use ALL the columns in your new habit tracker from Step 1.

How long does it take?

According to a [study](#) published in the European Journal of Social Psychology in 2009, it takes between 18 and 254 days for a person to form a new habit. The conclusion was that it takes 66 days on average for a new behaviour to become automatic and the actual time depends on a range of variables including – effort, ease, motivation, etc.

There is a persistent myth about habit formation taking 21 days that originated from a book published in 1960 by Dr. Maxwell Maltz. He made the observation that it takes a minimum of 21 days for old mental images to dissolve and new ones to become embedded. This simple, situational observation became accepted as fact due to the popularity of the book.

10 tools to help habits stick

1. **Align habits with your identity and purpose** – habits are easier to adopt when they are part of our identity and support the achievement of our purpose
2. **Replace a bad habit with a good one** – select a better habit to replace a negative habit
3. **Break habits down to make them easier** – go for micro habits as they are easier to achieve, and they provide compounding benefits

4. **Plan in advance how to allow for unexpected circumstances** – anticipate unexpected obstacles or circumstances and consider how you can still commit to your habit
5. **Set up reminders and provide rewards** – there is a powerful tool that is known as the 3 Rs – reminder, routine, reward. Setting reminders and providing rewards for achieving your new habits can make it easier to stick to new habits
6. **Implement accountability** – this can be accomplished by finding a trusted friend or professional to ask about your progress and hold you accountable
7. **Track progress and adjust strategies** – we all know that what we measure improves, so track your adherence to your new habits with a Habit Tracker. Observe where you have not been consistent and take action to adjust your circumstances
8. **Stack a new habit on top of an existing habit** – it is easy to link a new habit with an existing ingrained habit
9. **Simply start again** – if you fall out of a habit, become aware of the root cause so you can eliminate it and simply get started again
10. **Address limiting beliefs** – you could be sabotaging yourself with limiting beliefs. Work to identify these and to replace them with more empowering beliefs

“Excellence is an art won by training and habituation. We do not act rightly because we have virtue or excellence, but we rather have those because we have acted rightly.

We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act but a habit.”

Aristotle

About the author...



Hi, I'm Therese Linton, a global leader in legal project management legal process improvement, and personal productivity. Over the last decade, I've worked with thousands of lawyers to introduce innovative ways of working that delight clients, reduce stress, improve work-life balance, and lead to better legal outcomes.

I've been encouraged by my best friend, business partner, and many clients to expand the positive impact of these ways of working with the NEW Positive Lawyer coaching program.

I've been growing and learning throughout this journey myself. I have firsthand experience with learning new skills, along with the ups and downs that are inevitable when striving for mastery.

Announcing an amazing new program - THE POSITIVE LAWYER®

The Positive Lawyer provides the new 'non-negotiable' approaches to legal work, and a well-researched collection of tools and techniques to support positive mindsets, improve resilience and uplift legal working environments.

It's the solution for lawyers who want to stress less and live more! Participants will be supported with a ground-breaking coaching program, tailored to address the complex challenges faced by lawyers today. Over 6 months you will participate in 6 face-to-face sessions, or workshops, and have fortnightly contact to complete guided activities to support your breakthrough and transformation.

If you're committed to releasing yourself from limiting beliefs; learning new skills that are critical to your success; developing and implementing realistic action plans; reigniting your enthusiasm for your career...then register your interest at <https://basaltgroup.clickfunnels.com/registerpl>.

My aim is to inspire you to achieve great things and I look forward to joining you on your journey! Cheers....T