

BE STRONG

Eat.Move.Live

THE KNOWLEDGE

BREAKING AND FORMING HABITS

This week's focus: Habits, how they are formed and broken, and how they are the key to long term success

Why is it important?: We can change our eating habits to achieve short term success, but unless we crack bad habits and form new healthy ones, we risk going back to our old ways. Getting into good routines and habits is the key to long term success.

What will we tell you?: Different strategies to help you break and form habits

- 1 Cold Turkey** –Some people are just able to break habits by deciding that they are no longer the person who does that. E.g by thinking 'I am no longer a smoker' and adopting that as a mindset. This can be hard with food, as we need food to live. But you could do it with a type of food or a particular food item. Particularly one that is doing you damage. 'I don't eat custard creams/cake/garlic bread'.
- 2 Replacement Strategies** – By changing your daily bad habits for improved and healthy habits, the 'numbers' usually take care of themselves and impressive results can be achieved from this alone. Here are some examples:
 - I am 90-100% confident that I will record what I eat on paper for 6 days per week after I finish eating each meal.
 - I am 90-100% confident that I will eat fresh vegetables with every meal for 6 days a week after I decide to eat/cook.
 - I am 90-100% confident that I will drink 250ml of fresh water with every meal for 6 days a week after I start to eat.
- 3 Small Steps** – This would mean exercising some will power for a short period of time and then slowly building on it. Examples might be if you currently eat a packet of biscuits in one sitting, reduce it to half a packet in one sitting each day. Then when that is tolerable, reduce it further. This is the same principle as smokers who cut down to quit date, rather than just stop.
- 4 The Three R's** – For every habit we perform there is a **reminder** (see triggers later), we perform the **routine**, then we get a **reward**. When we experience a pleasurable reward from doing something, we want to do it over and over to keep experiencing the pleasure. This is useful in forming new habits. Get a reminder, attach the routine and the pleasurable reward then you have the building blocks for a new habit. Are there any current habits that you have, that you can piggyback a new good habit on to?
- 5 The 20 Second Rule** – This is all about interrupting routines or making routines easier by putting a 20 second barrier in place, or removing a 20 second barrier to make a routine easier to perform. It focuses on the very start of the routine that you want to perform or break, using 'Activation Energy', as the spark that you need to act as a catalyst to ensure you follow through with your desired routine. It could be as simple as moving the biscuit tin to another part of the kitchen to make it harder for you get to it. It might be putting your kit by your bed, to make morning exercise easier.

KEY MESSAGES

Breaking and forming habits are the key to lifelong success. There's no right or wrong way to break habits. You must find the right strategy for you. And it may take different strategies for different habits.

Have a look at the habits you have that might be causing you damage, how can you interrupt them or replace them? What new habits do you want to be able to perform? What can your reminders and rewards be for these?