

**Lessons Learned On The Self Improvement
Journey And Their Action Steps**

TAKE CHARGE OF YOUR HABITS

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Introduction

What type of life do you lead? Are you happy? Are you exhausted? Are you sad? Are you energized? Whatever your answer, what you have is a direct result of the habits you have spent a lifetime building. Heavy sigh.

A product of your own making, but how on earth do you undo a lifetime of bad habits? You have to take charge of them and make a conscious decision to change.

It sounds hard and it *is* hard, but here's the thing. Every single day you have the chance to live your habits out. You make a choice about what time to wake up. You make choices to determine how your morning routine unfolds (or doesn't).

You choose the outfit you will wear. You choose how much exercise and interaction you get. You determine how productive you will be and how you react and respond to the world.

Those daily habits are what brought you to this point today. Those habits make up a large part of your choices in life, how you live your life and, in many cases, extend to who you are and how you feel about yourself. For example, I propose to you that if Bob has poor habits when it comes to exercise and healthy diet then he is likely not very supportive of himself, or he has poor self-esteem and so his self-care suffers as a result.

For these reasons and others, taking charge of your habits is a key lesson learned on the self-improvement journey.

Habits are a necessary part of life. When you build habits, you create space in your mind to focus on other things (like simply surviving the day). For example, once you learn how to drive and have the experience you hop behind the wheel and you go. Your focus isn't on driving the car, it's on following the rules of the road safely. Your brain gives you the space to do so by handling the handling of the car.

That's a good example of a positive habit. Unfortunately, they can also be negative. Bad habits can lock you into self-sabotage and destructive patterns that will heavily limit your success. If

you want to be successful, if you want to develop as a person, then you have to get rid of those bad habits and develop new, healthy ones that align with the life you're trying to live.

Before we proceed, let's talk about what habits are and what they mean.

What Are Habits And How They Start

The American Journal of Psychology has defined the term habit as "a fixed way of thinking, willing, or feeling acquired through repetition"

(https://www.jstor.org/stable/1412711?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents)). To put it in modern language, it's a behavior that you repeat regularly and it's often one that occurs subconsciously. This is why it's difficult to observe these bad habits or break them once you do. A good example would be if someone you're close to speaks with an accent.

At the start, it was likely noticeable. In fact, it may be a part of what drew you to the person in the first place. After a while, though, that's just who they are, it's their voice, it's their accent, you grow accustomed to their way of speaking, and *not* hearing it has become a habit. This is especially true for the children of immigrants. After a while, you hardly notice that your accent differs from theirs unless someone draws attention to it.

But how do your habits grow roots? How do they start?

Well, from the definition it's clear. Habits begin when you do something repeatedly. Such as brushing your teeth every morning and automatically doing so when you wake up.

There are all types of misconceptions about how long it takes to break or make a habit. You have probably heard a range of options from 21 days to 66 days. There is no real scientific basis for any of that and anyone who has tried to quit smoking knows exactly how difficult it can be.

The nicotine may have left your blood one to three days after your final cigarette (<https://www.webmd.com/smoking-cessation/qa/how-long-does-nicotine-stay-in-your-system>), but the habit is much harder to break. You grow accustomed to having a cigarette with your morning coffee, after you eat lunch, after a great dessert, and all the other times throughout the day.

The only way to effectively disentangle yourself from the habit of smoking is to find *something else* to do to distract you from the need to smoke.

According to the CDC, smokers need up to eleven attempts to successfully quit smoking, the American Cancer Society believe it tops out at ten, while the Australian Cancer Council has that number as high as fourteen. That's far higher than we once thought, but according to a study from the BMJ Open, that number is neared to *thirty* (<https://bmjopen.bmj.com/content/6/6/e011045>). Ultimately, a year. That is a long time. Of course, the best way to shake bad habits is to educate the masses and ensure those bad habits never have a chance to take root in the first place.

Bad habits range from the extreme of smoking, risk-taking, excessive alcohol use, overspending, and drugs to the more mundane, but annoying fidgeting, nail-biting, and procrastination.

The Facts Of Bad Habits

Everyone has at least *one* bad habit, but the reality is that you likely have several. Do you bite your nails? Are you constantly late? Do you overanalyze everything? Do you constantly nitpick? Everyone has a behavioral pattern they could do without.

We are humans which means we are imperfect beings which is a perfect excuse to brush these bad habits to one side and shrug it off. You're not perfect, but if your bad habits are holding you back then you cannot continue to simply brush them off.

A Bad Habit Can Be Broken

If you built it, you could break it. In the same way, bad habits take root, so can good habits. Think about it – you have plenty of good habits you don't even think about but contribute to keeping you alive – hydrating, eating, driving the car, going to work, and earning a paycheck. Those are habits that positively contribute to your existence.

So, it stands to reason that if you can eradicate (or at least limit) your bad habits, then you can replace them with positive habits. I want you to think of habits as infrastructure and this is infrastructure week. The infrastructure you have built thus far has brought you to this point in your life and from here on out, any infrastructure you build should contribute to your continued success.

To do so, you must be able to identify bad habits, break them, and replace them. The most effective way to break a habit is to prevent it from occurring, but it might be too late for that *now*. However, you can take preventative steps to *break* bad habits, too.

For example, if you are constantly running late you can take preventative steps to get up earlier, organize your morning more effectively, and leave earlier.

Action Steps

Identify Poor Habits

You cannot achieve your dream life by hoping for it to materialize, you have to take active steps and be intentional about creating the life you want. You cannot 'cure' a bad habit until you identify it and its cause.

What made habits are holding you back?

- Is it punctuality?
- A failure to respond to calls, emails, or texts in a timely manner?
- Do you stay up too late and shun sleep to your detriment?
- Do you fail to honor your commitments?
- Do you fail to plan your day?
- Do you overspend?
- Do you put things off? Are you a perennial procrastinator?
- Do you drink too much? Do you smoke too much?
- Do you work too little? Do you work too much?

Can you imagine what your life could be like if you got those bad habits under control? If you ate well, slept plenty, and exercised regularly? If you lived within your means, paid off your debt, and managed your finances more efficiently? If you squelched your fears and stopped procrastinating to use your time more wisely? If you built a plan and stuck to it and made things happen for yourself.

Your life would be different if you identified those bad habits and made changes.

The best way to begin is to write out the good habits that you have and other productive habits that you could imagine adopting. Then, when you identify your bad habits you have productive ones ready to slot in when the time comes.

The key is being fully committed to each new habit you choose to build. If you cannot commit to it fully, then it's unlikely you will be successful in your endeavors. I don't want you to put pressure on yourself to eradicate a bad habit and replace it and move onto the next one quickly.

It's going to take time and we'll detail shortly how important it is to focus on one habit at a time. It's an incremental task and even if you spend three months focusing on replacing a bad habit with a good one, that is four healthy habits you're adopting in the span of a year. That might not sound like much, but its impact can be massive.

Decide. Commit. Focus.

Identify New Good Habits You Want To Create

With just a little bit of discipline to start, you can build a healthy new habit that won't take much to form. With every bad habit must come a new habit to replace it. The best way to make them stick is to choose a healthy habit that is closely related to the bad habit you are trying to ditch.

So, if you are always late and want to improve your timekeeping, then your new habit should revolve around creating a healthy morning routine. Initially, you should have a detailed plan of how your morning will unfold, from the time you rise to when you brush your teeth, brew the coffee, meditate, and leave the house. Everything should be accounted for.

That might seem like a lot, but it's necessary to help you get used to the change and keep you on track. After a while, it will be second nature and you won't need to give your schedule a second glance, you will simply just *do it*. I have some tips you can rely on that will help you get started.

Just 30 Days

As we discussed earlier, it can take much longer to break and build a habit. However, committing to thirty days to start is a good psychological tool to deploy and maintain motivation. It becomes easier to sustain with time so you need to make it safely through the

conditioning phase. A 30-day commitment should be more than enough to get you on your way.

Daily Focus

A habit isn't something you can pick up and put down, this is something you have to practice daily. Guess what? You might like to laze around on your days off, but you're better off following the same routine, particularly in the first 30 days.

If you want your body to work well for you, then you should be prepared to do the same for it. So, no more staying up late on your evenings off so you can sleep until noon on your day off. It is much harder to lock in a habit when you only do it every two or three days.

Keep it Simple

You cannot change your entire life in a single day. It's easy to feel energized and motivated on day one, but if you take on too much then you will burn yourself out. If you want to build a strong habit of playing a new instrument for two hours a day instead of watching television, then start by practicing for thirty minutes.

Reminders

It's easy to forget that you're trying to build a new habit because well, it isn't a habit yet. If you miss out on a day it becomes easier still to forget again. So, use sticky notes, phone alarms, and whatever else it may take to give yourself frequent reminders of what your new habit is and when you should be practicing it.

Be Consistent

The more consistent you are with your habit the better it will stick. So, if you want to build a healthy exercise habit, you need to choose a specific time and do it then every daily for the next 30 days. No excuses, no going back, every day at this time you are going to do these exercises. Habits are more likely to stick when you have cues in place, such as circumstances, place, or time of day.

Accountability Partner

You have to want it for yourself but having an accountability partner can make a major difference to you. You will feel like quitting, especially if you are getting rid of a particularly stubborn habit. An accountability partner can help keep you motivated.

Triggers

These days, a trigger is generally discussed in a negative context. However, you can create your own triggers and use them in a healthy way. It's essentially a ritual that you use just because you carry out a good habit.

For example, if you have a punctuality problem then waking up the same way every morning can help you get up earlier. If you're desperately trying to quit smoking cigarettes, then you could snap your fingers when you get a craving and before you do the replacement habit.

Replacements

This is key. You cannot eradicate a bad habit without replacing it with a good habit, that really is the key to all of this. You have to look at the bad habits you have identified and ask yourself what needs each of these habits meet.

For example, if smoking is the issue then it probably relaxes you. It's a coping mechanism to deal with stress. Intellectually, you know it's dangerous to your physical health. You probably also know that the relaxation it provides you is temporary and it has the opposite effect long-term. What can you do instead to replace that habit and meet the need it did?

Forget Perfection

You will slip up, you will fail. 30 attempts to quit smoking. Accept that you will run into bumps and understand that it's how you respond to them that counts.

Add A But

When negative thoughts creep in add a but to the end and turn them into a positive. *I suck at this, but* I'm going to get better.

No Temptations

The best way to ensure your success is to restructure the world around you to remove or limit temptations. If you're trying to quit smoking, then throw away all of your cigarettes. If you're trying to curb your junk food diet, then remove all of it from your cupboards and get it out of your house.

If you're guilty of staying up late on your phone or watching television, then move the TV from your room and set your phone on the other side of it or use an app blocker to keep you out of the most absorbing apps.

Role Models

Surround yourself with the people who have habits you'd like to create or mirror.

Experiment

For the next thirty days, I want you to see this exercise as an experiment which means there can be no judgment until the full period of time is up. An experiment cannot fail, they simply have different outcomes.

Nothing But Net

When you are overcome by a craving, visualize yourself carrying out the bad habit. Don't leave it there, it's important that you visualize yourself shoving it aside to perform the good habit instead. Visualize the sequence until its completion and enjoy the positivity you feel as a result of winning that moment.

See yourself picking up a pack of cigarettes, taking one out and snapping it in half, crumbling it between your fingers, and dropping it in the trash. Visualize yourself taking a run without wheezing.

Do this several times until it becomes the way you respond to each craving or temptation. This is particularly important if you find yourself overcome when you cannot escape to actually complete the good habit you chose to replace the bad habit.

Write it Out

Write your ideas down, put them on paper, and let that guide your focus and keep your attention on the end result.

Benefit Analysis

It's important that you understand the benefits of the changes you are making. There are benefits to letting go of bad habits and there are benefits to embracing a positive habit. Pay attention to the physical and mental benefits that come with the changes you are making. Now think about how that contributes to your self-improvement journey. You're going to be unstoppable.

Likewise, you should have a grasp of the potential consequences that come from failing to make the right changes.

Do It For You

This change you want to make has to be about you. When you are working from a place of intrinsic motivation you are far more likely to succeed.

Instill Habits Around Self-Improvement

Self-discipline is a necessary part of success. To build healthy habits you have to have self-discipline and to build healthy habits that work for you, you have to focus them on self-improvement. It all comes down to your ability to control yourself through discipline. You are in charge of your thoughts, behaviors, feelings, emotions, and your habits. It's up to you to keep it all under control and in check.

If you have goals you want to achieve, then discipline is necessary to ensure success. So, the habits you build now will contribute to both your strength of self-discipline and your self-improvement.

If you can form positive habits now (and the younger you are when you do so the better), then you begin building a better future. Anything is possible with self-discipline. I'd like you to think of discipline as a gateway drug to achieving success.

The more you practice self-discipline the stronger yours will grow. So, eradicating bad habits and forming better habits is an excellent way to improve your self-discipline and while you're at it, contribute to self-improvement.

That is the focus. Your focus on the habits you get rid of first should aid your self-improvement. The habits you replace them with should aid your self-improvement.

For example, if you have a list of five bad habits you want to rid yourself of, then you should start with the biggest stumbling block to your self-improvement. According to the American Psychological Association, around 40% of human behavior is driven by habit (<https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2014/08/140808111931.htm>). That's a lot. All types of habits can help you improve as a person while strengthening self-discipline.

It's up to you to determine which habits are for you but to give you a good idea of the ones that can help you improve self-discipline while contributing to your personal development, here are some suggestions.

- Practicing gratitude
- Offering forgiveness
- Regular meditation
- Journaling
- Setting goals intentionally and actively
- Eating a healthy diet
- Adopting a healthy sleep pattern
- Regular exercise
- Maintaining organization
- Effective time management
- Persistence no matter the resistance

Build One Habit At A Time

It all comes down to this, it's time to put it all into action but where do you go from here? It's all-important, but this point is particularly important. You can only build one habit at a time.

Focus On A Single Habit

Let's talk about ego depletion. It's the idea that our willpower or self-control only has a limited pool of resources to draw from. Therefore, you can fall into a state of ego depletion when you use up all of your energy (<https://www.bps.org.uk/news-and-policy/“strongest-evidence-yet”-ego-depletion—idea-self-control-limited-resource>).

If you want to succeed in taking charge of your habits, then you first must understand how ego depletion is holding you back. You reach a point where your capacity to regulate your actions, thoughts, and feelings is diminished.

This impacts your ability to build new habits because that supply of self-control is too thinly spread all over your life. You might think this sounds like a habit-killer, but this is simply to highlight the importance of focusing on a single habit at a time. As you channel the energy into one habit you increase the likelihood of success.

So, what is the one habit you want to form? Before you get started, you should take the necessary research steps to learn everything about it and how you can effectively establish it as your habit. Make yourself an expert on the subject.

Think about a habit you can do daily and that fits into your life. Starting with one, positive habit that you can be consistent and intentional about will make you more likely to succeed and encourage you to keep going with a new habit when this one is nailed down.

Remember, you need to commit to thirty days to get started on a positive note. It might take longer but giving yourself a judgment-free thirty days to get started is important.

Anchor It

To improve your chances of success you should anchor your new habit to an existing one. It's all about creating a habit loop. Look at the bad habit you're replacing and the routine it is attached to and anchor a new one to that same routine.

For example, you normally get home from work and change into comfortable clothes and sink onto the couch to watch television before you prepare dinner. Instead, get home from work and change into workout clothes and go for a walk before you prepare dinner. It's all about finding a consistent habit you have and anchoring new, positive behavior to it.

Little Steps

When you rely on motivation alone to build your new habit you may struggle when it runs out and you're not in the mood. That's why little steps are important. It's the idea that you set up a low level of commitment to ensure your success by making it essentially impossible to fail. It makes it easier to remain consistent and follow through no matter what's going on.

Some examples of this include writing a single sentence in your journal. Taking a five-minute walk. Eating one piece of fruit (or portion of vegetables) daily. Getting up just five minutes earlier. These micro-commitments can build up to something great by offering you small wins to get started and build higher levels of motivation.

Obstacles

There is an obstacle (or two) to any new habit you choose to build. It takes time, there may be pain, the weather might be a factor, the cost could be an issue, and even space could be a problem. The key to ensuring your success is heading off obstacles before they have a chance to throw a banana skin in your path.

For each habit, you plan to adopt you should consider what obstacles you may face and put a plan in place to cope with each and every one of them. For example, if it rains then you will run in place rather than go out.

Rewards

You should have a reward system in place because you have to celebrate every success you experience on your journey to self-improvement. Simple rewards are more than enough, you don't have to blow your budget out of the water.

And you should avoid rewards that revolve around a bad habit. For example, don't reward yourself with food if you're building a healthy eating habit. At least, not to start. You can use rewards that contribute to making building new habits fun. For example, if your self-improvement habits revolve around improving your health, then workout clothing could be a good reward.

This is You

You will only get so far repeating your habit daily. Committing to small actions daily and increasing how much effort you put in overtime can make a difference. However, you will reach a point where you have to shift it from habit to part of you.

Your healthy habits, especially those focused on self-improvement, must become part of your core identity. You are, effectively, building a new version of yourself.

Who do you want to be? Because now is the time to decide.

This is how you stick to something without requiring constant reinforcement. A lasting habit should be a reflection of your inner self. You have to believe that it contributes to what makes you the person you are (or want to be). Goals tend to be centered on outcomes, but it's better to make them part of your identity. That requires a shift in your mindset.

You want to improve yourself by losing weight, but don't think about the weight loss think of it as *I'm the kind of person who cares about my body enough to be intentional about what I put into it and how I treat it.*

Final Thoughts

Ultimately, you cannot even begin to work on self-improvement if you do not first get your habits under control. The habits you build now will serve your self-improvement for years to **come**. No real change can happen if you don't instill healthy, positive habits from the outset.

TAKE CHARGE OF YOUR HABITS

Mindmap



Take Charge Of Your Habits Action Steps Checklist

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Identify Poor Habits

- ✓ You cannot 'cure' a bad habit until you identify it and its cause.

What bad habits are holding you back?

- Is it punctuality?
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 - Do you stay up too late and shun sleep to your detriment?
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-
- ✓ Imagine what your life could be like if you got those bad habits under control? If you ate well, slept plenty, and exercised regularly? If you lived within your means, paid off your debt, and managed your finances more efficiently? If you squelched your fears and stopped procrastinating to use your time more wisely? If you built a plan and stuck to it and made things happen for yourself.
 - ✓ The best way to begin is to write out the good habits that you have and other productive habits that you could imagine adopting. Then, when you identify your bad habits you have productive ones ready to slot in when the time comes.
 - ✓ The key is being fully committed to each new habit you choose to build. If you cannot commit to it fully, then it's unlikely you will be successful in your endeavors.
 - ✓ New habit building is an incremental task and even if you spend three months focusing on replacing a bad habit with a good one, that is four healthy habits you're adopting in the span of a year. That might not sound like much, but its impact can be massive.

✓ Decide. Commit. Focus.

Identify New Good Habits You Want To Create

- ✓ With every bad habit must come a new habit to replace it. The best way to make them stick is to choose a healthy habit that is closely related to the bad habit you are trying to ditch.
- ✓ If you are always late and want to improve your timekeeping, then your new habit should revolve around creating a healthy morning routine. Initially, you should have a detailed plan of how your morning will unfold, from the time you rise to when you brush your teeth, brew the coffee, meditate, and leave the house. Everything should be accounted for. After a while, it will be second nature and you won't need to give your schedule a second glance, you will simply just do it. I have some tips you can rely on that will help you get started.
- ✓ Committing to thirty days to start is a good psychological tool to deploy and maintain motivation. It becomes easier to sustain with time so you need to make it safely through the conditioning phase.
- ✓ Daily Focus - A habit isn't something you can pick up and put down, this is something you have to practice daily. It is much harder to lock in a habit when you only do it every two or three days.
- ✓ Keep it Simple - You cannot change your entire life in a single day. It's easy to feel energized and motivated on day one, but if you take on too much then you will burn yourself out. If you want to build a strong habit of playing a new instrument for two hours a day instead of watching television, then start by practicing for thirty minutes.
- ✓ Reminders - It's easy to forget that you're trying to build a new habit because well, it isn't a habit yet. If you miss out on a day it becomes easier still to forget again. So, use sticky notes, phone alarms, and whatever else it may take to give yourself frequent reminders of what your new habit is and when you should be practicing it.
- ✓ Be Consistent - The more consistent you are with your habit the better it will stick. So, if you want to build a healthy exercise habit, you need to choose a specific time and do it then every day for the next 30 days. No excuses, no going back, every day at this time you are going to do these

exercises. Habits are more likely to stick when you have cues in place, such as circumstances, place, or time of day.

- ✓ Get An Accountability Partner - You have to want it for yourself but having an accountability partner can make a major difference to you. You will feel like quitting, especially if you are getting rid of a particularly stubborn habit. An accountability partner can help keep you motivated.
- ✓ Triggers - Create your own triggers and use them in a healthy way. It's essentially a ritual that you use just because you carry out a good habit.
- ✓ Replacements - This is key. You cannot eradicate a bad habit without replacing it with a good habit, that really is the key to all of this. You have to look at the bad habits you have identified and ask yourself what needs each of these habits meet.
- ✓ Forget Perfection- You will slip up, you will fail. Accept that you will run into bumps and understand that it's how you respond to them that counts.
- ✓ Add A But- When negative thoughts creep in add a but to the end and turn them into a positive. I suck at this, but I'm going to get better.
- ✓ No Temptations- The best way to ensure your success is to restructure the world around you to remove or limit temptations. If you're trying to quit smoking, then throw away all of your cigarettes. If you're trying to curb your junk food diet, then remove all of it from your cupboards and get it out of your house.
- ✓ Role Models - Surround yourself with the people who have habits you'd like to create or mirror.
- ✓ Experiment - For the next thirty days, I want you to see this exercise as an experiment which means there can be no judgment until the full period of time is up. An experiment cannot fail, they simply have different outcomes.
- ✓ Nothing But Net - When you are overcome by a craving, visualize yourself carrying out the bad habit. Don't leave it there, it's important that you visualize yourself shoving it aside to perform the good habit instead. Visualize the sequence until its completion and enjoy the positivity you feel as a result of winning that moment. See yourself picking up a pack of

cigarettes, taking one out and snapping it in half, crumbling it between your fingers, and dropping it in the trash. Visualize yourself taking a run without wheezing. Do this several times until it becomes the way you respond to each craving or temptation. This is particularly important if you find yourself overcome when you cannot escape to actually complete the good habit you chose to replace the bad habit.

- ✓ Write it Out - Write your new habit plans down, put them on paper, and let that guide your focus and keep your attention on the end result.
- ✓ Benefit Analysis - It's important that you understand the benefits of the changes you are making. There are benefits to letting go of bad habits and there are benefits to embracing a positive habit. Pay attention to the physical and mental benefits that come with the changes you are making. Now think about how that contributes to your self-improvement journey. You're going to be unstoppable.
- ✓ Do It For You - This change you want to make has to be about you. When you are working from a place of intrinsic motivation you are far more likely to succeed.

Instill Habits Around Self-Improvement

- ✓ Self-discipline is a necessary part of success. To build healthy habits you have to have self-discipline and to build healthy habits that work for you, you have to focus them on self-improvement. It all comes down to your ability to control yourself through discipline. You are in charge of your thoughts, behaviors, feelings, emotions, and your habits. It's up to you to keep it all under control and in check.
- ✓ If you have goals you want to achieve, then discipline is necessary to ensure success. So, the habits you build now will contribute to both your strength of self-discipline and your self-improvement.
- ✓ If you can form positive habits now, then you begin building a better future. Anything is possible with self-discipline. I'd like you to think of discipline as a gateway drug to achieving success.

- ✓ The more you practice self-discipline the stronger yours will grow. So, eradicating bad habits and forming better habits is an excellent way to improve your self-discipline and while you're at it, contribute to self-improvement. That is the focus. Your focus on the habits you get rid of first should aid your self-improvement. The habits you replace them with should aid your self-improvement.

- ✓ It's up to you to determine which habits are for you but to give you a good idea of the ones that can help you improve self-discipline while contributing to your personal development, here are some suggestions.
 - Practicing gratitude

 - Offering forgiveness

 - Regular meditation

 - Journaling

 - Setting goals intentionally and actively

 - Eating a healthy diet

 - Adopting a healthy sleep pattern

 - Regular exercise

 - Maintaining organization

 - Effective time management

 - Persistence no matter the resistance

Build One Habit At A Time

- ✓ Focus On A Single Habit - You can only build one habit at a time.
- ✓ What is the one habit you want to form? Before you get started, you should take the necessary research steps to learn everything about it and how you can effectively establish it as your habit. Make yourself an expert on the subject.
- ✓ Think about a habit you can do daily and that fits into your life. Starting with one, positive habit that you can be consistent and intentional about will make you more likely to succeed and encourage you to keep going with a new habit when this one is nailed down.
- ✓ Remember, you need to commit to thirty days to get started on a positive note. It might take longer but giving yourself a judgment-free thirty days to get started is important.

Anchor It

- ✓ To improve your chances of success you should anchor your new habit to an existing one. It's all about creating a habit loop. Look at the bad habit you're replacing and the routine it is attached to and anchor a new one to that same routine.

For example, you normally get home from work and change into comfortable clothes and sink onto the couch to watch television before you prepare dinner. Instead, get home from work and change into workout clothes and go for a walk before you prepare dinner. It's all about finding a consistent habit you have and anchoring new, positive behavior to it.

Little Steps

- ✓ When you rely on motivation alone to build your new habit you may struggle when it runs out and you're not in the mood. That's why little steps are important. It's the idea that you set up a low level of commitment to ensure your success by making it essentially impossible to fail. It makes it easier to remain consistent and follow through no matter what's going on.

Some examples of this include writing a single sentence in your journal. Taking a five-minute walk. Eating one piece of fruit (or portion of vegetables) daily. Getting up just five minutes earlier. These micro-commitments can build up to something great by offering you small wins to get started and build higher levels of motivation.

Obstacles

- ✓ There is an obstacle (or two) to any new habit you choose to build. The key to ensuring your success is heading off obstacles before they have a chance to throw a banana skin in your path.
- ✓ For each habit, you plan to adopt you should consider what obstacles you may face and put a plan in place to cope with each and every one of them. For example, if it rains then you will run in place rather than go out.

Rewards

- ✓ You should have a reward system in place because you have to celebrate every success you experience on your journey to self-improvement. Simple rewards are more than enough, you don't have to blow your budget out of the water.
- ✓ And you should avoid rewards that revolve around a bad habit. For example, don't reward yourself with food if you're building a healthy eating habit. At least, not to start. You can use rewards that contribute to making building new habits fun. For example, if your self-improvement habits revolve around improving your health, then workout clothing could be a good reward.

This is You

- ✓ You will only get so far repeating your habit daily. Committing to small actions daily and increasing how much effort you put in overtime can make a difference. However, you will reach a point where you have to shift it from habit to part of you.

- ✓ Your healthy habits, especially those focused on self-improvement, must become part of your core identity. You are, effectively, building a new version of yourself.
- ✓ Who do you want to be? Because now is the time to decide. This is how you stick to something without requiring constant reinforcement. A lasting habit should be a reflection of your inner self. You have to believe that it contributes to what makes you the person you are (or want to be). Goals tend to be centered on outcomes, but it's better to make them part of your identity. That requires a shift in your mindset.

**Take Charge
Of Your Habits
Action Steps
Workbook**

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Identify Poor Habits

Good habits will be the foundation of your success, but before you can build new positive habits you must first identify the bad habits that have been holding you back.

Identify Your Current Habits

The aim here is to identify *all* of your daily habits, whether they are positive or negative. Think about how many times you check your emails, get caught up scrolling various social media timelines, eating between meals, watching television, reading, meditating, working, spending time with your loved ones, etc. Just pour it all out into the table below. You should aim to write at least 10 in each column, however, we have provided space for 20 just in case you want to add in more.

Positive Habits	Poor Habits
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
9.	

10.	
11.	
12.	
13.	
14.	
15.	
16.	
17.	
18.	
19.	
20.	

Break Those Bad Habits

Every habit follows the same cycle. There is a trigger, a routine, and a reward. Habits generally produce a positive outcome or feeling, even if it's short-lived. If you want to break those bad habits then you need a plan to overcome the triggers and change your mindset with regards to the rewards.

From the list above, I want you to choose the three most negative or biggest bad habits you struggle with. List them below and for each of them, write the trigger and the reward.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

For each of the triggers you noted above, wrote down three ideas for how you can use it to your advantage.

Trigger One

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Trigger Two

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Trigger Three

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

For each of the short-term rewards you noted above, write out an alternative long-term reward.

In the space below, write a sentence that you can repeat to yourself when your trigger arises or occurs.

Identify New Good Habits You Want To Create

Creating new positive habits to replace those bad habits is what makes the self-improvement process much simpler. It takes time to build new habits and break old ones, so replacing one with another is an excellent way to proceed.

Once you set your new habits and the goals around them, you should review them weekly (and monthly). Let's talk about how you can make them stick.

A gratitude journal is a good place to start because it helps you focus on the positive aspects of your life. While I would encourage you to invest in a physical journal to write in, let's get started here. In the space below, write three things *from today* that you're grateful for. There is space for you to write down three things from *this week* that you're grateful for and another space for three things *in life* you're grateful for.

Today's Gratitude

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

This Week's Gratitude

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Life's Gratitude

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Write down three (healthy or positive) activities you sometimes do that you could turn into positive habits.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Make a list of three brand new habits you would like to build.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Write out the long-term benefits of each of these habits.

1. _____

- 3.
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-

Write down the negative effects (long-term) if you do not do these activities daily.

1.

Make a plan of action to overcome the triggers that come from the triggers for those harmful negative habits you listed above. How will you deal with them daily?

Trigger	Habit	Plan of Action

Instill Habits Surrounding Self-Improvement

It all begins with a *small* change, a little habit. Something so easy that you cannot say no to it. Often, people say they would do a better job of building better habits if only they had more willpower or better motivation.

Willpower is a muscle, it ebbs and it flows so you have to use it to your advantage. For example, as you begin a self-improvement journey, start off small. If you want to get fit and your aim is to work out for an hour daily, then start with 5-10 minutes to build up to it. If you go straight in with an hour there's a good chance, you'll fall prey to fatigue, the following day your body will be one giant ache, and you will likely give up as quickly as you started. So, let's take it slow.

Don't underestimate the power of incremental improvement. Boosting yourself 1% daily doesn't sound like much, but when you add it up week by week, it sure does look like something special. Earlier, you chose the biggest three bad habits. I want you to choose a positive habit you identified to replace each of those bad habits.

Make a note of the healthy habits you will replace those bad habits with.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Now I want you to look at those habits and I want you to think about how they support your self-improvement journey. Do they?

If not, I want you to rethink the bad habit you're cutting out and consider what positive habit will help you overcome it while also serving as a key aspect of your self-improvement journey.

Finalize your healthy habits below, and for each of them write a few sentences about how they will support your self-improvement journey.

Now that you know where you are going with this journey, it's time to put it all together into an action plan.

Think about the bad habits and the small steps you will take to eradicate them and how that serves your long-term goal. Do the same again for the good habit you are trying to replace it with. No matter what your plan is, it has to serve the longer-term goal. Every action you take in the smallest steps now is in service of that greater plan.

In the space below, break down each of those into bite-sized chunks that you can manage daily to create major growth.

The Action Plan	Action Steps	Long-Term Goal
Bad Habit 1	1. 2. 3.	

Good Habit 1

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Bad Habit 2	1. 2. 3.	
Good Habit 2	1. 2. 3.	



Bad Habit 3	1. 2. 3.	
Good Habit 3	1. 2. 3.	

While you have the space to tackle three habits in the action plan, it's important to note that you should only build one habit at a time, which brings us to the next section of our workbook.

Build One Habit At A Time

As you embark on a journey of taking charge of your habits, it's important that you can differentiate between habits and goals. A goal is an outcome like getting fit. A habit is the action you will take to achieve the goal. So, if your goal is to get fit, then habits to achieve that goal include exercising daily and eating five portions of fruit daily along with vegetables at every meal.

Does your environment support your action plan?

Look at your world and think about how it may encourage your bad habits and discourage new healthy habits and vice versa. How can you make changes to maintain your journey?

Part of securing your action plan should help you establish habits in relation to other activities to enforce it. For example, After x, I will y, to support z. This is how you should phrase your action steps from here on out.

Even if you are completely drained of energy or running low on time, remember that some practice is better than skipping it altogether. So, if your daily starting goal is to exercise for ten minutes and you just don't have time or energy, push yourself to complete five minutes. It is consistency that will help you build those habits.

You can also choose a friend to keep you accountable, whether they serve as an official accountability partner or simply tell a few close friends your plans so it's out there.

You should also use a calendar, spreadsheet, or journal to help you keep track of your plan and your practice. It doesn't just serve as a record of your behavior, it's a great motivational tool. As

you look back on it you can see just how far you have come in your journey which will serve as motivation for the next stage of your journey.

Reassess The Action Plan

Now, with that knowledge in mind let's reassess the action plan you created above. This is your chance to settle on the good habits that will replace the bad habits *and* how each of them serves the long-term goal.

The purpose of this exercise is simply to help you establish motivation by clarifying your goals and building a deeper understanding of how it serves your greater goal and purpose.

The Action Plan	Action Steps	How Each Habit Serves the Long-Term Goal
Bad Habit 1	1. 2. 3.	
Good Habit 1	1. 2. 3.	

Bad Habit 2	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1.2.3.	
Good Habit 2	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1.2.3.	

Bad Habit 3	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1.2.3.	
Good Habit 3	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1.2.3.	

Put It All Together

Now, put it all together again with any changes you made in the table above.

The Action Plan	Action Steps	Long-Term Goal
Bad Habit 1	1. 2. 3.	
Good Habit 1	1. 2. 3.	

Bad Habit 2

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Good Habit 2

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Bad Habit 3	1. 2. 3.	
Good Habit 3	1. 2. 3.	

Don't forget to celebrate every success. You are on your way to an incredible journey, one that will be as intense as it is satisfying. Just be sure to stop and smell the roses.

