

## Changing a habit that's not working

To be the best you can be, you must be prepared to change the habits that are not working for you. It is about you being more effective at getting what you want. How you see situations is your choice. You create your own reality. What is an impossible demand on one person is an exciting challenge for another. Some people will feel a failure and blame others, whilst some will learn from failure and change themselves.

### It's your habits that will determine your future

Most of us resist change until it is forced upon us or the future we desire is better than where we are now. How often have you said to yourself "never again" yet found yourself repeating the behaviour again and again – even when it's not in your best interests? To **be the best you can be** you need to develop a new habit, which is to embrace change and enjoy changing the habits that are clearly not working for you. Successful people have made change a habit, and have made a commitment to themselves to **be the best they can be**. Simply by changing your habits you can **turn negative consequences into positive rewards**. Once a new habit gets well developed (*it takes about 30 days*) it then becomes your new normal behaviour.

**IF YOU KEEP DOING WHAT  
YOU HAVE ALWAYS DONE**

**You'll keep getting what  
you've always got**

**UP TO 90% OF OUR NORMAL BEHAVIOUR IS BASED ON HABITS**

## Moving from Now to New

Make a list of the habits that are not working for you. Some of these will be persistent behaviours that are actually stopping you from being more effective as a person in getting what you really want for yourself. See them as SPRINGBOARDS to success.

### **FAILURE IS ONLY FEEDBACK – LEARN FROM IT AND DO SOMETHING DIFFERENT**

Your actions represent the truth about who you really are. What you say or think you are like is an illusion. If you are open to good honest feedback, you can make small adjustments quickly and eliminate bad habits permanently. **You have just got to want to change and take action.** That's why at the end of each set of Skill Gym notes you are encouraged to take action. It is the only way new habits and skills will be developed. It's not about perfection, it's about being better.

If you have children, you will understand only too well that beliefs and habits are learned from the people and the environment you live in. A negative, blame ridden organisation culture, creates negative employees who will blame everyone but themselves. If you cannot change someone else's behaviour then it's our own habits that we have to take responsibility for – if we really want the culture to change. That's why cultural change is difficult, unless managers are prepared to lead by example and expect others to follow their example. An attitude of "do as I say, but not as I do" just won't hack it. Remember, your truth is in your behaviour – not your thoughts or words.

## How to change habits that aren't working for you

If you listen well and take good notes you will generate a wealth of powerful ideas for new habits you can work on for yourself. Think of someone you admire or would like to be like. What do you observe about the way they behave or the attitudes they have? You will probably see them as determined, committed, passionate, enthusiastic, positive, hard working, confident, etc. What could you do to develop these traits in yourself? After all, they are only habits, driven by a desire to achieve their goals.

People who feel wealthy in every respect understand that life is a learning experience, an opportunity to **be the best you can be**. The learning never stops. Learn to constantly refine your habits. There is always another level to reach for, no matter how good you are right now. You always have more to offer, it's just a matter of believing that you can.

[This where Coaching comes in.](#)

**A good Coach can help you develop successful habits.**

There is no magic formula for changing a habit, but there is a simple way that works as long as you are committed.

**1. Clearly identify a habit that's not working for you**

Think about the future consequences of your bad habits. This is because the real impact could be years away. Be honest with yourself. Listen to those who care about you. Your quality of life could be at stake. Do small things now and make change easy for yourself.

**2. Define the new habit that will work for you**

Usually this is just the opposite of your 'bad' habit. What are you actually going to do? To motivate yourself think about all the benefits and rewards you can get from adopting your new successful habit. This helps you create a clear picture of what this new habit will do for you. See the [Miracle Question](#) in Info Notes (2) 'Focusing on Solutions'.

**3. Create a three-part action plan**

This is a test of your inner strength as a spiritual being. Deepak Chopra in his wonderful little book 'The Seven Spiritual Laws of Success', talks about finding ways of constantly reminding yourself to *"pay attention to your intentions"*. Set yourself three immediate action steps or intentions that you will pay attention to on a daily basis for the next 30 days.

**You need to be a starter and a finisher.** Now that you know how habits really work you have the formula for transforming yourself, by acting your way into a new way of thinking. This is important because you cannot think or plan your way into a new way of being – it takes action – your action. Here's a framework . . . .

<b>A. The habit that's holding me back</b>	
The habit . . .	The consequences . . .
<b>B. The habit that will serve me better</b>	
The habit . . .	The benefits . . . .
<b>C. The 3-Step Action Plan to Jump-Start My New Habit</b>	
1. . . . .	
2. . . . .	
3. . . . .	
Start Date:	Review after 30 days

# Finding the time to change your habits

It is important that you separate so-called urgent tasks from your most important priorities. Putting out fires all day long does not allow you to change or improve anything. Everytime the telephone rings or the email messenger beeps, you should not jump to answer it all the time. Create time in your day to focus on your priorities.

Try the 4-D formula to help you prioritise. You need to be honest. Are you hiding behind what's urgent and not tackling what's important to you – your goals. As a result, change may never happen.

1. **DUMP IT** – learn to say no. Be firm.
2. **DELEGATE IT** – it needs to be done, but maybe you don't need to do it. Find someone else to do it for you. See Levels of Control in Info Notes (9) 'Be in charge and take control'.
3. **DEFER IT** – it needs attention, but not right now. Schedule a specific time at a later date to deal with it.
4. **DO IT** – it is the projects that are important to you that need your attention right away. This is needed to move things forward. Give yourself rewards for completing these projects. Don't look for excuses. Neglect what's important and the consequences could be significant.

**Learning the power of 'NO'** requires considerable self-discipline and confidence. Become more aware of what you actually do spend your time doing. How much time is spent helping you achieve your goals? The biggest battle you will have is with yourself – between your own ears.

When that little negative voice tries to get your attention – take time-out and give yourself a good talking to. Focus on the benefits and rewards of what your new habit will mean for you. Other people may attempt to destroy your focus and sidetrack you. **Avoid life's "time bandits"**. Take time during the day to get focused on your priorities. Grab a coffee and eat a snack away from your desk, rub on some handcream, anything that stops you answering the phone for 10 minutes. Tackle your most important priorities first.

Don't allow the telephone to rule your life, unless you have no choice. In this case something needs to be done to give you some time away from the telephone. Pre-schedule your appointments and important telephone calls. Take charge of your time. Create a new habit. Say NO more often. When initiating calls, think through what you want the outcome to be.

## How to create well-formed outcomes

1. Be clear about what you want and express it in positive, future-focused language
2. When you have it, what will you see, hear and feel (step back and observe yourself)
3. Focus on the behaviours you can control, it will enhance your sense of achievement
4. Be clear about where, when, how and with whom you want it
5. Be honest about why you don't have it already or about what you will not do
6. Ensure that it's realistic in terms of time, cost and fits your sense of self.

# Bring greater awareness to your pursuits

It was the famous Psychotherapist, Nathaniel Brandon, who remarked that most people are “in danger of having near life experiences”. Most of us he argued, lived our lives at low levels of self-awareness, not always conscious of the choices we make or how we respond. The more of our lives that become unthinkingly habitual deprive us of the opportunity to choose a response to events that brings us what we want.

## DO YOU KNOW HOW & WHY YOU MAKE THE CHOICES YOU DO ?

Habits are unconscious or semi-conscious behaviour which we give little or no thought to, yet determine what we get from life. **As a result we blame others for our own unconscious behaviour; believing that we have no choice.** The truth is that whether we are conscious of it or not, we can choose our actions, thoughts and feelings – they are all under our control. See Info Notes (4) ‘Being in charge and taking control’.

To change a habit that’s not working for us we need to be aware of how our responses create what we get. **EVENTS + REACTIONS = OUTCOMES** The events in your life, and reaction to them produce what you get. What’s your reaction when you get stuck in a traffic jam ? How do you react when you are criticized or shouted at ? How do you feel when your boss doesn’t respect you ?

If the reactions inside you bring negative emotions they can be an obstacle to you getting what you want or feeling good about yourself. Your habit of reacting negatively is not working for you and it is in your interests to change it.

## TAKE TIME TO THINK ABOUT AND CHANGE YOUR REACTIONS

When an event happens you have a split second or two to choose how to react. For example, if someone is late for a meeting with you, you may choose to get angry or be reasonable and appreciative. Train yourself to feel your negative reaction and stop yourself from just “firing off without thinking”, then flip the feeling over into a positive one and move on to think about something or someone else. This way you are remaining conscious of your feelings, recognizing them and then controlling or replacing them to meet your need to be positive.

Create a list that acknowledges how you respond to different events now and how you could choose to react differently. Don’t do what you have always done – do something more positive.

The Event	How I currently react	How I could choose to react

# Taking Action

Try the following sentence completion exercises.

Quickly complete each sentence with 6 endings. Choose one from each group of 6 to work on to change the underlying habit that's not working for you.

1. I sabotage my efforts to get what I want when I . . . . .

2. If I could bring 5% more awareness to my activities today . . . . .

3. The scary thing about living more consciously is . . . . .

## NOTE:

Living more consciously is an act of loving yourself to experience your full potential as a person and the level of importance you place on living a meaningful and purposeful life.

Making choices should not be seen as a burden that you need to shift onto others, but an opportunity to feel free, empowered and in control of your destiny.

It is the strength of your desire to achieve something worthwhile, despite the odds, that defines you. A little effort can deliver big results.

# Changing habits that aren't working for you

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The habit . . .	The benefits . . . .
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1 . . . . .	
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Start Date:	Review after 30 days

**Process Notes:**

- 1. Clearly identify a habit that's not working for you**  
 Think about the future consequences of your bad habits. This is because the real impact could be years away. Be honest with yourself. Listen to those who care about you. Your quality of life could be at stake. Do small things now and make change easy for yourself.
- 2. Define the new habit that will work for you**  
 Usually this is just the opposite of your 'bad' habit. What are you actually going to do? To motivate yourself think about all the benefits and rewards you can get from adopting your new successful habit. This helps you create a clear picture of what this new habit will do for you. See the [Miracle Question](#) in Info Notes (2) 'Focusing on Solutions'.
- 3. Create a three-part action plan**  
 This is a test of your inner strength as a spiritual being. Deepak Chopra in his wonderful little book 'The Seven Spiritual Laws of Success', talks about finding ways of constantly reminding yourself to **'pay attention to your intentions'**. Set yourself three immediate action steps or intentions that you will pay attention to on a daily basis for the next 30 days.

# Creating well-formed outcomes

## 1. What do you want ?

Be clear about what you want and express it in positive, future-focused language

## 2. How will you know when you have it ?

When you have it, what will you see, hear and feel (step back and observe yourself)

## 3. Is it under your control ?

Focus on the behaviours you can control, it will enhance your sense of achievement

## 4. Is the context clear ?

Be clear about where, when, how and with whom you want it

## 5. What don't you have ?

Be honest about why you don't have it already or about what you will not do

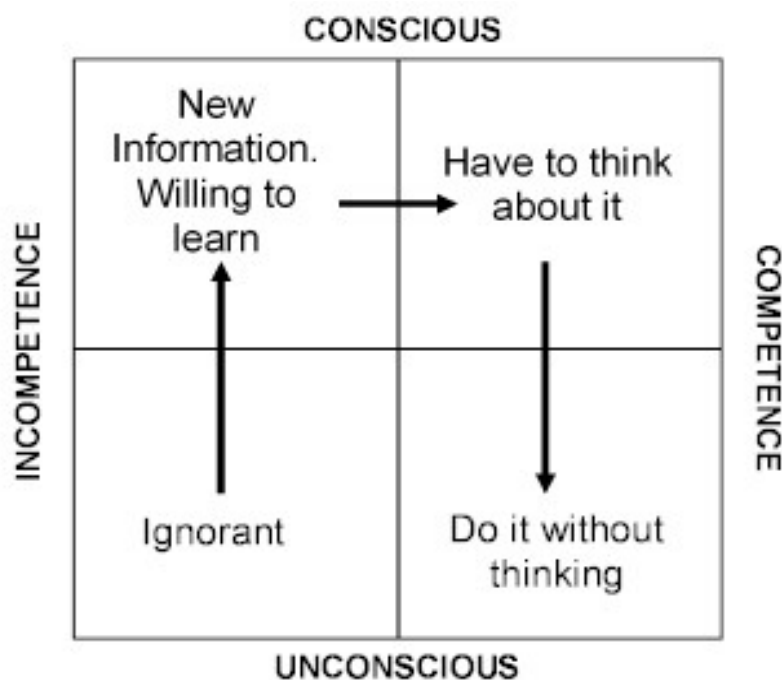
## 6. Are you being realistic ?

Ensure that it's realistic in terms of time, cost and fits your sense of self.

# Acting without thinking

Habitual behaviour happens when we don't have to think about it. We need to build habits, otherwise we would be unable to do more than one thing at a time. However, when those habits no longer work for us they can stop us being effective and get in the way of us being the best we can be.

Before you wanted to drive you were completely unaware of what was involved and none of the skills – you were 'unconsciously incompetent'. When you started to get more information and learn through experience you become aware of the skills you still need to develop - a state of 'conscious incompetence'. You reach the stage of being able to drive yet having to concentrate hard on practicing the skills – you are now in the zone of 'conscious competence'. Finally, you are able to drive the car almost without thinking, so you can focus on the road conditions, looking for hazards, etc. This the stage of 'unconscious competence'



**Think of a learning process you have gone through to reach a state of mind where you are able to do something without thinking.**

Changing a habit requires you to go through this process to create new neural pathways. Some believe it takes 30 days to grove a new behaviour.