



## Building Good Habits

Alexis Tovar, MD, Rebecca Margolis, DO, Victoria Saites, MD, Children's Hospital Los Angeles

**Habit** = A behavior or practice routinely performed which becomes involuntary or automatic.

There are **Three Levels of Behavior Change - Outcome, Process, and Identity**:

- **Outcome** (“what you get”): The results you want, e.g., to save more money.
- **Process** (“what you do”): The practice to reach the desired outcome, e.g., creating a spreadsheet of expenses.
- **Identity** (“what you believe”): The definition of who you want to become, e.g., I will become financially responsible

### How to Create Lasting Behavior Changes:

- Disregard the **Goal/Outcome** and focus on the **System** used to achieve that Goal/Outcome, e.g., instead of focusing on the goal of learning a new instrument, concentrate on the habit of 5 minutes of daily practice of the instrument.
- Build “**Identity-Based**” Habits - Focus on who you want to become, not on the outcome you want to achieve.
- **Start Small** - Start with practices that are “too small to fail.” For example, if the desire is to become financially responsible, start saving a dollar each day and progressively increase the amount saved.
- Identify “**Keystone Habits**,” or habits that allow other good habits to take hold. For example, waking up earlier may allow time to meditate, exercise, and/or prepare a healthy breakfast.
- Consider “**Habit Stacking**,” or linking a new behavior to an already established behavior.
  - Habit Stacking Formula = After/Before [Current Habit], I will [New Habit]; e.g., “After I turn on the coffee pot, I will take my daily multi-vitamin.”
- Consider “**Habit Tracking**” with a calendar or an App – Habit trackers remind you to act, motivate you to continue, and provide immediate satisfaction when marking off completion of the behavior.
- **Emotions** create habits - Celebrate a positive behavior immediately after completion to associate that behavior with a sense of accomplishment.

### The 4 Rules of Behavior Change - Make it Obvious, Attractive, Easy, & Satisfying

#### Applying the 4 Rules to “Practicing Good Sleep Hygiene”

<b>Make it Obvious</b>	Write down your bedtime routine to become aware of positive and negative practices. <b>Habit stack:</b> After brushing my teeth, I will move to my bed.
<b>Make it Attractive</b>	Use <b>temptation bundling</b> by pairing a desirable action with a needed action, e.g., listening to a podcast or reading a book for 5 minutes before committing to sleep.
<b>Make it Easy</b>	Set a bedtime and stick to it. Make the environment conducive to sleep by minimizing excess light and distractions.
<b>Make it Satisfying</b>	Use a <b>habit tracker</b> to keep track of when you apply your bedtime routine. Use <b>positive reinforcement</b> by rewarding yourself each week you stick to your routine.

### The 1% Rule & The Power of Compounding:

- Small wins lead to exponential progress. If you improve by 1% each day for one year, you'll end up 37 times better by the end of the year.

#### References:

- Clear, James. Atomic Habits: An Easy & Proven Way to Build Good Habits & Break Bad Ones. Avery, 2018.
- Duhigg, Charles. The Power of Habit: Why We Do What We Do in Life & Business. Random House, 2014.
- Edblad, Patrik. The Habit Blueprint: 15 Simple Steps to Transform Your Life. Archangel Ink, 2016.
- Fogg, BJ. Tiny Habits: The Small Changes That Change Everything. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2020.
- Guise, Stephen. Mini Habits: Smaller Habits, Bigger Results. CreateSpace, 2013.
- <https://JamesClear.com>

$$1\% \text{ better every day } 1.01^{365} = 37.78$$

$$1\% \text{ worse every day } 0.99^{365} = 0.03$$

