

Habit Upgrade Hacks



Breaking bad habits is hard. Creating good habits isn't easy.

That's what we tell ourselves, anyway... And if we're not working *with* our basic mental processes to address habits, then we are making it harder than it needs to be!

So here is a simple explanation of how we can re-wire habits so that we can take back control over the habits we have and those we want to cultivate, and live with more ease + flow.

If it's true that *45% of what we do is habitual*, that means we can put the right things on autopilot and spend less energy doing the things that we know will move us in the right direction, like meditating, moving our bodies every day, cutting out sugar, and eating more meals at home.

So here are the basic building blocks of habits. You can use this foundation to build a healthier, happier lifestyle with less effort. Understanding that every habit begins with some sort of a cue, and ends with a reward, we can recognize that our power lies in changing the routine. Trying to simply "break a bad habit" by stopping it is ignoring the fact that *we have wired our brain with a Cue that expects a Reward* – and willpower alone is no match for the habits that are wired into our brain.

Cue	Routine	Reward
<i>i.e. Feeling sleepy after lunch</i>	<i>Get a coffee</i>	<i>Feel more awake</i>

Step 1. Identify any habits that you want to change. Make a list. You aren't committing to change all of them! Simply take stock. And then *choose one* you'd like to address.

2. Get curious about the Cue. What is it that triggers the Routine you want to change?

It's helpful to make notes for a few days as you're examining your habit, and notice any + all of the following influences. After your discovery process you should see a trend in one or even several of these categories.

- Location
- Time
- Emotional State
- Other People
- Immediately-preceding action

3. Discover the Reward that you are seeking by performing the habit. Is it energy? Comfort? Calm? Eating sugar triggers dopamine, a difficult Reward to ignore.

To find the real Reward you're seeking to fulfill with the habit, you can start replacing the Routine with alternatives and explore what Reward follows, and if it satisfies the desire.

Do you crave coffee after lunch because your energy is flagging? Would a 10 minute walk give you the same Reward of energy that a coffee does, without interrupting your sleep cycle? Or does an herbal tea give you the same lift that you are looking for, with the chance to take a mental break, grab a tasty warm beverage and come back to your desk with a fresh mindset?

Make note of new routines that satisfy your quest for a Reward.

4. Implement your new habit! Put your insights to work, and plan what Routine will now follow the Cue whenever it triggers the desire for the old Routine. Be kind to yourself, and keep coming back to your intention even if you fall back on the old habit. Remember that it takes almost 70 consecutive actions to create a habit, and know that you are making great progress! I encourage you to plan rewards for yourself as you complete days and then weeks of implementing your new + improved routine.

