

Take Control Module 10 - Create Habits, Routines...and Other Ways to Make it Work!



Objectives

You will:

- Learn what habits are and how they can improve your chances for success
- Identify routines that take the decision making out of your maintenance
- Create a plan for review and planning on a daily and weekly basis.

“All our life, so far as it has definite form, is but a mass of habits.”

--William James, 1892

“Habits are cobwebs at first and cables at last.”

-- Chinese Proverb

Instruction¹

Making Habits Work for You

Change happens through consistent small steps over time. In the same way that that Grand Canyon was formed by drops of water flowing over the earth over millions of years, we can make big changes if we break those changes down into small, incremental steps and implement them consistently.

A habit is just the ‘usual’ way that you do things. Habits have no conscience so they can be healthy or destructive. For instance, you may have a habit of biting your lip when you are nervous. Eventually, your lip probably bleeds. This is not a healthy habit. You may also have a habit of hanging your keys on a hook as you walk in the door. This is a helpful habit because you can always find where you put your keys even if you don’t remember putting them on the hook.



Habits happen automatically. They allow your brain to go into autopilot mode and conserve resources. Decision making is an energy intensive task. So, as much as possible, your brain seeks to conserve energy by turning as many actions as possible into habit. Investigative reporter, Charles Duhigg, researched the topic of habit extensively in his book [The Power of Habit: Why We Do What We Do In Life And In Business](#). He writes, “One paper published by Duke University researchers in 2006 found that more than 40% of the actions people performed each day weren’t actual decisions but habits.”² Therefore, for more that 40% of the day your brain is working on autopilot from decisions that you made previously that have become ‘habit’ or your ‘usual way of doing things.’

¹ 1899 Paris <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Toothbrush>

² Duhigg, Charles. [The Power of Habit](#). Random House: New York, 2012. pg xvi

What if you could insert habits to facilitate the changes that you would like to make? Even though common knowledge tells us it takes 28 days to change a habit, research has shown this number to be anywhere from 18-245 days with the average being 66 days.³ “...The amount of time required to make lasting change is highly individualistic and depends on the person, the change and the circumstances,” states Brett Blementhal, author of 52 Small Changes: One Year to a Happier, Healthier You. So many pieces go into making a lasting change including how interested you are in changing, how much you are trying to change and what supports you have to make the change. However, Duhigg explains that a habit is made of three parts: a cue, a routine and a reward. While habits never disappear, they can be ‘re-written’ by changing the routine part of the habit. The science behind this is amazingly interesting and you can read all about it in his book but here is the gist. Your brain activates on the cue and the reward and only goes into autopilot while you are doing the ‘routine’ part of the habit. Therefore, if you keep the cue and the reward the same you can swap an old routine for a new one. This is a bit oversimplified but it will work for our purposes. The tricky part is knowing what the cue to your habit and the reward is.

First, determine your cue to completing a habit. Think about why and when you do a specific behavior. For instance, let’s look at the habit of dropping your dirty clothes on the floor. The cue is ‘getting undressed.’ As soon as this happens, you let the clothes fall to the floor. You select your next outfit and put it on. Then, you are rewarded with the sense of completion (and maybe warm fuzzies if you are putting on your pjs.) If you want to change your habit so that you put the clothes into a hamper instead, then add to your routine walking to your hamper, or better yet, move the hamper to the exact place where you get undressed. You will be cued by seeing the hamper and put the clothes into the bin. Doing so will require thinking about adding this step but the less you change about your existing habit cycle the easier it will be to incorporate your change.

³ Blementhal, Brett. 52 Small Changes: One Year to a Happier, Healthier You. Lake Union Publishing, 2012.

Creating Your Maintenance Toolkit

Maintenance Tool Kit

- Vision
- Habits
- Routines

Vision

You have created your vision so we are not going to do that again here but along with it you need to create a belief that you will make your vision into a reality. It is a mental shift but it is very important.

Believe that you can and will change.

Create a mantra for yourself that helps you remember and focus on what you are

working on such as, “One small step” or “I am worth it.” or “Even a little makes a difference.” or “Some is better than none.” Create a phrase that encourages you and helps you keep focused on the belief that your vision is possible.

Habits

Making the changes that we wish to see become habits automates them so that we do not have to think about making the ‘right choice’.

What habits do you have? Do not limit yourself. Write down all the habits you can think of good or bad. Remember, even bad habits can be reformed and good habits can be added to.



What three habits would you like to create for yourself?

1	
2	
3	

Routines

Routines are a series of steps that you take, a planned set of actions. A weekly home maintenance routine may be:

Monday - Wash & change towels

Tuesday - Wash & change sheets

Wednesday - Take out the trash

Thursday - Grocery Shop

Friday - Pay Bills & Balance Checkbook

or you could consider a morning routine such as:

- Wake up
- Drink 1 c. water
- Take medicine
- Shower and dress
- Eat breakfast
- Pack lunch
- Brush teeth
- Leave for work

By creating a routine, you decide once what your planned set of actions will be and then just follow the steps. It is most helpful to write them down until their order becomes habit. You then never have to think about what comes next or what to do and everything that needs to get done, gets done.

Daily Routine

Routines to help my day go more smoothly

Morning:	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1.2.3.4.
Mid Morning:	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1.2.3.4.
Lunch:	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1.2.3.4.
Afternoon:	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1.2.3.4.
Evening:	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1.2.3.4.
Bedtime:	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1.2.3.4.

Weekly Routine

Monday	
Tuesday	
Wednesday	
Thursday	
Friday	
Saturday	
Sunday	

What's Hampering Your Habit?

Are you getting in the way of forming a new habit that would make your life run more smoothly? Why do we put so much pressure on ourselves to change our lives quickly and drastically? I have found that small changes make a more dramatic difference. What is so great about small changes? They allow you to effect change incrementally, with lasting success.

Are You Working On Your Habit Daily?

If you are not working on forming a habit right now, then any effort in that direction is better than the ZERO effort you are putting forth now. Instead of saying "There's not enough time...", realize that any time put towards your project will ALWAYS be better than none. Remember that!

Habit-building is not a Punishment

Is this you? You started working on forming a new habit: decluttering 15 minutes a day, exercising three times a week, eating more veggies... You started forming a habit and then were derailed. You were riding that train and things were going great. You did your decluttering sessions 5 days in a row and then... the weekend hit, or you got sick, or you had a crazy day, or you just could not fit it in. So the next day you gave up. You said, "See that never works. I try and do good things for myself and I just always fail!" Whoa! Where did that come from? Maybe you punished yourself in another way. You DOUBLED the work you needed to do today because you didn't do it yesterday. Although that idea seemed valiant at the time, you actually just ensured that you WOULD NOT do the task! "WAIT! I am being responsible, I'm making up for the lost time," you say. But what is really happening is that **you are punishing yourself for your lack of follow through and you are making the task overwhelming and unapproachable**. At some point, when you miss five days in a row of your habit, you suddenly have a hour and fifteen minutes of decluttering to do you and if it was hard to incorporate 15 minutes a day, an hour and fifteen minutes will never fit into your schedule. You might as well give up.

Get Back On The Train!

The idea is that you need to keep moving forward. If you miss a day, you miss it. Move on. Start today and work on your task. Remember, doing something is better than nothing! Do you brush your teeth every day? If you are like most folks, you [brush your teeth](#) twice a day. You probably don't think too much about it. You just do it in the morning and before bed. It is a habit. How did it get to be a habit? You did it, every day, for a long time. But, yesterday, you were sick. You did not get out of bed. You did not brush your teeth. You just slept. So today, did you brush your teeth? YES! You did! You didn't beat yourself up over missing yesterday. You didn't brush your teeth twice as much because you missed yesterday. You did not say, "I AM SUCH A FAILURE BECAUSE I DIDN'T BRUSH MY TEETH!" You just brushed your teeth and moved on.

Don't Hamper Your Habit

Whatever new habit you are working on, be positive. The change that you are looking forward to in your life is fantastic! That is why you are working on it. Do as much as you can. Pat yourself on the back. Do it again tomorrow. If you fall off of the train, just get back on and start again. Soon, just like brushing your teeth, your habit won't require any thought at all and you will be well on your way to that fabulous change you are looking for in your life.

Productivity = Happiness

by Nettie Owens, September 2012

How do you squeeze more from a day? And why would you want to? It is my theory that the more productive you are, the happier you will be. The idea is that if you are moving in the direction of where you want to be in life, consistently, you will be happier. Productivity is the measure of output for a given input. Increase your productivity with these three proven strategies and you will stay motivated, get more done and be happier.

In the realm of manufacturing and economics, productivity is measure of output/input. For instance if making a paperback book requires 1 tree then your measure of productivity is 1/1 or 1.

if you can make the same book with only half of a tree the measure of productivity is 1/.5 or 2. In our lives, we can increase our productivity by doing more in less time, with less money or fewer physical resources. But, in a world where we already feel overwhelmed and busy how could we possibly do any more that we already do!

Strategy 1 – Set Goals. You have to review them and set new goals periodically as well. Review Module 5 on Goal Setting if you need a bit of a refresher.

Strategy 2 – Know how you spend your time. Often we are moving from task to task so quickly that we are being reactive instead of proactive. We feel constantly busy and our activities do not align with the priorities in our lives. Spend one week writing down EVERYTHING you do in 15-minute increments. Review this information after seven days. What are you doing with your time? Does your time reflect your life's priorities? Identify your top three priorities then assign a highlighter color to each. Highlight each activity on your completed daily calendars and see how you are doing. David Seah, designer of productivity stationery and blogger, has a effective tool titled, The Emergent Task Planner, available for free download on his site www.DavidSeah.com that will help in your time tracking process. You should have done this in Module 2, go back and check your notes, redo it now if things have changed.

Strategy 3 – Schedule your activities. Now that you know how you are spending your time and the goals you are working towards, it will be easier to create a plan for getting it all done. Take time every week to plan your week ahead considering all activities that involve you. Be sure to include healthy habits such as exercise, meals and sleep. Break down your large goals into tasks and put these on your calendar. Do not recreate your schedule from scratch every week. Look for trends and utilize 'block scheduling' to create routines for yourself. Every evening, review your day and pick three tasks to focus on the next day.

Still confused as to how being more productive will make you happier? Think of one dream or project that you have not completed. Why have you put it off? How does it make you feel? Think about how great you will feel if it is finished. Being more productive and working towards accomplishing that project captures that excited feeling on a daily basis because you are energized and accomplishing your dreams. Set goals, know your time and schedule your activities and you will be able to do more in less time.

Planning & Review

Every day and every week you should be checking in with a bit of planning and review time.

Daily Review should take no more than 15 minutes. In this time you will:

1. Identify what you accomplished in your day,
2. Note what appointments you have for the following day and
3. Select three tasks to focus on the following day.

Every week you should also complete a planning and review session. This period is a bit longer, possibly an hour. In this time you will:

1. Plan your schedule and identify upcoming appointments for yourself and for others that impact you.
2. Review the month ahead so that there are no surprises!
3. Update your to-do list. Remove items that are completed or no longer relevant and add new items
4. Review your goals. Just do a quick check in to see if you are on task. What is the next step you need to take?
 - a. Now is a good time to spot check yourself. It has not been that long. What did you set out to accomplish? What did you think as you started making progress? What slowed you down or interrupted your momentum? Can you get that issue in check and forge ahead?
 - b. Set a goal to try to do a little bit more of that task each day. Add 15 minutes a day to your routine and fold and put away the clothes in the dryer. Make that closet organizer that you bought in January earn it's keep. Enjoy the sight of a cleared counter and sink as you head off to bed. Really. A little time goes a long way and once the habit is a part of you, it will not even seem like an effort.
5. If you are doing this at home consider adding time to balance your checkbook and plan for meals. These two tasks alone go a long way toward financial peace and a workable schedule.

Remember, just taking 1 hour of time to plan can save 10 hours of work. That is a tremendous amount of time that could be freed to work on the things that are most important to you.

Conclusion

We have come to the end of creating your Take Control Organizing System. You have done an amazing job of learning new information, new skills, practicing those skills and putting them into place in your life.

Take some time now to think about where you began and how far you have come. What was your biggest 'Ah-ha' moment? How has your life changed? Has it improved? Why? What changes are you going to keep as you move forward?

Tasks

- Identify at least 3 habits you would like to create or update
- Define your daily routine
- Define your weekly routine
- Complete the [Review of Module 10](#) and meet with your coach.