

# Habits

Have you ever given up something you love for a period of time? A 10-day cleanse, a 30 day diet jumpstart, a 6-week weight loss challenge or even abandoning your favorite vice for Lent. In theory this

abandonment of behavior sounds like a great idea. People say, "If I don't eat it for a while, I'll stop craving it". While there is some truth to the changes in our body and brain when we separate from poor eating habits, there remains a gap that often leads us counting the days until we can revisit that longtime friend. To prevent this lapse, the key is to recognize your behavior. We all follow the same behavioral process:

trigger ---> action ----> reward

This process summarizes most of our habits, both conscious and subconscious. This also allows us to identify the issue with simply abstaining from our tendencies. When we give up chocolate, or quit drinking soda cold turkey, we do nothing to fill the gap between the trigger and reward. The trigger can be a lot of things- a stressful day at the office, the first set of commercials on your favorite Wednesday night show, or the mid-afternoon energy slump you feel at 2:30pm most days. These things happen, and our mind is trained to think of our go-to action, that solves the problem- a couple pieces of chocolate, some chips to graze on, or a mountain dew from the vending machine. All of these offer a reward- positive stimulation in a stressed environment, mindless activity when the commercials are on, or a caffeine and sugar rush to make it to 4:30pm.

The secret to changing habits is to first identify this cycle. Pick the habit you are trying to break, then look at 1. why you go to that food, and 2. what happens when you do. Once you do this, you can then begin to substitute alternative habits. The alternative habits complete the loop, and allow for you to truly change for good. Outline the 3 habits you want to change that would have the largest positive impact on your health.

HABITS:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

In our examples above, we might start bringing fruit to that meeting you normally find chocolate in, you might find yourself reading a magazine or newspaper or book between commercials to keep the mind stimulated, and that midafternoon soda might become a squirt of mio energy in some water from the water cooler or a 10 minute walk to clear the mind.

REPLACE WITH:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Once we identify the alternative the change can truly begin to take shape, for good!