

Breaking Bad

HABITS

By Holly J. Niles, MS, CNS, LDN

Moving from summertime to the fall season brings with it more routine as we let go of longer days, eating outdoors, beach vacations and summer foods. Even when we are no longer of the age that we are, “going back to school” we still feel the pull of the colder weather bringing us back to our routines. The relaxed feeling of summer can also lead to letting go of our normal schedules and attention to healthier habits. Fall is a great time to make changes to let go of the things that don’t serve us, a.k.a. bad habits.

The first step is to be honest with yourself about what you know, deep inside, are in fact bad habits. Most of us have 1, 2 or maybe even a few habits that get in our way. I like to start by choosing the one that seems the most accessible or easiest to change. Once we make that choice, here are steps to follow as you make that journey; to encourage you to be bold and make those changes.

Why?

Creating lasting change needs to be connected to a strong incentive or reason to make change. That leads us to looking at the importance of being clear about your WHY. I sometimes have clients who want advice about ways to help their sibling, partner or friend get healthier. The truth is, that never works. Any change needs to be your idea, not the prodding of someone else. Take time to be very clear why you want to make that change. Sit with it and be sure it’s your voice driving the change and that you feel connected to the outcome or the difference the change will make. Sometimes our health is a factor or maybe our finances but it’s important to take the time to know WHY.

What?

Consider... if I continue with this habit or if I change this habit, what will my life be like in 1 month, 1 year, or even 5 years? Connect with the big picture: what are my goals for my year, my life? Is the short-term pleasure worth it? Knowing consequences can support decision making.

Who?

Who stands to suffer or be impacted by my choices? Also, who will be better off, besides me, if I make this change? You may have family or someone depending on you. It’s helpful to consider if you are setting a bad example for someone you love. Equally important, consider your own disappointment in not making positive changes.

When?

There is no time like today to take the first step. Get clear and make a plan, start with one simple change you can make to get the

ball rolling. Following a step-by-step process is a productive path to get you there.

Where?

Where can I find someone who has mastered this and learn from them? Research someone who is very skilled at what you are trying to change. Look for podcasts, videos, CDs, a local club, a professional...the list goes on and on. Learn from the best and take advantage of the wisdom of others.

Using the 5 W’s (why, what, who, when and where) helps you move through this process to clarify how you can make positive changes happen for you. We always need encouragement to keep going. Let’s look at what can get in your way and what will lead you to success.

Here are 3 beliefs that can get in your way:

The All or Nothing Principle: This happens when people feel that if they can’t do everything perfectly they won’t do anything at all. If you make a poor choice at breakfast, lunch is a great time to start over. Skipping the gym on Tuesday makes Wednesday the next great option. Redefine success and celebrate all the positive changes, even the small ones.

“Everyone Has a Vice”: This is a way we can rationalize our choices by believing that everyone has bad habits. Lots of people may have bad habits but NO ONE feels good about them. Be the person who breaks the cycle and empower yourself for change. Surround yourself with people who take pride in taking care of themselves.

I Don’t Have Enough Time: Time is a precious commodity and we are all very busy. However, we also know that most Americans spend about 4.3 hours a day watching TV! So, there are always creative ways to find time to take care of ourselves.

Here are 3 pillars of success to help with change:

Inch by Inch, Anything is a Cinch: Transforming one meal in a day can create incentive to manifest other positive changes in our diet. Step-by-step progress is much more sustainable as we find ways to create new long-lasting changes.

Make Time for What is Important: I have a dear friend who says, “We do what we WANT to do.” Be clear about the changes you want to make and shift them high on your list of priorities. This is a hallmark of successful people, who decide to make things hap-

pen in their life.

We Have One Precious Life: Time passes quickly as we mark our many life transitions. Making the most of our life gives us a feeling of satisfaction and accomplishment. Find a friend or a partner who is ready to make change and cheer each other on. Be accountable and help each other find ways to create the changes you want.

In the end, you have all the skills you need to set yourself free of bad habits. Making different choices, reframing your thinking and aligning yourself with likeminded people sets you on a path of success.

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