

Change Habits

Description

Gentle Reader,

Would you like to change habits? Is there something you have a core desire for but don't seem to be arriving at it? May I share an insight I have had about my two core desires that have resisted the changes required to realize them?

I put on 20 lbs. my junior year in high school. I got too sick to swim competitively and finished the season eating the way I always ate when in training, but doing no exercise to burn off those calories. Boom! Twenty pounds; stretch marks; shock. The whole family got involved in Betsy's weight problem, monitoring my caloric intake and my weight every single day at breakfast.

No will power! No will power! No will power! My brothers and father taunted.

The Yo-Yo dieting program began. I lost and gained those same 20 pounds (and 5 more) for the next twenty-five years. I owned three sets of clothes.

In 1985, I met Jayme Curley who encouraged me to address a number of "little" health issues by starting a wellness program of soy protein shakes and a group of vitamins every day. The protein shake became my breakfast, alone or as the liquid I poured over a small bowl of cereal. I started to lose weight. The Shaklee Company, whose products I was taking, brought out a Slim-up-and-Live program. With it came an audio tape by the same name. I listened to it faithfully each morning and evening before getting out of bed and before turning off the light. A soothing voice spoke.

Picture yourself at your ideal weight. Picture what you can do, running on the beach, playing ball with your kids, dancing for hours with airy steps, stamina and pleasure.

Picture yourself in a skinny pair of jeans, stepping in your car, driving to a friend's, joining in the conversation with comfort, pride and confidence.

Without knowing the science behind it, I had changed my eating habits and I had created a new image of myself. The cue (boredom with the tasks of wife and mother) for eating a

dozen cookies on my way home from grocery shopping, faded. New cues (excitement about the new pants I fit into) dominated, and I no longer reached for the packaged Lorna Doones. To eat cookies all the way home flew in the face of my image of myself in that bathing suit.

Charles Duhigg analyzes ***The Power of Habit, Why we do what we do in life and business***, and presents his scientific findings about the formation of habits. Listen to this description of the five key points in his book by Thomas Frank, the college info geek.

The loop for cue > activity > reward is an unconscious habit and requires some work to figure out what the reward is you are craving when you do the activity. One of my core desires is to write a book. I go to my desk, turn on the computer, and instead of going to my project, I check email. After an hour or so, I struggle to redirect myself to the writing project to get the reward I want, a satisfying writing experience.

My cue was turning on the computer first thing in the morning. Examining the loop, I realized that the cue lead me to the wrong activity. Turning on the computer brings up gmail, often moving on to Face Book. I started to resent my core desire—writing the book. I was stuck and unclear about my next step. Gmail and face book provided a diversion from the discomfort my project caused.

First, I decided, as Duhigg suggests, to examine what was behind the gmail distraction. *Wanting to connect with people.* My house is quiet. I live and work alone. I feel disconnected from friends and family. Gmail fills this void. Or so it seemed. Unconsciously I turned to email and face book for that “Good morning, Betsy” contact.

What I realized was that it did not satisfy that longing for connection to read and respond to email. I needed to develop other ways and other times to get people in my life.

Recognizing the poor reward this email activity provided my desire for human connection, I plan to call, email and arrange connections in the evenings and on weekends. I can make a change. I can enjoy the thrill of three fresh morning hours several days a week with nothing to do but write. My people reward will come later. My creative activity reward is immediate. I believe people will be there for me. All I have to do is organize it.

I am five days into this. Turns out, I didn't believe I could change. Belief is a major ingredient in changing habits. Sunday night I had one bad dream after another. Every story line I began in my dream was co-opted by the computer which forced a story arc having nothing to do with my plot. It was as though the computer became Hal in the Space Odessey, taking over my mind. I woke up laughing at the power of the subconscious to twist a mind into knots.

On Monday, I managed to complete my morning stretches, meditation and short walk, return to the office and open my project WITHOUT looking at email. I knew there were several Shaklee business items that needed attention. I knew I had ample time after lunch to address them.

Monday was creatively productive beyond hope.

Tuesday was the same.

I completed all my business and household work.

Email took a fraction of the time. I made dinner arrangements with a grandson and snow shoeing plans with my girl friends.

Yesterday, I wrote in the Uptown Espresso and did not read email even though a little ping told me someone called.

Rewards? I wrote the next chapter. The one to follow is waiting for me to put pen to paper. I broke through the wall.

How can this discussion of habit help you? You might pick up Duhigg's book. If you want to lose weight or stay faithful to an exercise program, eliminate seductive food from your food intake, figure out the cue that leads to the activity, and discover what the reward is.

My daughter who told me about this book realized she was anticipating a glass of wine the minute she stepped into the light rail car on her way home from work. She wasn't happy with that habit. She decided to develop a new activity to get the reward. The reward was a signal to her system that her workday was finished. A short run would bring the same reward. Stepping into the neighborhood for a breath of fresh air and exercise said "release from work" with every step. To help with the anticipation, she took her running clothes to work and changed into them before her commute. Cue in place, activity (run), reward (ah, the workday is over).

For some of us, change comes more easily with a buddy. That's why the [180 Turnaround Weight Management](#) program provides so much support. In Dr. Jaime's most recent talk, she describes the four tools to use to stay motivated.

- Your scale,
- your tape measure,
- your body fat index and
- your hand held food tracker.

Behavior Tracking Tools that shape a new habit

The four trackers are the tools that help form the habits you need to override the habits

that got you over-weight in the first place. People weigh too often. People skip the tape measure part. They fail to make a chart where they can write down the change. Pants size can do this job especially if you have a skinny jeans waiting for your new body to show up. I was out with a friend the other night who proudly showed me her outfit and said she hadn't been able to get into it for a long time, but now she could. What a motivator to keep going that little success is!

People weary of keeping track of their food intake. That's why the hand held app can ease the pain and actually increase your conscious eating all day long. Shaklee's 180 app is easy to use. Your phone is always with you. Just the act of pulling it out and recording your next bite will change your behavior. It becomes a habit. When you hit your goal weight, you will mentally be calculating the little indulgences if you have faithfully used that tool for the whole duration.

Calculating your body fat is simple if you have a new fangled scale that does that for you. At my Xgym, they run my stats every 6 – 8 weeks. I have consistently lowered my body fat even though I haven't lost weight. Lean muscle is building every week. I haven't been trying to lose weight. I have been trying to gain muscle so my bone density will increase.

Here she is, explaining the program.

[Here](#) is the best description of the 180 Weight Management Program available.

Be well, Do well and keep moving. If you would like a supportive guide in any habit change you want, I am here for you. If you have a habit changing method that works for you, please share with all of us. Betsy



GrandmaBetsyBell
guides you to your
ideal weight and helps
you keep it off.



Category

1. Be Well health tips

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