How to Build a Happier and Healthier Life
By Tom Erik Green

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About the Author and the book

Tom Erik Green is a psychotherapist and mentor. His experiences over a thirty-year period have formed this e-book--the third in a series of books from PlusVendor AS. These books aim to create principles for personal growth and development available to everyone.

Life has a tendency to get in the way of our passion and our intentions, making it easy to be distracted or fall into destructive personal habits like smoking, drinking, abusing drugs, not living a healthy lifestyle or practicing sound financial behavior. This is how life goes.

Anything that interferes with our ability to live a happy and healthy life can be considered a bad habit. When we keep repeating the same bad habits, they become ingrained, and it’s impossible to imagine our life changing for the better, one that is both happy and healthy. This book will show you how to end the madness and start living your life to its fullest by replacing bad habits with positive ones.

Today it is important for all of us to spend time working on our Personal Growth & Development. Only through these efforts will you be able to discover your true personal potential. This e-Book will give you practical examples and ideas on how to stop procrastinating and start empowering your best, so to be able to give a lot more to others.
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Introduction

When you really think about it, most of life is something we do out of habit. From the moment we wake up in the morning to the actions we take throughout the day - our “morning routine,” or “regular breakfast,” our “typical commute,” the “daily grind” at work - the habits we develop literally control about ninety-five percent of our actions. These types of unconscious thoughts determine what we think, how we feel and how we behave in nearly every situation.

Because our habits dictate all the small details that make up our everyday lives, they also are directly related to the bigger issues, such as how much money we earn, the kind of person we choose as our partner, our physical condition and health, and every other aspect of our day to day living.

Our habits determine our character, who we project to the world, and ultimately our destiny. So if we embrace bad habits - those habits which have a negative impact on who we are - then those same habits will prevent us from achieving excellence in our lives, holding us back from reaching our fullest potential.

Only by breaking bad habits and replacing them with good habits, do we ultimately succeed and be the individual we were truly meant to be. The purpose of this guide is to show you how to break bad habits -from those that damage your health, like smoking or not wearing a seatbelt, to those that affect your self-esteem, such as negative thinking or
overeating. Once they are broken, you can replace them with consistent positive behavior and finally cause you to achieve your desired results.

Albert Einstein once said that the definition of insanity was performing the same task over and over again and expecting a different result. When you keep repeating the same bad habits, it’s crazy to expect that anything will ever change for you. “Breaking the Habit” will show you how to end the madness and live your life to its fullest by abandoning bad habits and replacing them with positive ones.

**Wanting to Break the Habit**

I want to begin with a personal story. When I was a younger man, I was a heavy smoker. I began smoking in college - it was during the 1980s and smoking didn’t have the cultural stigma it does now - and continued well into my thirties. I knew that smoking was bad for my health. Indeed, I would wake up in the morning with a hacking cough, would feel breathless throughout the day, and by the time I got home at night I was exhausted, even if I hadn’t particularly exerted myself during the day.

Then there was the chemical dependency I developed to the nicotine in my cigarettes. If I went without a cigarette for longer than an hour or so, I would become jittery, irritable and would even begin to panic. Only when I gave my body the drug it needed (yes, nicotine is a drug and is actually more addictive than heroin) was I able to return to my “normal” self.
During the fifteen years that I smoked, I quit smoking literally hundreds of times. I became something of an expert at quitting smoking, even if I backslid into the same dirty and unhealthy habit sooner or later. Cold turkey, hypnotism, acupuncture, the patch, nicotine-laced chewing gum, you name it, I tried it.

Every time I tried to quit smoking, I truly believed that this was it, I was going to stop and put this terrible habit behind me once and for all. But it never stuck. Ultimately my desire to smoke became stronger than my desire to stop.

Until one day I came to a stunning discovery. I truly didn’t want to smoke anymore. This habit was simply something that didn’t fit into my life, either then or in the future I envisioned for myself. Right then and there, I made a commitment to stop smoking—which was easier than ever before because I truly had no desire to smoke anymore-- and, after a few days of uncomfortable withdrawal symptoms, I was finished with the destructive habit.

That was more than ten years ago and I haven’t had a single cigarette since. Even the smell of somebody else smoking is enough to send me scurrying away. When I see others smoking - while I try not to judge -- I often can’t help but wonder why they can’t see themselves the way others perceive them. If they could, perhaps they, too, could reach the point where ending their bad, destructive habit was not only possible, but easy.
“Bad” Habits vs. “Good” Habits

So how does one define a “bad” habit, and what qualities separate it from a “good” habit? In most cases, the distinction is obvious. A bad habit is:

- Destructive, harmful or poses a short or long-term danger to you or somebody else.

- A negative impact on your self-esteem, the way others view you, and your overall reputation as a good or bad person.

- A pattern of undesirable behavior acquired through frequent repetition.

Usually, bad habits begin innocently. I smoked my first cigarette because my college roommate smoked and I was curious what it tasted and felt like. Unfortunately, bad habits have a tendency to quickly snowball.

A single bad habit can act as a gateway to others. People who tend to overeat unhealthy foods have a tendency to put on excessive weight. People who are overweight have a more difficult time maintaining a healthy exercise routine. With a poor diet and not enough exercise, many develop hypertension or diabetes. In this way a single bad habit of not eating well has escalated into a lifestyle that is self-destructive, can
ruin your career, your family life and of course your own health, even potentially leading to a premature death

Examples of Bad Habits

Practically any habit that can be considered “good” can have a “bad” counterpart:

- Destructive personal habits like smoking, drinking and abusing drugs
- Overeating or not living a healthy lifestyle
- Making poor financial decisions
- Gambling
- Procrastinating
- Being addicted to sex or pornography
- Failing to live in a positive manner/having a negative view of your world

In short, anything that interferes with your ability to live a happy and healthy life can be considered a bad habit.

When Is a Habit Really an Addiction?

People who are addicted to drugs, alcohol, sex, gambling or other self-destructive behavior frequently point to the physical and psychological addiction that prevents them from overcoming their bad habits.
But you don’t need to have a chemical or psychological dependency to have an addiction. Addiction is defined as “The state of being enslaved to a habit or practice ... to such an extent that its cessation causes severe trauma.”

So, in fact, any bad habit is an addiction because it enslaves us, preventing us from achieving our highest potential. Make no mistake—there will be consequences for reversing any bad habit. Yet there is nothing to fear. Just remember throughout the process that pain is temporary; quitting lasts forever.

**Our Need for Habitual Behavior, Habits and Beliefs**

Habits are not only useful, but we actually rely on our routines to function in our daily lives. Physiologists tell us that of the 11,000 signals we receive from our senses, our brain only consciously processes about forty. Therefore our brains use the rote familiarity of habits so we can focus on other “higher value” activities.

Walking, chewing our food, and talking don’t require the kind of mental focus that we use in solving math problems or playing video games. These activities taken for granted are actually habits we have developed that are performed without conscious intent.

Social habits work the same way. Most people will take a shower at the same time every day or always drive the same route to work. These habits are performed essentially without conscious thought. Negative
habits - like overeating, smoking or driving too fast - work the same way. We rarely think about these things, even when they are putting us in danger or damaging our health or well-being.
Using Habits to Achieve Success

Oftentimes, we are not able to even perceive that we have bad habits. Have you ever known or worked with somebody who has poor personal hygiene or had a friend who drank or partied too much? Usually, those people don’t consciously decide to perform their bad habits. They just do these rituals out of ... well, habit!

When we take the time to recognize our own bad habits, take corrective action and replace them with good, positive and healthy habits, the result is permanent change that pays dividends to our health, prosperity and happiness for the rest of our lives.

Imagine being a fit and active person who works out daily without even thinking about it. Or someone who always makes the right food choices, doesn’t get into financial trouble, studies thoroughly for every exam, automatically performs all work duties without flaw, and so on. Isn’t this desirable? If you could make healthy, positive choices all the time without even thinking about it, your life would be much, much easier. Wouldn’t it?

Once you replace your bad habits with good habits, you can eliminate the stress and anxiety they caused in your life, and achieve the feelings of happiness and well-being you’ve always desired.
You deserve to be happy. In your heart, you know that to be true. Breaking your bad habits and replacing them with good ones can help you achieve that happiness.

Are you ready to get started?
“It Takes 21 Days to Change a Habit”

You are about to take a journey that is literally going to transform the way you live. Once you embrace the process of converting your bad habit or habits into good ones, your rewards will be enormous and lifelong.

How long you’ve had your bad habits doesn’t matter. They could have began during childhood, such as lying or biting your fingernails. No matter how many years you’ve been practicing this bad habit, as long as you recognize it’s destructive, and genuinely want to convert it into something positive, you can change any bad habit into a good habit.

Changing Habits

Everybody has bad habits, including the Pope, George Clooney, the Dalai Lama, or the Archbishop of Canterbury. People are human, occasionally making mistakes, and these mistakes can often develop into bad habits.

The problem isn’t that you have bad habits. This is normal. What causes unhappiness and psychic pain is you have been unable to make a genuine commitment to change.
You truly can accomplish anything you set your mind to do. The human will is strong and the changes that lie ahead are going to surprise and amaze you. All it takes is the will to do accomplish your goals.

What’s So Special about 21 Days?

You may have heard it takes 21 days to change a habit. That’s one reason residential rehab centers for drug and alcohol abuse usually last 21 days. Three weeks is how long the body needs to flush out toxic and addictive substances. This is also the period to time needed for the mind to expel the toxic and negative thoughts that help create bad habits so positive ones can take their place.

Three weeks or a month is a good timeframe to work on changing habits since our calendar system is so engrained in our lives from our earliest days of childhood. If you target the first day of the month for the beginning of a habit change, then it’s a simple matter to use that month as a framework to work on your objective (“I’m going to get this done by Week 2, that done by Week 2 …” and so on).

Not every bad habit requires 21 days or a month to alter. Some require more and some less time and effort. For example, if your goal is to get out of bed a half hour earlier each day so you can make your mornings more productive, you probably can make this a habit within a week to ten days.
But habits that go deeper into your character - such as being kinder to your spouse, or becoming a more spiritually-centered person, or losing the extra weight that is making you obese and out of shape and replacing it with muscle - can take months or even years to achieve fully.

Creating a Fresh Start

Everybody has experienced the frustration and feelings of helplessness that accompany bad habits. When you do something you know is bad for you, but do it anyway, it can cause a psychic hurt that can affect your self-esteem (“I must be a bad person because I always (insert bad habit here”).

However, bad habits can always be overcome, as long as you are persistent and apply the right strategies, which will be outlined in detail in this guide.

When Habits are Controlling and Ruining Your Life

Every bad habit can be damaging to your physical and/or mental health, but some are more serious than others. While biting your fingernails may not be sanitary or particularly healthy, it probably won’t be as fatal as shooting heroin or eating an extremely poor diet.

Making bad choices almost always leads to making more bad choices. Even the most innocuous and poor decision can sometimes lead to a downward spiral that leaves you wondering what just happened.
Remember that the smallest of bad habits can have a profoundly negative effect on the rest of your life.

Cheating on your taxes, for example, can lead to “rounding up” on your hourly timesheet, which can lead to “borrowing” from your company’s petty cash fund, which can lead to changing the books so that additional funds are diverted into your private accounts. You’ve graduated from a tax cheat into an embezzler!

**The Will to Choose**

You always have a choice, however. Even the most degenerate, emaciated, drug-addled street junkie, or someone 400 pounds overweight with diabetes, high blood pressure and congestive heart failure, can make the decision to turn his life around. That’s one of the gifts of being a rational, thinking human.

Thanks to our ability to reason, only humans have the ability to end bad habits and convert them into good ones. And it’s never, ever too late. All it requires is the will to choose and being brave enough to make positive changes in your life. That’s the hard part. As you will soon see, the rest is easy.
Goal Setting

Once you cross the Rubicon and decide to affect positive change in your life, all you need to do is to follow the process laid out in this guide and you can achieve your goals within whatever timeline you choose.

Goal setting is when you apply realistic expectations to your desired outcome. In Chapter 5, entitled “The Game Plan,” you will learn how to develop practical, concrete goals to follow every step of the way until they lead to good habits and a better, happier and healthier life.

Accepting Responsibility

None of this happens in a vacuum, however. Any bad habits you have are yours and yours alone. Blaming other people or situations for your bad habits will do nothing to help you overcome them.

Maybe your mother and father weren’t responsible parents. Maybe your husband or wife is indifferent to you sexually. Maybe you were bullied in school. So what?

While these things may have contributed to your bad habits, any unwillingness to accept responsibility will ultimately sabotage your efforts and prevent you from achieving your goals. Honesty and maturity are two key factors that separate those people who can successfully change their lives and those who are destined to continually repeat the same mistakes.
Searching for Answers

In the same way that you alone are responsible for your own bad habits, in nearly every instance you lack the power to overcome your bad habits entirely by yourself. In some way, shape or form, eventually you are going to require the help of others.

When we are struggling with personal problems that are consequences of our bad habits, there’s a tendency to circle the wagons and try to take care of things on our own. This is truly a bad idea.

Perhaps it’s ironic that you are responsible for your own bad habits but you need the help of others – whether it’s in the form of health care, nursing, coaching, support or just information from books or websites - in order to make things better. But seeking out and getting the answers and help that you need is an essential step in your healing process.

Over the course of the next 21 days, there are going to be a lot of changes that you are going to experience. Not all of them will fall within your “comfort zone.” You may be accustomed to being completely self-sufficient and prefer to work on fixing your own problems entirely independently of anybody else.

In the words of Dr. Phil, “How’s that working out for you?”
Negative Emotions and Positive Feelings

Many people aren’t even aware of their bad habits. Instead they wonder why the universe conspires against them and causes them to have such terrible luck. They never realize that in most cases they are the cause of all of their own problems through repeated bad habits.

In order to make genuine, positive improvements in your life, the first step is to develop self-awareness. You can’t effectively choose new habits if you aren’t even aware of what your current habits are. In this section, we will walk through the process of becoming more aware of your thoughts, feelings and actions so you can see their connection to the things happening in your life.

By developing this sense of self-awareness, you can move your subconscious thoughts and feelings into the conscious sphere, analyze these thoughts to make the connection between your bad habits and their consequences in your life, and then choose new behaviors based on your discoveries.

What Is It You Want?

Everybody wants something out of life. For some, it may be a happy, fulfilling marriage. For others, it’s unlimited wealth and power. For still
others, it could be spiritual enlightenment or a feeling of closeness to a higher power.

As the Rolling Stones once sang, “You can’t always get what you want/But if you try sometime/You just might find/You get what you need.”

What is it you want more than anything else out of life? Try to think in “big picture” terms. Rather than simply wanting to stop smoking, your goal may be to achieve optimal health. Rather than just paying off a staggering amount of debt, think of your goal as enjoying financial security or even prosperity for the rest of your life.

Creating Self Awareness

Once you have identified some overriding objectives - think global, not local - the next step is to understand what has been preventing you from achieving these goals. This can be achieved through a number of methods, including:

- **Reflection** - Think about past experiences and then use your understanding of how you behaved during those events so you can apply what you learned to future situations.

- **Friends and Family** - Open lines of communication with others by asking trusted people if they also see your bad habit.
• **Compare Yourself With Others** - Think about people who already have the good habits you want and consider what they do differently when confronted by relevant situations.

• **Available Information** - Are there any books, courses or videos that can help you achieve your objectives? What sort of things do you find when you search online?

• **Personal Beliefs** - If you are a spiritual person or have religious beliefs, call upon them to help your journey toward self-discovery. Even people who are non-religious can benefit from surrendering themselves to the will of the universe, or a “higher power.”

• **Start a Journal** - It’s nearly impossible to remember each thought and breakthrough you have along the way. Keep a journal so you can keep track of your progress and refer back to what you have learned.

• **Create Measurable Objectives** - Imagine what success will look like. What measurable event has to occur for you to believe you have successfully achieved your objective?

There may be more than one bad habit you want to change. If so, you may want to prioritize and attack these one at a time. Trying to fix too many things at once can dilute your efforts so that little or nothing substantive is accomplished. Once you learn how to overcome your first bad habit, the others will be easier to break.
Keeping a Habit Diary

Once you have selected a single bad habit that you want to break, the next step is to develop an awareness about the habit as it applies to you. One way to do this is to keep a Habit Diary, which is simply a record of how you performed against your objective.

For example, if your goal is to stop smoking, you will want to keep track of how many cigarettes smoked per day and what time you smoked them. If you want to stop overeating, write down everything that you eat throughout the day. If your goal is to stop telling lies, every time you lie to somebody, write down what you said, to whom you said it, and if known, why you lied.

This type of tangible information will help you understand where you stand in terms of your bad habit. In many cases, the results and the patterns you notice may be shocking.

Root Causes of Bad Habits

After you have identified a bad habit and begun to track it in your daily life, this will often lead to a search for the root causes of your bad habit. While you don’t want to blame other people or situational environments for your bad habits - you own them, they are entirely yours alone - you can still try to understand what is triggering them.
For example, if your bad habit is using rough language too often, pay attention to when you find yourself swearing. Do you swear more often in front of some people than you do in front of others? Or if your bad habit is compulsive gambling, what are the triggers here? Do you pass by a casino or racetrack on your way home from work every day? Is there a particular convenience store where you always buy your lottery tickets?

Understanding the situations and triggers that cause our bad habits will be useful later when we work to end them.

**Consequences**

The next step of developing self-awareness about your bad habit is something I like to call “Putting two and two together.”

Earlier, you thought about what it was you wanted out of life. You identified some global objectives to work towards. Perhaps you were able to envision an idealized life, or there is someone admirable who is living the type of life you desire.

Now I want you to think about what’s preventing you from achieving this ideal. Why is your bad habit standing in the way of your objective? In other words, “do the math” so you can see how your actions are causing specific consequences.

This is simply cause and effect. Your bad habits are the cause. The effect is you aren’t living the life you desire. Yet for your entire life up to this
point, you haven’t been able to put two and two together and come to the realization that your actions are causing your consequences.

Until now!

Making a Commitment to Yourself

So far, so good.

You’ve identified something that you want to change. You’ve engaged in the process of self-awareness, and this has led to an understanding that your actions lead to certain consequences.

Now you must make a personal and durable commitment to changing those actions so you can change the consequences. I’m not talking about simply saying some magic words or making another empty promise. What’s required is a solemn and irreversible commitment - a contract with yourself, if you prefer - an obligation to achieve your objective.

It’s not necessary for you to commit to changing on the spot, vowing to never perform that bad habit again. That would not work because your life is too complicated. It’s taken years, if not a lifetime, to get to where you are today. Simply promising that you will change right now is about as effective as spitting into the wind.

Instead, take some time to think about what you are promising. Consider why it’s important for you to succeed. How will life be different when
you’ve broken your bad habit? What will be the consequences if you continue to engage in the bad behavior?

**Excuses and Inner Dialogue**

Once you have made up your mind, and are committed to making positive changes in your life (which won’t happen right away or all at once since this is a process), the next step is to stop making excuses or allowing negative inner dialogue to influence your decision-making.

You already have come to grips with the fact that you are solely responsible for your behavior—not your environment, how you were raised, or how other people have treated you. These are the excuses and people use in order to justify their bad habits. When you have made a genuine commitment to change, these excuses will not be needed.

Pay attention to what you tell yourself before your bad habit occurs as well as while you are doing it. What excuses do you automatically bring up? What rationality allows you to do the bad habit? These are the thoughts and feelings you will need to overcome.
How Good Habits Will Impact Your Life

Congratulations! The hardest part is over. Increasing your self-awareness to the point of realization that you have to change is the hardest part of the self-improvement process. Unlike 99.99% of people with bad habits, you are now able to admit you have a problem and accept full responsibility.

The last chapter was the most difficult part of the change process. It’s natural for people to dislike admitting weakness, or to deny their problems needing to be addressed. Yet making this breakthrough is an essential part of the recovery process. And you have made it!

In this section, we are now going to turn our attention to creating an environment of positivity to provide the strength and support needed to nurture yourself to a new, healthy and life-affirming habit.

The Benefit of Good Habits

You may recall that about 95% of the things we do every day are out of habit. When you can eliminate bad habits and replace them with good ones, positive things will happen automatically.

Legendary motivational speaker Earl Nightingale once said that if you are willing to devote just one hour per day to studying within your field, you
can get to a leadership position within your chosen profession in just three years. One hour per day of study will make you a national authority in five years. And within seven years, you can be one of the most recognized experts in the world.

Reading an hour per day in your field translates to about one book per week. So you can see something as simple as developing a positive habit like reading an hour daily will not only create positivity, but will also transform your life.

Like a commercial airliner with all of the significant flight information programmed into its computer so it operates on automatic pilot, the good habits we develop are the “mental software” that will allow us to reach our ultimate objectives without even having to think.

**Step 1: Discovering Your Purpose**

Developing self-awareness allowed you to become more familiar with your current bad habits and connect them with the consequences that are holding you back from achieving your ultimate objectives.

The next step is to create goals for yourself that will help you move away from bad habits and move toward the kind of life you truly desire. Goal setting is most effective if you first have a positive vision and purpose for your life. This will allow you to remain inspired to work on “smaller” goals and habits that build to your overall objective. This process can be expressed with this diagram:
The beginning point is to discover your purpose. To do so, ask yourself these questions:

- Who am I?
- Why am I here?
- What do I want to accomplish with my life?
- What would make me feel most fulfilled?
- What do I value more than anything?
- Do I believe in God, a higher power, or the will of the universe?
- How does this affect the choices I make?

**Step 2: Creating Your Vision Statement**

Think about your answers. Write them down and organize them so there’s some sort of order or pattern. This is how you define your *belief system*, which is the overriding purpose behind your life.

If you can’t see the pattern right away, try reflecting on these additional questions:

- How would I choose to live if I could do anything in the world?
- If you never had to worry about money again, how would you spend your days and nights?
• At the end of your life, what will you point to as your most important accomplishment?
• What would you like people to say about you at your funeral?

Are you starting to see it now? What you are discovering is your vision of how you want your life to be. The next step is to arrange that vision into a single sentence or paragraph - called a *Vision Statement* -- that defines what you want out of life.

Here are a few examples of Vision Statements that others have come up with from the website Tita Eda. ([https://sites.google.com/site/titaeda/sample-vision-statements](https://sites.google.com/site/titaeda/sample-vision-statements)):

“I am a housewife and also working, I want to balance my family and professional life - both. I want to become a successful human being. I want to improve my personality, and also the growth of the company and myself. I want to earn money to make my family and society happy.”

“I myself want to be a true leader and help all the people who come to me. I want to complete my PHD program in human resources. I want to be a motivational leader and provide training programs to the corporate world. I love to be a truthful, family loving person and want to visit across the world and enjoy life.”

What does your Vision Statement look like?
Step 3: Building Your Power Goals

Your Vision Statement is where you want to go. Your Power Goals are how you plan to get there.

To develop these Power Goals, let’s return for a moment to your unwanted bad habit. Think about how this bad habit affects you in each of these areas of your life:

- Health
- Relationships
- Money/Finances
- Work/Career
- Personal Development
- Friends/Social Life
- Family Life
- Spiritual

Not every bad habit will have an impact on every aspect of your life, but you may be surprised how damaging your bad habits can be.

To develop your Power Goals, simply complete the connection between how breaking your bad habit will cause an improvement in each area identified.

For example, let’s assume the bad habit you want to break is your gambling addiction.
Gambling: Your addiction to gambling causes you to lose sight of what’s important in life, become anti-social, become financial unstable and most likely end up in debt.

Power Goal: When you break the bad habit of gambling, you will become more positive in life, create positive goals and work to reconnect with your friends, family, partner and improve your financial situation.

Continue with this exercise with each category right down the line. If there is no direct correlation between your bad habit and a particular area of your life, just skip it and go to the next one.

Why Goals are Essential for Happiness

When you compile a list of Power Goals, they will provide the structure upon which you will build your Game Plan for achieving your Vision Statement. Once this journey has been broken down into smaller, achievable steps, not only will you be able to break your bad habit, but you will also be able to live your life on autopilot.

As long as you follow your plan consistently and habitually, your long-term success is virtually assured. Of course, things can still go wrong. Life will continue to throw the occasional curve ball at you, but because you have been able to break a bad habit and replace it with a good one--and repeat the process until all of your bad habits are in your past-you will have the strength and personal determination to overcome any setback.
Reseaching Your Path

When it comes to achieving your Power Goals, knowledge is power. The more information you have about your objective, and how others have achieved it, the more tools you will have at your disposal when it’s time to act on your goals.

Spend time on the Internet researching everything you can about your goals. Search for blogs and forums that are related to your key bad habit. Given the size and scope of the web, there will be many sites devoted to a broad spectrum of problems. You will find a wealth of information and inspiring personal stories for motivation.
Stop Procrastinating and Get More Done

If the hardest part about changing a bad habit into a good one is admitting you have a problem, then the second hardest part is staying focused on your objectives. Life has a tendency to get in the way of our intentions, and it’s easy to become distracted or fall back into our bad behavior.

It’s also very easy to say you want to affect positive change in the abstract, all while putting off acting on that goal. This type of procrastination can add months or even years to achieving your objective. This may even derail your habit-breaking process altogether.

The Consequences of Procrastination

Procrastination is just one more excuse people use to avoid doing the hard work of achieving their objectives. In the same way nobody else is responsible for your bad habits - you own them and it’s up to you to resolve them - putting off the inevitable is just another way of shirking responsibility.

When you procrastinate (“I’ll start next week” or “I’m not ready yet”), you are only cheating yourself. You may have all the motivation in the world to change your life, but without direct and immediate action, you will never achieve your overall objectives.
Power Goals

Often, procrastination is a problem because people think about the big issues rather than breaking them down into smaller, more doable steps. It’s like the old saying goes: How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time!

When you think, “Oh, my goodness, I have to stop drinking,” or “I can’t believe I have so much debt to pay off,” it can be daunting. But by breaking your goals into a series of easier steps and arranging them into a timed sequence of events, you can affect positive change without having to slay all of your demons at once.

Motivation and Enthusiasm

It’s helpful to have motivation to keep you on your path. This can be either internal or external motivation.

Internal motivation supports your decision to make changes in your life, such as reinforcing positive behavior with rewards or posting inspirational messages in places where you will see them frequently.

Be creative. For example, if your goal is to lose weight, find a photo of yourself when you looked your most fit, even if it was years and pounds ago, and put it on the door of your refrigerator. This will give you the
motivation you need when you sneak into the kitchen for a late night snack.

External motivation is when other people encourage and support you towards success—loved ones and friends, professionals like therapists and life coaches, and even experts who have created inspirational books or videos.

The more internal and external motivation used to keep you on your chosen path, the more enthusiastic you will be about your journey and the more likely to succeed and achieve your Power Goals.

Interrupting Negative Behavior

Inevitably, there will be setbacks. Nobody is perfect and you will occasionally fail or succumb to temptation. It is possible, however, to short circuit this bad behavior by attempting to interrupt it as soon as you recognize the triggers.

While you were developing the self-awareness that led to the recognition of your bad habit, you identified a series of triggers or patterns that usually preceded it. These can be thoughts, or physical sensations like tempting sights or smells.

Often, simply avoiding these triggers is enough to keep you on track. But if you accidentally or unknowingly trip a trigger, you can interrupt your potential negative behavior by removing yourself from that situation.
Drop everything and go in the opposite direction. Stop the thought process that is going to lead you to trouble.

For example, if your bad habit is alcoholism and you unexpectedly run into an old “drinking buddy,” think of an excuse to get away from that person as quickly as possible. The longer you spend with that person, the higher the chances of your desire to have a drink.

**Keeping Focused on the Benefits of Good Habits**

Overcoming temptation can be difficult, especially at the beginning of your journey to break your bad habit. One effective technique is to remind yourself why you want to break the habit.

Earlier, you identified the benefits of replacing your bad habit with a good one. These benefits were boiled down into your personal Vision Statement. Keep this handy so that you can revisit it whenever needed. Keep a copy of your Vision Statement where you can pull it out and read it when you become tempted to recede back to your earlier bad behavior.

Often, simply reminding yourself of what you want out of life and how avoiding temptation in the moment will help you achieve your goal in the long term is enough to give you the strength to make better choices.
Reward and Punishment

*Conditioning* is a term used in psychology to describe the process of using reward and punishment to affect behavior. Experimental subjects can be taught learned behavior by being given rewards or by being punished when they fail to make a desired action.

Conditioning also is applicable to real life. You work at your job because you are rewarded with a paycheck. You pay your taxes because you want to avoid the punishment of going to jail for tax evasion.

When breaking a bad habit, using small rewards to reinforce positive behavior is an excellent way to keep you motivated and to associate happy, healthy emotions with your positive choices.

If, for example, your goal is to lose thirty pounds within six months, build in a reward structure that reinforces hitting various milestones--like buying yourself a new outfit every time you lose five pounds or treating yourself to a spa treatment at the halfway point.

Punishment, however, is less effective because invariably people will figure out a way to exploit a punishment structure in order to “authorize” unwanted behavior. Not much tends to get accomplished under this model.

For example, if your bad habit is swearing and you create a punishment structure in which you have to pay a dollar every time you curse, you may
find yourself saving up money so you can curse at will. In other words, the punishment becomes “worth it” in order to perform the bad behavior. This is not a positive way to proceed.

Punishment also sustains negative thoughts with your bad habit. When you punish yourself, it negatively affects your self-esteem: “I’m such a terrible person so I deserve to be punished.” The idea is to build positivity and optimism, not reinforce poor self-image and pessimism.

So when it comes to breaking bad habits, use plenty of carrots but stay away from the stick!

**Eliminating Negativity**

You will be more likely to achieve your Power Goals if you eliminate as much negativity from your life as possible. This includes both *internal* and *external negativity*.

Internal negativity includes thoughts and feelings you have about yourself that are critical, damaging to your self-esteem, and pessimistic. Be aware when these types of thoughts and emotions creep up and focus on expelling them from your mind. Through the power of will, you can decide to think positively and prevent the negative thoughts.

External negativity can be more challenging to prevent. These are critical or damaging things others say or express non-verbally. These things are damaging to your self esteem--hurtful comments from your boss, nagging
from your wife, or “teasing” from your friends. If you want to improve your chances of achieving your Power Goals it’s necessary that you shut them down or shut them out.

Shutting them down means standing up to whomever is being critical of you and explaining that you aren’t interested in their opinions. What they have to say is hurtful and you won’t listen anymore. This requires backbone, but it’s an effective way to shut down those who are critical and not constructive and simultaneously boost your confidence.

Still, this is not always practical. For example, if you are receiving your annual review and your boss is being critical of your job performance, you probably aren’t going to tell him off, at least not if you want to keep your job. In these types of instances, you can shut them out.

Just because somebody has a negative opinion of you or says something mean or nasty to you doesn’t mean that you have to listen. Dismiss their words and don’t let them permeate.

Negativity is the enemy to your journey of accomplishing your Vision Statement and, as a result, needs to be banished from your life.
The Game Plan

You have developed self-awareness to recognize your bad habits, made a personal commitment to replace them with good habits, developed a Vision Statement to guide you to where you want to go, and created Power Goals to bring you there.

The next step is to create a Game Plan that will break your journey down into achievable steps. In my opinion, this is the most enjoyable part of breaking bad habits and replacing them with good ones; you now build the structure to turn your goals into a reality no matter how long it takes.

Drawing Up Your Game Plan

Your Game Plan is an action plan, just as generals utilize when leading their armies into combat, or captains of industry employ to expand or to increase profits.

This will be a tangible plan, including measurements that can be observed, built-in rewards to motivate you to reach both short- and long-term objectives, with a concluding achievement--Living your Vision Statement every day so you can be happy and productive.
This begins with your Power Goals. Pull these out and consider how long it will take realistically for you to achieve each of them. Don’t be overly indulgent. Your Game Plan should challenge you to reach your objectives as quickly as you can. The more time you allow yourself to persist with your bad habit, the harder it will be to break.

Let’s look at an example of what a Game Plan might look like. Assume the bad habit you want to break is you are gambling too much and you go to the casino every Friday and Saturday night, buy lottery tickets daily, frequent the racetrack every Sunday and bet on sports several times per week. That’s a lot of gambling!

When identifying your Power Goals, the “Family” goal you set was:

*Family* - My addiction to gambling means I spend little time with my spouse and children. I also spend a large percentage of my income on my gambling, to the extent there is often not enough to buy groceries or pay my children’s tuition.

*Power Goal* - Stop gambling so I can be home more and be supportive of my family both emotionally and financially.

In this instance, quitting cold turkey may not have a high percentage of success. You may have tried to quit numerous times before, but always receded back into your bad habit.
Instead, your Power Goal can be broken down into a series of steps that are achievable and come with a built-in reward structure:

1. By the end of Week 1, I will cut up my casino’s VIP membership card, stop betting on sports, and only buy one lottery ticket per week. At the end of the week, with the money I save I’ll take my family out to dinner at a restaurant.

2. By the end of Week 2, I’ll end my Sunday “tradition” of going to the track and limit my visits to the casino to one night per week. With the money I save, I’ll pay my children’s past due tuition.

3. By the end of Week 3, I’ll voluntarily put myself on the casino’s “banned patrons” list and not buy any lottery tickets. This will end my gambling habit. As a reward, I will commit to planning at least one fun family activity each weekend, such as going to the zoo or going camping.

Notice there’s no punishment involved with failing. If you don’t succeed in meeting your commitment for the week, restart the clock and try again until you succeed. As long as you stay committed and focused, eventually you’ll make your way through your entire Game Plan.

**Asking for Help**

Some bad habits are so powerful it’s nearly impossible to overcome them on your own. Addictions to drugs, alcohol, gambling, sex and other life-
threatening habits may require you to get professional help, as well as the support and assistance of your family and friends.

It’s natural not to want to ask for help. Our personal pride or embarrassment gets in the way, but if your bad habit is so strong you can’t break it without help, then you need to set your reluctance aside and turn to other people.

There is no shame in wanting to be a better person. Even though it may seem that other people may think less of you if you admit you have a problem, in reality most people will give you credit for trying.

Training Wheels: Easing into New Habits

With very few exceptions, going cold turkey to break a bad habit is not going to be effective. It has taken you so long to develop your bad habit, it will take at least a little time for you to break it.

You can improve your chance of success by easing into your good habits, rather than rushing. Slowly wean yourself off your bad habit (but not too slowly!) and introduce your new, good habit until eventually you are completely free of the bad and committed to the good.

For example, if your bad habit is drinking too much, you may want to start by drinking less and replacing some of the time enjoying long walks or joining a gym. As the weeks progress, you can ease off the drinking altogether and replace your negative behavior with positive behavior. In
time, it’s possible you will become “addicted” to working out, eating right and living a healthier lifestyle.

**Timelines and Milestones**

In most case, it takes 21 days or a month to break a bad habit. It’s helpful, although not essential, that you start your Game Plan on the first day of a new month. This simply makes it easier to set up the timelines and milestones you will need to ease yourself into your new positive behavior patterns. If you can’t wait until the start of a new month then at least wait until the beginning of the new week, if possible.

When you are developing your Game Plan, don’t just take it week at a time. In other words, don’t just plan the first week’s goals and see how it goes from there. To improve your chances of success, plan out the entire Game Plan over multiple weeks until you reach your ultimate Power Goal.

When creating your Game Plan, every new week should build on the success of the week before so by the end of the process you have completely eliminated the bad habit and replaced it with a good habit. This will improve the quality of your life and push you towards achieving your Vision Statement.

**Dealing with Setbacks**

Understand that you will experience setbacks. The trick is not to let failure derail the entire process.
One of the benefits of having a Game Plan is if you fail to reach a particular week’s goals, you don’t have to begin all over again. You can simply restart that particular week and move everything up a week. All the other progress you’ve made can be salvaged.

If you experience a setback, don’t just gloss over it and bull through your Game Plan. This happened for a reason. Maybe you were moving too fast or didn’t realize how much time you needed to achieve a particular step in your journey. Go back and repeat the step until you get it right. Only then should you move on to the next step.

**Remaining Positive**

It’s critical not to allow your setbacks to cause a return to negative thinking. Mistakes are going to be made. We are only human. Accept your fallibility and move on. But don’t dwell on your failure or think of yourself as a failure.

You are trying to make your life better, so you are the opposite of a failure. Even if you don’t succeed all the time--and you won’t--you can still be successful. Even Joe DiMaggio failed to get a hit more than sixty percent of the time.

The most important thing is to stay positive and to just keep trying. As long as you are making the effort to get better, you are a winner.
Strategies for Successful Habit Formation

Let’s return for a moment to our definition of a habit. A habit - whether it is good or bad - is something we do without thinking about it. Habitual behavior happens automatically. It’s part of who we are and how we live our lives.

In order to learn a new good habit, we have to literally teach ourselves to repeatedly do that habit until we do it reflexively, without thinking.

For example, if the bad habit we broke was driving too fast, and the good habit we want to nurture is following the speed limit, we would have to force ourselves to drive the speed limit every time we got behind the wheel until we reached the point where we drove without thinking. Eventually, through repetition, it becomes second nature to us.

Using Reminders

Information overload is a very real condition in contemporary society, and it’s only getting worse. We can connect to the Internet from and stream video anywhere and anytime we want, and sadly the result is shorter attention spans.

It’s incredibly easy to become distracted now. There are just so much other stimuli to attract your attention. So staying on course with your
Power Goals and following your Game Plan is going to take your complete and genuine commitment.

One helpful way to remind yourself to stay on track is through the use of reminders. These can be little things such as Post-Its, text messages, emails or voicemails you can send yourself or have somebody else send so these reminders can keep you motivated and focused.

Reminders are especially helpful when used in conjunction with your trigger points. If there is a particular place or event that reminds you of your past bad habit, use creative ways to post reminders so you can avoid the temptation of recidivism. For example, if your bad habit is drinking too much and your trigger point is the family liquor cabinet, install a padlock on the cabinet and give the key to your spouse to hide.

The Power of Ritual

If you do the same thing at the same time every day, it can become a ritualized experience. For example, you probably have a “morning ritual” which dictates when you shower, drink coffee, use the bathroom, get dressed and prepare for work. You probably follow the same exact sequence every day without giving it much thought.

This same type of ritualized experience can be applied to your newly-developed good habits. Train yourself to perform the same actions at the same time and in the same sequence every day until they become second
nature. That way you will gain the benefits of your good habits without having to consciously choose to do them.

**All Together Now: Grouping Actions**

*Grouping actions* is when you take a number of good habits and perform them all at the same time. This saves you time, and once you make them part of your routine, you will do them automatically.

For example, if the bad habit you want to break is poor personal hygiene, you could group together good habits like brushing your teeth, using mouthwash, showering, shaving, applying deodorant and putting on clean clothes so they are always performed ritually at the same time every day.

In many cases, it’s far easier to use group actions than to try to remember to do each of the good habits individually.

**Keys to Consistency**

Something is a habit if it doesn’t require any thought on your part. Try to ensure your new good habit is performed consistently by repeating it every day for 21 or 30 days. When you keep doing the same thing over and over at the same time and place and in the same sequence, you will begin to consistently follow your new good habit as second nature.

This helps create a permanent good habit that is drilled into your daily routine, rather than having multiple habits that are loosely connected.
Utilizing Your Personal Rhythms

You already have set routines you follow at work, at home and even when you socialize. Try linking new habits with existing ones rather than trying to install a completely new routine. This will make it easier to absorb the new positive habit into your life and will speed up how quickly it becomes part of your ritual.

For example, if your bad habit is disorganization, one of your Power Goals might be to set some time aside every day to organize what you want to accomplish. An existing habit is you always shower the moment you wake up. You can fit your new habit into your existing habit by using your shower time to map out your day. You could even go so far as to install a whiteboard in your shower stall where you can jot down your key objectives for the day. Be as creative as possible!
Living Positively

One of the things many people aren’t prepared for is success. Ironically, some people have failed so many times before that when they finally achieve success in breaking a bad habit, they have trouble coping, which can send them spiraling back to where they began.

This is because they usually have some sort of mental block preventing them from accepting that they are powerful and willful, and once they set their mind to something, they have the ability to see it through to the very end. Removing these types of mental blocks, and using the power of your mind to achieve and sustain your success, is essential to reaching your long-term objectives as defined by your Vision Statement.

Thoughts, Belief Structures and Habits

Sometimes your mind can put limits on your accomplishments. For example, if your bad habit is overeating and your Power Goal is to lose fifteen pounds in thirty days, if your mind has a defeatist or pessimistic outlook it’s going to be more difficult for you to reach your goal. In other words, the mind often leads the body.

So it’s important to train your mind to reject negativity and embrace positivity. It’s possible to reprogram your mind so success comes more
easily. All you need to do is to have beliefs that are supportive of your goal, and your reality will line up with your beliefs.

Remember, habits operate on the subconscious level and are based on the things we believe or once believed. So even if you purge a negative belief from your mind (“I’m too fat” or “I have no self-control”), if you allow negativism to be sustained and don’t quash it, that negative thought will only be replaced with another one (“I’m not strong enough to do this”).

**Affirmations and Declarations**

Dispelling negativity from our worldview is easier said than done. For almost your entire life, your negative thoughts have been reinforced by your bad habits. In your mind, you believe you will fail to achieve your Power Goal because you have always failed in the past, right?

Not necessarily! There is a technique you can use to banish negativity from your mind and replace it with positive thoughts—*affirmations* and *declarations*.

Affirmations are short phrases you repeat to yourself several times a day, usually while looking at yourself in a mirror. They are designed to reprogram your mind to reinforce the positive and banish the negative. They can include such phrases as:

“I am a powerful, willful person.”
“I can accomplish anything I set my mind to.”
“I am strong enough to do whatever I truly want.”
“I am a happy person who deserves success.”

Affirmations can also be habit-centric:

“I am going to be sober today.”
“I will spend my day smoke-free.”
“I am going to stay out of the casino today.”

By their definition, affirmations are positive statements. So avoid affirmations that use the words “won’t” or “not.”

Affirmations are a helpful way to focus the mind on the positive and they really work. Develop three or four affirmations that are relevant to your Power Goals and repeat them to yourself out loud in front of mirror ten times each three times a day for a week. At the end of that time, you will notice a change in the way you feel about yourself. You will have more positive energy, and negative thoughts will have been banished from your worldview, at least when it comes to your bad habit.

Declarations are statements you make to other people about yourself. Like affirmations, they work by defining who you are, in both your own mind and to others.

For example, people who attend Alcoholics Anonymous meetings always start out their “sharing” by saying, “My name is (whatever your name is) and I’m an alcoholic.” The other people at the meeting show their
support and acceptance by greeting them by name. With their declarations, the members accept responsibility, by publicly declaring their problems, while being supported by the group.

Affirmations and declarations are an effective way to build positivity and expel negative thinking from your mind. You may feel a little silly using them at first, but once you realize the benefits, that embarrassment will soon be replaced by feelings of empowerment.

Visualization and Positivity

Another technique to promote positivity is to use visualization exercises. This is when you set aside a little time every day to visualize what your life is going to look like once you replace your bad habits with good ones.

Try it out for yourself by finding a quiet place where you won’t be interrupted for at least five to ten minutes. Sit comfortably and close your eyes. Try to relax completely. When your mind is calm, don’t dwell on your bad habit or its consequences, but instead imagine what your daily life will look like once you adopt your new good habit.

Be as detailed as you possibly can. What will you look like? What will other people say to you? What will you smell? What will you feel? What thoughts will you have?

Visualization helps prepare the mind for success by anticipating that success. Then, when you realize the positive consequences of your good
habits, you are less likely to reject them with negativity. There are even some people who believe it’s possible to actively influence events by visualizing them. In other words, simply believing positive things will happen can cause positive things to happen.

While there may or may not be any direct correlation between the two, it’s absolutely true that preparing your mind for success through visualization makes it easier for you to embrace success once it arrives.

Making a Vision Board

Different people learn in different ways. Some people are “doers” and need to get their hands dirty by performing a specific task in order for their minds to absorb it. Other people, however, are visual learners who need to physically see something repeatedly before it is absorbed into their minds. For these people there are vision boards.

Vision boards are collections of photographs, images, quotes, videos and anything else that positively reinforces what you’re trying to accomplish. This board can be a collage made of cardboard and magazine clippings, or a digital web page you build on Pinterest or another website.

In either case, the purpose of the vision board is to provide positive visual reinforcement for your objective. By frequently looking at your vision board, you mentally train your mind to think positively about your journey. This can ease the process of making positive decisions and avoiding negativity.
The Power of Hypnosis

While hypnosis may have a bad reputation among some people thanks to carnival frauds and phony party entertainers, hypnotism is an actual physiological process widely used in psychology and psychiatry to treat a variety of mental conditions.

When performed by a trained professional, hypnosis puts the subject in a deeply relaxed trance-like state then places post-hypnotic suggestions into the person’s subconscious. These suggestions then become embedded into his belief system, but only if he’s already disposed to the suggestion in the first place. You couldn’t hypnotize somebody to believe in God if he’s already an agnostic or atheist, or to vote Democratic if he’s a Republican, for example.

So somebody who is struggling to quit smoking can be hypnotized to believe that whenever he smokes a cigarette it tastes like poison. When the person comes out of the hypnotic state, that suggestion remains a part of his belief system so whenever he smoke, the bad taste is so anxiety-causing he’s unable to finish the cigarette.

If you are interested in using hypnosis to help you break your bad habit, ask your doctor or health care professional to refer you to a reputable professional hypnotist.
There also are less costly shortcuts you can find online that use self-hypnosis programs created by professionals. The self-hypnosis tapes and CDs you buy online help you relax so you can address your root problems and break bad habits.

Meditation and Clarity

You have already used a form of meditation when you performed your visualization exercise. Meditation works the same way. You find a quiet place where you won’t be disturbed and you put yourself into a relaxed state. The difference is that with meditation, instead of visualizing yourself as being successful, you clear your mind completely of all thought.

When you are in a meditative state, your mind is a blank page. There are no distractions or anxieties to occupy your mind: In fact, there is nothing at all. For a period of time, usually anywhere from ten to thirty minutes, you empty your mind of everything.

When you come out of a meditative state, you will feel relaxed and completely reinvigorated. Just fifteen to twenty minutes of meditation can provide as much energy as a full night’s sleep. Anxieties will be relieved and negative thoughts will be purged. Plus, your mind will have a sharpness and clarity to help you think more clearly, empowering you to achieve your Power Goals more easily.
Taking Action

The Chinese philosopher Confucius famously said, “The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.” Even though he said those words more than 2,500 years ago, they are still as true today as the day they were spoken.

Now that you have a Game Plan that comes complete with a timetable, milestones, and measurable objectives and rewards, the next step is to implement your plan. Making big changes in your life can be intimidating and can cause a lot of apprehension in many people, but at this point you should be confident that you truly want to make a genuine change in your life’s direction.

Focus and Willpower

The time and energy you spent creating your Game Plan will now pay off as you begin your journey. You know ahead of time where you need to be every step of the way, and this will help to keep you focused and motivated.

Still, there are always going to be unpredictable events and life is occasionally going to throw a curveball. Don’t flinch. Stand your ground. The radical changes you are making will have positive influences on every aspect of your life from here on out.
If you start to waver, use the techniques outlined in the last chapter - such as affirmations, a vision board, and meditation- to keep on track.

**Implementation**

When you wake up on Day One of your program to break your bad habit and replace it with a good one, you may feel nervous or afraid. Take comfort that you have planned out every step of the way. You already have all the tools you need to overcome your bad habit, plus you have retrained your mind to be positive and to reject negativity.

Although the road is long, the steps are short. You *can* do this! Not only is success inevitable, given your motivation and the structure you have built to prepare for your journey, you are completely ready for this. You are strong, brave and capable.

Everything up to this point has been preface. Now is the moment when real, genuine and positive change begins. Are you excited? You should be!

**Defeating Inertia**

Newton’s First Law of Physics states that an object in motion tends to stay in motion and that objects at rest tend to stay at rest. This law can easily be applied to habits. It’s far easier to stay the way you are rather than change. But without change, there can be no growth. And without growth, you are not going to achieve the success you desire.
Fortunately, you don’t need to apply an overwhelming force in order to get the ball rolling. The tiniest of shoves in the right direction will start you on your path. As you progress through your Game Plan, achieving your objectives along the way, you can gain momentum so before you know it you have passed the halfway point to your goal, then the three-quarters point, and finally, you will have the finish line in sight!

The Dangers of “All or Nothing”

Something is better than nothing. Even the smallest of accomplishments is favorable to continued failure. While your ultimate objective may be something quite challenging, it usually isn’t realistic to expect you to jump from Point A to the finish line in one single step. It simply doesn’t work that way.

Avoid taking an “all or nothing” approach to breaking your bad habit. It will lead to nothing but frustration. In most cases, a bad habit can be overcome using smaller, more achievable steps that are supported by positivity and continual motivation, both internal and external.

Accepting Incremental Improvements

It’s okay if you don’t eat the whole enchilada in one bite. Indeed, it’s preferable to take small bites rather than choking to death or overburdening your digestive tract.
In the same way, it’s okay to take it slowly when breaking a bad habit. Your bad habit didn’t develop overnight and you shouldn’t expect to overcome it instantly.

For example, if your bad habit is using heroin, going cold turkey is going to be a tortured, agonizing experience. In fact, it could shock your system to the point where the cure is worse than the disease. Depending on your level of addiction, it may even kill you. More often than not, it’s not going to work anyway.

A better plan would be to wean yourself off the drug slowly under the care of a trusted medical professional. They will normally recommend substituting a less powerful narcotic, such as methadone, so that the process of eliminating your addiction is more achievable.

Even if your bad habit isn’t as radical, the same principles apply. Be accepting of incremental improvements. Ultimately, they will lead to total victory over your bad habit.

**Embracing Failure**

For somebody with a negative perspective, failure is something terribly scary and should be avoided at all costs. But for the positive-thinking person, failure is an opportunity.

As human beings, we learn through failure. It’s the “error” part of trial and error that leads to the greatest discoveries. When you have a setback
on your journey, or you fail to achieve your Game Plan’s weekly objective, use it as a learning tool to identify what went wrong and why to avoid making the same mistake again.

The beauty of the Breaking the Habit Program is if you fail it’s not necessary to go all the way back to the beginning. You can simply repeat the step you slipped up on so you maintain your forward momentum.

**Power of Persistence**

The movie “Rocky” is one of my favorite films of all time. As you may recall, Rocky Balboa, played by a very young Sylvester Stallone, is a working class Philadelphia boxer who through extraordinary circumstances gets the opportunity of a lifetime to fight the heavyweight champion of the world, Apollo Creed.

Everybody remembers the mesmerizing and inspirational moment at the end of that movie, when the music swells and Rocky is showered with adulation as he is reunited with his shy, awkward girlfriend, Adrian.

Many people don’t remember that Rocky didn’t win his fight against Apollo Creed. He lost the match on a decision. However, this didn’t stop Rocky from becoming one of the most beloved movie characters of all time, because he accomplished his intended goal. He “went the distance” against the best boxer in the world. By getting up and coming back for more whenever he got knocked down, Rocky became a winner.
Like Rocky, you can be the hero of your own movie as long as you keep getting up and coming back for more. The glory isn’t in the destination, it’s in the journey. By using the power of your own persistence, you will overcome your bad habit and change it into a good one, regardless of the blows you receive along the way.

You may not win every battle and sometimes, like Rocky, you are even going to get your ass kicked, but as long as you keep fighting, you’ll be the champion.
Keeping Score

In order to assure the outcome you want and to remain motivated and on track, it’s critical to record your progress and review and refine your Game Plan as you proceed.

You mapped out your Game Plan from a safe distance before you got into the heat of the action. There probably were things that you didn’t anticipate. It’s okay to make changes. Your Game Plan is a guideline, not a rule book. As long as it succeeds within the timeframe you planned, it can be adapted and modified as needed.

Just make sure your program is progressing towards your goal, not backsliding into the bad habit that needs to be broken.

A Record of Your Success

Keep a record of your performance versus your Game Plan. I like to call this the “Victory Log.” This will help you measure your progress. The log will help you put together your next Game Plan when you’re ready to break another bad habit.

In your Victory Log, be sure to record your performance versus your objective. Identify shortcomings. Be honest and unflinching. The Victory Log is for your eyes only.
Ultimately, when you reach your objective, your Habit Diary and your Victory Log will help point to the key elements that led to your success. These can be applied to other areas of your life so you can make constant, positive improvements and move closer to realizing your Vision Statement.

**Weekly Progress Reviews**

Schedule a time each week to review your success. Make this a new good habit by reviewing at the same day and time every week, making it easier to remember. Eventually, you will look forward to this as the closer you get to your objective, the more likely the news will be good.

Weekly progress reviews should be as non-judgmental as possible. Update your Victory Log without emotion, explaining exactly what you did well and what still needs work. Any setback or failure should be accompanied by a plan of action to correct those areas needing improvement. These can then be folded into the future Game Plan.

**Celebrating Victories**

The little rewards you built into your Game Plan are important motivators, even if they are simply trinkets or tokens. Since you worked hard to earn these rewards, they carry deep personal significance.
For example, people who struggle with alcoholism and join the 12-Step program, are awarded plastic chips to celebrate the various stages of their sobriety. These inexpensive tokens are presented for 30-days, six-months, one-year and 10-years of sobriety. These chips have no monetary value, but for the people who earn them they are among their most valuable possessions.

When your Game Plan has been completed and you have achieved your overall objective, it’s time to celebrate. Invite loved ones to join you for a celebratory dinner or throw a party. Not only do you deserve it, but celebrating your achievement will reinforce your positive behavior and make it easier to repeat the process when it’s time to address other bad habits you want to correct.

**Taking It to the Next Level**

You’ve made it through your first Game Plan. You’ve broken a bad habit and replaced it with a good one. Now what?

You still have your Vision Statement to achieve. Build on the experience and success of your first Game Plan and apply those lessons to the next bad habit you want to correct.

Where does it stop? You know you have reached your ultimate goal when your Vision Statement is no longer a target you want to achieve, but actually describes your everyday life.
Breaking the Habit Permanently

This may be the end of this guide, but it’s not the end of the road for you. There are still many bad habits to correct before you are living the life you have always imagined. Now that you are armed with the knowledge of how to achieve this, the experience of breaking your first bad habit will give you the confidence you need to continue your journey.

I said at the very beginning that you have the power to do whatever you set your mind to do. Now you comprehend the truth behind this statement. Keep believing in yourself and never, ever, ever give up.

You can change your world. You just have to do it one habit at a time!

Good luck!