

TINY HABITS



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Introduction

How happy are you in your life right now? Chances are there's something you'd like to change. This is fairly normal. In fact, regardless of how satisfied you might be in some areas of your life, it is, in fact, probable there're still some areas which need some tweaking.

The good news is, it takes very little to put your life on track. No, we're not talking about winning the lottery. Instead, we're focusing on tiny changes designed to build life-changing habits. These are small actions, which take only a few minutes out of your day.

Let's dig in:

The Habit: Eat Breakfast Every Day

Have you ever considered the origin of the word “breakfast”? This is a sort of shorthand for “breaking the fast.” At the very least, grab a piece of fruit before you head out the door, or some form of complex carbohydrate to get yourself moving.

Why This Works:

Think about this a minute. You haven’t eaten since before you went to bed last night. You’ve gone a long time without food. Your body needs fuel to get started. This is why skipping breakfast is so unhealthy. You really do need some good vitamins and nutrients to start out your day properly. So eat something!

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The Habit: Walk

Sometimes the simplest change is right in front of you. Literally. You begin by setting one foot in front of the other. Walking is so easy to incorporate into your day. When out shopping, try parking a little further from the door. Take your dog out for a jaunt around the block. Or why not explore a neighborhood and discover what kinds of hidden treasures are just around the corner?

Why This Works:

It might not seem like just walking has much in the way of health benefits, but seriously, anytime you put your body in motion it’s good for you. Walking is great for cardiovascular health, and helps you to stretch muscles, gain energy, even think better. Walking is even good for your mental health.

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The Habit: Adjust Your Eating

What’s on your plate? Hopefully, you’re already enjoying a lot of fruits and veggies. If not, here’s your chance. Even just paying more attention to what you’re ordering when out can make a huge difference in your day. Start scaling back on the processed things. Embrace whole foods. Cut the fats, and heavy sugar

to feel your best. Need ideas? Visit a farmer's market for some great options. (Bonus points for walking there!)

Why This Works:

What we put into our bodies makes a big difference in how we feel, and how much we feel like we can get done in a day. Don't believe it? Think about the last time you stuffed yourself with junk food and how lethargic and even just plain blah you felt afterwards. This is why eating right can really be life-changing.

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The Habit: Hide the Scale

There is nothing more condemning than this small piece of technology. Sure, it might be good to watch your numbers, especially if you have heart issues and want to track fluid intake. But unless you have medical reason to do so, the scale is only going to drag you down. Pay attention to how you're doing by how your clothes fit. You'll know when you're veering too much in one direction over another.

Why This Works:

When we see the numbers on the scale, it's so easy to fall into self-recrimination. We agonize over every pound and beat ourselves up every time we see a gain over a loss. This isn't good for our mental health. By ignoring the scale entirely, you'll have a lot more peace of mind.

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The Habit: Take a Daily Media Break

Let's be honest, just how many times a day are you looking at a screen? If you dare, check under your settings on your phone and see just how many times a day you pick it up. Don't be surprised if that number is a lot higher than you expect. Here's why it's so important to just set the phone down, turn off the TV, or close the laptop. Do this for at least a few hours every day. Instead, why not go outside, visit a friend, or even spend time in a good book?

Why This Works:

Anything with a screen starts to carry a certain urgency after a while. You get a text message and think it needs to be answered immediately. You can't help but check your email just in case something interesting has come in. You're on social media scrolling...and scrolling...and scrolling. It can be harder to break away from than you think. Taking a break forces you to look up at the world around you. It'll help you clear your head. Besides, doesn't it feel better to talk to someone face to face than over the internet? Getting offline forces you to slow down. It also takes a great deal of stress out of your life you weren't even aware was there.

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The Habit: Encourage Healthy Relationships

We really do underestimate just how much being around the 'right' people can change our lives. Here's something small you can do which might not seem life-changing but really is: cull out your friends list. Get rid of toxic relationships. Focus on the people who are supportive and encouraging. You always want to be around people who challenge you to be your best.

Why This Works:

There are some relationships which will only drag you down. Being around people who make you feel small in some way, who bully you, or treat you badly only hurts you (and encourages them). When you set boundaries, you protect yourself from these kinds of influences. Don't believe it? Consider this: they say you're the sum of the five people you spend the most time with. What does this make you? If you truly want to achieve things in your life, surround you by the sorts of people who encourage you to achieve your dreams, who are achievers themselves.

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The Habit: Do Something New

Whether you're feeling like you're in a rut or not, there's a lot to be said for trying new things. Read a book, take a class, watch a how-to video and go out and try to

do whatever you just watched. Daily, you should find a way to challenge yourself at least a little bit.

Why This Works:

On the surface, it just makes sense to learn new things. This is how we grow and develop as people. But there's also some serious health benefits to trying new things, both mentally and physically. First, exploring new ideas generally requires at least some measure of action, which is always good for you. There's also additional benefit involving brain health in trying new things. This kind of constant stimulation has shown to protect your brain against dementia later in life. This also builds your neural network in your brain, meaning you'll find you think better and are even able to make better decisions when you regularly challenge yourself.

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The Habit: Drink More Water!

What are the odds you're dehydrated right now? Quite high, actually. We really don't drink enough. In fact, 75% of Americans are considered to be dehydrated chronically. Yikes! Go drink some water right now, while you're thinking about it.

Why This Works:

When you're dehydrated, your heart has to work faster. You can't think well, because you need water for optimal blood flow, meaning you're cutting down oxygen to the brain when you're dehydrated. You'll feel more tired, and generally start dragging when you need water, and could even make yourself physically sick, as lack of fluid even affects your digestion negatively. In other words, a lack of water will shut your entire body down. You really do need to drink more. How much? Try half an ounce of water for each pound you weigh. So if you weigh 150 pounds, you need 75 ounces of water every single day. The good news? You can get some of this through the consumption of fresh vegetables and fruit. The bad news? The water in caffeinated beverages doesn't count as the caffeine dehydrates again.

The Habit: Get Out Every Day

It's too easy to stay in all the time, especially if you work from home. And really it doesn't matter how much you love your home. Those same four walls will start to lose their charm after a while. You really do need to get out, even if it's just to walk around the block and get some fresh air.

Why This Works:

We all need a change of scenery. This is good for our mental health. Staying in has been proven to lead to depression and even anxiety over time. We really do need to see something else now and again.

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The Habit: Go to Bed Early

Do you get enough sleep at night? If you're like most Americans, the answer is probably no. In fact, 70% of people asked, will say they're tired and feel like they regularly don't get enough sleep. How early should you go to bed? The hour really doesn't matter so much as the quantity, though there are some studies which have discovered going to bed before midnight leads to more restful sleep. Whatever the case, the habit part of this is simple: go to bed about half an hour earlier than you have been and see how you feel over the next week.

Why This Works:

It's when we sleep that our bodies heal, and we refresh ourselves from the busy day we've just had. Good sleep is absolutely crucial to mental and physical health so don't sell yourself short. Most people need about 7 to 9 hours every night. If you still doubt this, consider this: in the past, people have used sleep deprivation as a form of torture to get secrets from prisoners-of-war. Now why would you do this to yourself?

Conclusion

When we want to change our lives, we really don't need to make big sweeping changes to see things improve in regard to our general well-being. The problem? We tend to forget just how much our mental and physical health requires attention to the details. Keep following these tips every day and soon they'll be so ingrained, you'll need never think about them again. The best part, you'll be feeling better than ever.