



5 Ways to Break a Bad Habit

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Let's face it: we all have a bad habit or two that we would like to get rid of! Whether it be smoking, biting our nails, overeating, or a host of other afflictions, it may be easier to eliminate it than you imagine.

With a little perseverance, willpower, and determination, you can be free from that nasty little habit!

Here are five strategies that can help:

- 1. Commitment.** Make sure this is something you truly want to accomplish. It's wonderful to *"talk the talk,"* but you'll need to back that up by *"walking the walk"* as well. ***Be honest with yourself.*** Do you truly believe that this is the right time to kick your bad habit? Remember, it has to be done for the right reasons.
 - ***Don't let yourself be pressured by others.*** Search your soul and be certain you're doing this for only one person - you! It's *your* time and energy you'll be using to make your goal a reality, so make your decision carefully.
- 2. Start a journal.** Jot down every time you practice your bad habit. This isn't to be used as a punishment, but to give you more of an idea when your undesired behavior is occurring, so that you can better devise ways to break it.
 - ***Include your thoughts and feelings that precede or accompany the behavior.*** This can give you an idea if you're doing this when you're under stress, bored, tired, and so on.

Though it may seem time consuming at first, recording these thoughts and actions can be a wonderful tool to speed up your success in breaking the habit.

3. Choose an alternative behavior. This behavior can either remind you of your desire to quit or be a permanent replacement of your bad behavior with a desirable one instead.

- For example, a friend of mine once put a rubber band on her wrist when she was quitting smoking. Each time she had the urge to light up a cigarette, she would snap the rubber band on her wrist instead. Naturally, this was only temporary to remind her not to smoke.
- Some more ideas are to take a walk, read a book, sing a song, or cook. ***Any activity can be used as an alternative behavior.*** Of course, you don't want to replace one bad habit with another one, but anything that can redirect your focus works well.

4. Start a replacement schedule right away. Start immediately replacing your bad habit with your alternative, but a gradual shift may work better for you than a complete change.

- You may want to start with once a week, then maybe twice week, then three times, until you're consistently practicing your alternative behavior instead of the bad habit.
- Remember, this won't happen overnight, so please practice patience. ***People learn different behaviors at a different pace.*** Don't be discouraged if your best friend stopped smoking in three weeks and you're on your fifth week and still craving a cigarette.

5. Don't keep this a secret. If you've made the decision to break a habit, tell others. This is the time when you need the support of your family and friends to help you be successful.

- ***Whether you succeed or not, you've taken a major leap in a positive direction.*** That's why it's so important to share what you hope to accomplish with family and friends. Those who love you will be there to encourage you, offer support, and help you wherever they can.

Breaking a bad habit can be difficult, but it isn't impossible. Use these techniques to make your journey easier, then ***celebrate your accomplishment*** when you've succeeded - you deserve it!