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Bad habits can form without you even knowing it and they can prove to be difficult to break. However, it's always the first step that's the most difficult. Once you get started, you'll build both momentum and confidence.

With a proper focus and willingness to succeed, you'll find that ***you can overcome any bad habit***. Then you can choose to replace that bad habit with a more positive one.

Breaking Bad Patterns of Behavior

Before you can tackle the problem of replacing a bad habit with a good one, ***you'll need to be mentally prepared to detach yourself from the habit***. A strong mindset allows you to tackle nearly anything!

Keep these tips in mind as you prepare to transform your habits:

- Get organized by figuring out the bad pattern you'd like to break.
- Start small, with one habit at a time. Trying to change too much at once can overwhelm you.
- Decide that you truly want to change. If you don't want to change, you simply won't.
- ***Don't judge yourself***. If you make a mistake, get back in there and keep trying.

The Substitution

The key to permanently breaking a bad habit lies in being able to replace it with a good one. If you engage in a bad habit and decide to simply stop entirely, it can be *incredibly* tough. You might be okay for a while, but chances are you'll find yourself back to your old bad habits in no time.

Consider some of these situations for substituting good habits for bad ones:

- 1. Exercise.** Exercise is an excellent substitution for bad habits. Exercise can make you less likely to overeat and help you battle other addictions as well. With exercise, instead of just trying to refrain from the addicting activities, you're actively releasing your energy in other ways.
- 2. "Being social" and other excuses.** Sometimes we say that our bad habits happen in social situations only. It's true that we're social creatures, but certainly you can be social in ways that aren't detrimental to your health! ***Change your routines to avoid the temptation.***
- 3. Taking action.** Your solutions don't have to be conventional or from a textbook, but they *do* have to work for you as an individual. Strive to take action and stay the course, even if you stumble from time to time.

Fulfill Your Needs

You must learn to fulfill your needs in a healthy way. Chances are you've developed a bad habit because of an underlying need. Identify this need and find positive ways to fulfill it.

You might need to do a little soul searching in order to find the true underlying causes for your bad habits. If you have a bad habit of grinding your teeth at night, you might need to ask yourself why. Taking an action like wearing a mouth guard is one thing, but maybe you also need to take action to get to the root of your stress!

You might engage in many negative actions because you don't feel needed and loved the way you think you deserve to be. ***This is the root of the problem that we often ignore.*** Masking the pain with self-destructive habits is clearly not going to solve the issue. Instead, discuss your concerns with family, friends or a health professional and be proactive in solving it.

Following these tips to help you turn bad habits into good ones may take some time and effort, but the benefits of a happier and healthier life are well worth it!