

## Healthy Habits Challenge

Do you struggle sticking to the goals and habits you set for yourself? Have you said to yourself time and time again “I’ll start again on Monday”? Do you try and change everything all at once only to give up a week or two later because you had an off day and broke 1 or 2 of those habits? If so you have come to the right place. This challenge will give you accountability and teach you what habits are and how you can commit to changing them once and for all.

First off I want to define a habit. A habit is a routine or behaviour that is performed regularly and automatically. The brain creates habits because it is always looking for a way to conserve mental energy. The brain will try and make almost any repeated behaviour a habit in order to give itself a break as often as possible. When habits emerge the brain stops fully participating in that behaviour and can divert itself to other tasks while you carry out the given behaviour. This is why, habits can be so hard to break or change, we are not consciously aware that they are happening.

James Clear’s book Atomic Habits defines atomic habits are tiny changes we make over time. These little habits become the building blocks of a larger system. Little habits repeated consistently over time can lead to some big results. A regular and consistent routine that is small and easy to do is more manageable over time, gives you greater confidence (as you are more likely to be successful achieving it) and compounds your results. Clear also talks about goals versus systems. The results that you are looking to achieve or the habits that you are looking to create are considered goals. Systems are the processes that will outline how you will get to those goals. In other words goals are used to help you set a direction but systems are what force you to head in that direction and make progress. By the end of this challenge, my goal is that you have developed a system to achieve your habits.

Clear outlines four Laws of Behaviour Change which you can see below

|                   | <b>How to Create a Good Habit</b> | <b>How to Break a Bad Habit</b> |
|-------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <b>First Law</b>  | Make it Obvious                   | Make it Invisible               |
| <b>Second Law</b> | Make it Attractive                | Make it Unattractive            |
| <b>Third Law</b>  | Make it Easy                      | Make it Difficult               |
| <b>Fourth Law</b> | Make it Satisfying                | Make it Unsatisfying            |

### **First Law: Make It Obvious**

Before we can begin to make any changes to our habits and behaviours we must first be on the lookout for those things we are looking to change.

Start by listing below some of the habits that you would like to either start doing or stop doing. When looking at your habits/behaviours consider if the behaviour is helping you become who you ultimately want to be. You can use the table below;



## 2. Habit Stacking

- In habit stacking each action becomes a trigger for the next behaviour so using this to create new habits you will aim to pair the new habit with a current habit you already have
- Use the following statement: After [CURRENT HABIT] I will [NEW HABIT]
- Example: After I eat breakfast, I will take my vitamins.

## 3. Environment

- Certain behaviours tend to arise in certain environments so changing our environment can help us to change our behaviours
- Make cues for your good habits obvious and the cues for your bad habits invisible
- Example: If you want to drink more water, always carry a full water bottle with you, or leave them in places your frequent (one in your kitchen, one at your desk, one in the living room, ect)

### **Second Law: Make it Attractive**

The more attractive and appealing your habits are, the more likely you're going to be engaging in them consistently. There are a few ways you can make your habits more attractive;

#### 1. Pair your new habit with something you enjoy doing

- Complete the following statement" After [CURRENT HABIT], I will [HABIT I NEED] then I will [HABIT I WANT]
- Example: After I finish work I will go to the gym and then I will sit in the sauna for 15 minutes.

#### 2. Behaviours are more attractive when they help us fit in and feel like part of a community

- If you are looking to engage in a particular habit look around in your area or online for communities that share the same interests
- Example: I want to eat healthier so I joined a healthy recipe group on Facebook

### **Third Law: Make it Easy**

Habits are much more likely to happen when they are easy, that is just a cold, hard fact. You may have heard that it takes 21 days to build a habit, although there is not a lot of science to back this up. Habits form based on repetition (how many times you repeat them). The more frequently you do the behaviour the quicker it will become a habit and in order to practice the habit you want to make the habit easy. Here are a few ways to make your habits so simple you will do them even when you don't want to;

#### 1. Remove your points of friction in your environment

- Implement the strategies listed above with regards to making your environment more attractive to help remove the friction created

#### 2. Implement a new habit that takes you less than 2 minutes to complete

- Make the first two minutes of a new habit so easy to start that you will do it even when you don't want to
- Once you start you are more likely to continue
- Example: If you want to start flossing your teeth every night start by setting the habit to floss just one tooth, once you do that you are more likely to floss the rest of your mouth.

### **Fourth Law: Make it Satisfying**

The fourth and final law in Clear's Laws of Behaviour Change says to make the new habit satisfying. We are more likely to repeat a behaviour over and over again when it is satisfying. Pleasure teaches the brain that a behaviour is worth remembering. This is often how habits form in the first place. Here are a couple of ways to make your habits more satisfying;

1. Find an accountability partner
  - Find someone who is going to hold you accountable to what you are committing to and sign a contract with them that outlines what your behaviour is and what the consequences will be if you don't follow through
  - When choosing an accountability partner be sure to choose someone who will actually follow through and hold you to the standards you commit to yourself.
2. Habit Tracking
  - One of the best ways to measure your progress is by using a habit tracker (see one example below). This sheet measures whether or not you complete the habit each day
  - Not only does it create a visual cue it also makes the habit seem more attractive and satisfying (it's satisfying to check off those boxes)
  - The example below is just that an example, feel free to find an option that works for you (there are lots of examples online)

### **That's Great...So Now What?**

Start by choosing 1-2 habits to work on. The biggest mistake that most people make is trying to change everything all at once. This usually leads you to feeling frustrated and discouraged when you miss doing a couple of those things for a couple of days. Instead, start small and build your confidence by completing small things week after week. Remember, that small habits build a strong system and compound your results over long periods of time.

HABIT 1 \_\_\_\_\_

HABIT 2 \_\_\_\_\_

Once you have chosen your habits ask yourself the following;

On a scale from 1-10 (1 being not confident at all and 10 being 100% confident) how confident are you that you can achieve this habit given your current life situations and stick with this over the next 1-2 weeks?

HABIT 1: \_\_\_\_\_ / 10

HABIT 2: \_\_\_\_\_ / 10

If this number is not 8 or higher, revisit your habit and make adjustments to the point that you reach an 8/10 or higher.

NEXT, decide how you will make the habit **obvious**;

I will \_\_\_\_\_ [BEHAVIOUR] at \_\_\_\_\_ [TIME] in  
\_\_\_\_\_ [LOCATION]

OR

After \_\_\_\_\_ [CURRENT HABIT] I will  
\_\_\_\_\_ [NEW HABIT]

AND

I will do the following in my environment to help make my habit more obvious;

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THEN, decide how you will make the habit more **attractive**;

After \_\_\_\_\_ [CURRENT HABIT], I will \_\_\_\_\_  
[HABIT I NEED] then I will \_\_\_\_\_ [HABIT I WANT]

NEXT, make your habit **easy**;

The habit that I can do in 2 minutes or less is \_\_\_\_\_

FINALLY, make the habit **satisfying** using the tracker below;

| Habit | Mon | Tues | Wed | Thurs | Fri | Sat | Sun |
|-------|-----|------|-----|-------|-----|-----|-----|
|       |     |      |     |       |     |     |     |
|       |     |      |     |       |     |     |     |
|       |     |      |     |       |     |     |     |

That's it, sounds easy right? Not so much. Remember how long it takes you to form habits in the first place and give yourself grace when you are trying to create new ones. Make sure you feel confident in sticking with your habits before you start and/or add on to them. If you have any questions please feel free to reach out to me at [a\\_wilhelm@fanshawec.ca](mailto:a_wilhelm@fanshawec.ca) or visit our Fanshawe Student Wellness Centre Facebook Group and look for the Healthy Habits Challenge Event