

**I Don't Care About Tomorrow...Let Me Get
Through Today, First!**

Breaking the Habit of Not Breaking the Habit.

These brief guidelines can bring big changes to your life...but only if you really want them to!

Looking at life from your perspective: Can you recognise any of the following?

No one has a clue what it's like living out your life. People use such terms as 'yes, I know what it must be like', but in reality they have no idea. No one would understand those thoughts that come into your head and you're so good at pretending everything is alright, that many people believe you are...if only they knew the truth! You're a fantastic deceiver and to stop being caught out, you have to think on your feet every day. You're constantly trying to deceive yourself and you get really mad when others hint that you may have a problem.

Sometimes things look so bleak that you stop caring, and what's more worrying is that you don't care that you've stopped caring. You both need, yet detest, the people who show concern and try to support you. You detest them because they get too close to the truth and see your failures all too clearly. But deep down you already know your failures inside out and don't want to be reminded about them. You want to believe that somehow you can live quietly alongside your problems, but deep inside you know you have to confront it/them head-on. At the moment, even though you're pleased with the ways you're managing to hide your problems, you really don't like yourself very much. You don't even dream of a better life because it takes all your energy just to survive on a day to day basis.

Every time you fail to change your behaviour, you reinforce the belief that you'll never be able to change. That's why so many people resign themselves to a second-rate life. In fact, all you're really guilty of is under estimating the single-mindedness and preparation that are needed in order to change your life for the better. There is a story about an arrogant young man who went to the great Socrates for knowledge on how to change. Socrates led him waist-deep into water. *'Tell me again'*, said Socrates, *'what do you want?'*. *'Knowledge to change'*, came the reply.

Socrates pushed him under the water, holding him there for 30 seconds and when he released him said, *'what do you want?'* *'Knowledge to change'*, the young man spluttered. Once again the great philosopher pushed him under and the scene was repeated. After the third time of being held under the water, even for a longer period, the young man came up gasping and coughing and mumbled, *'air, I want air'*. Socrates replied, *'when you want the knowledge to change as much as you want air, You'll change'*.

When misbehaving and challenging students have come up to me over the years and expressed their desire to change I respond with a simple question: Give me a score out of ten how much you really want to change. If they say, 9 out of 10, they are informed that it is not enough and they must go away and reconsider whether or not they really want to change. Nothing short of 10 out of 10 determination will really guarantee success. *Change can only happen when **YOU** decide.*

How much do **you** really want to change? This is the single most important question you must ask yourself. The second most important question is when? How many more days/weeks/years will you keep fooling yourself and say 'I'll change/stop tomorrow' One day, perhaps very soon, you won't have any tomorrows left. Be really brave and make a stand by making tomorrow the real tomorrow of change. The third most important question is **Why**? Make a concise list of **why** you want to change that will be accessible to you in those moments that you need extra motivation.

Next Steps:

Implementing Change

The first crucial step is to be absolutely honest with yourself about the place you're at right now. Don't gloss over the issues as you've done in the past, don't look for someone or something to blame and most important of all, don't be too harsh on yourself.

Admit your fears, acknowledge your hopes and then, don't fret, 'just be' ...relax into yourself and reflect on your reality. Give yourself permission to be in the situation you're in right now without looking for excuses. It will be very uncomfortable for you, but be really honest and try to accept, perhaps for the first time ever, the mess you're in. This is a vital step on your road to recovery.

- Be brave and honest by thinking seriously about all the negative effects your habit/behaviour is having on your life.
- What or Who else would benefit if you changed? Think very hard about this too.
- Make a list regarding what you will miss about your old life-style. Next make a list about all the benefits that your new life-style could bring. Compare the two lists and reconfirm to yourself your determination to change.
- At what times and in which circumstances will you miss your old ways most? Be honest with yourself. This is just to heighten your awareness so you can avoid vulnerable situations where you might fail. Avoid such situations as if your life depended on it.

It may be true that relationships in your life have been strained of late and seem to complicate the issues. How can you possibly have a worthwhile understanding relationship with others, when you don't even understand yourself?

Despite this, is there anyone close to you who you can share things with? Could they support you through this process? Are you prepared to admit your weaknesses and ask for their help? This is another very difficult thing to do, but it really could be crucial to your recovery.

Start to focus on the bits of you that you actually like.

Imagine that you're someone else talking about your good points, what would you say about yourself...say these good points out loud in private.

It is said that the beginning of wisdom is knowing yourself...weaknesses and strengths.

Another difficult, but essential, thing to do is visualise/imagine yourself free of your habit. Build up a clear, strong picture of what the new you looks like. Next, start to imagine what it feels like to be the **new you**. This will seem like a thousand million miles away from where you are at the moment, but stick at it...a picture of the new you will slowly start to emerge. At this stage, you must begin to have a hint of what you are able to achieve with determination and effort.

A crucial question is: Can you see yourself free of your old habit – Can you see the **new you**? You can't move forward until you have a clear picture of the **new you** in your mind's eye and have some idea of how it will feel.

Remember

Be brave enough to risk failure, but determined enough to hope for success.

From time to time you will hear a small voice saying to you, 'you're okay now, you can dabble just a little bit in your old life-style without being sucked totally back in'.

Human beings are past masters at justifying almost any kind of behaviour. Don't be fooled by your misplaced rationalisation, it is the biggest lie of all. Don't fall for this deception but combat it by saying out loud what you have already, and hope to achieve, in the future.

To unlearn an old behaviour, we must learn a new one to put in its place.

Make sure you replace an old habit with something new.

Instead of focusing on what your giving up/stopping, focus on your new behaviour.

For example, if you're giving up alcohol, make sure there's a sensible substitute substance for you to focus on. If you're giving-up a specific behavioural habit, substitute it for another, more wholesome one. Don't try to give up something without deciding how you're going to fill the gaping hole that the habit will leave.

Our characters are made up of a collection of habits, some helpful, some not. To gain a better life-style our task is simply to replace unhelpful habits with ones that will benefit our lives. But we should only tackle one negative behaviour at a time.

It takes around a month for a new technique/behaviour to become a habit – be patient with yourself and persevere.

In my experience, a determined person, with a limited ability, will almost always out perform a less-determined person with great ability. Destructive words are banned in my organisation, this includes swear words and any phrase beginning with 'I can't' or 'yes, but'.

Be Warned

You may find that the more your mind/will is determined to break the behaviour/habit, the more your physical body will try to cling on to it.

This is why your mind/will must be strong and well prepared from the outset.

It can really be a battle between mind and body!

Ready for Action

Decide when your journey will begin. Do not start until you are absolutely ready. However, Once you've started you must stay on for the long haul!

Up until now, your experience may have been similar to being at a busy railway station. The trains come and go, offering a variety of destinations but you're not sure which one to take. You know you should be making an effort to do something, but don't know where to start and you feel as if you're just walking in circles around the stationary trains going nowhere.

Now, at last you've decided to start your journey and selected the train that will take you in the right direction. The whistle blows and your train prepares to move.

Clunks are heard as the carriages take up the slack and are braced for motion.

Slowly you start off, the first moments of your journey have begun.

The longest journeys in life start off with the tiniest movement, but it is critical that the first tiny movement is heading in the right direction.

The greatest journeys in life start off before any travelling commences. The journey that landed the first man on the moon didn't start at the launching pad, but in someone's head, when they came to the decision that it is possible.

This is therefore the second stage of your journey. The first and most challenging part was in your own head. You haven't just started your journey, you're half way there.

Now your journey to a better life has started, keep a journal/diary. This is the passport to your new life. It will help you to monitor your progress and keep things in perspective.

Measure your progress in inches/centimetres not in miles/kilometres.

Above all have patience with yourself. You are allowed weak moments, but don't let them interfere with the momentum of your journey as a whole.

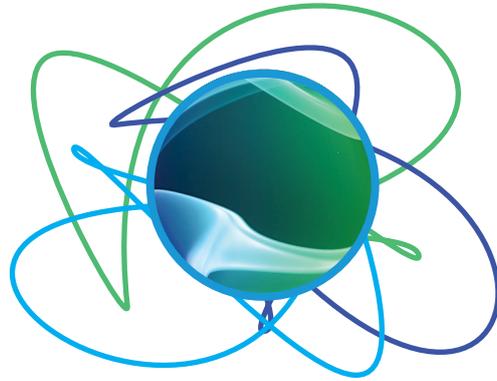
Don't forget to try and have some moments of escapism on your journey. Like a child playing outside on a summer's day believing their fun will never end as they gaze with squeals of delight at a darting fish in a pond. Try again to appreciate and marvel at your everyday life experiences.

Plan to reward yourself at different stages along your journey. Give yourself bigger rewards as you get closer to your final destination. And finally, never lose sight of what your final destination looks and feels like, so you'll know the very moment that you arrive.

Have a Great and Productive Journey!

The 12 Key Things to Keep in Mind

- It's not what you want to give up, but how much you want to give it up that will determine your success.
- Don't focus on what you're giving up, but why you're giving it up.
- Be honest with yourself about the tough journey ahead. Prepare yourself mentally for the challenge. Give yourself a good fighting chance by regularly reading the above guidelines and the notes you have made.
- See if you can find someone supportive who you can share your journey with.
- Regularly try to visualise yourself free of your behaviour/habit.
- Don't be deceived by the small negative voice inside your head.
- Substitute an old habit with something new.
- Once you've started, don't give up – remember you're well over half way there if you count that important journey you've already taken inside your head.
- See the first day, week and month as important mile-stones in your journey. Measure your journey in very small chunks.
- Determination, not ability, is the thing that will get you through.
- Reward yourself regularly for small steps forward.
- Never lose sight of what your final destination looks and feels like.



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