

# Swap Out Bad Habits for Good

Posted by Chris Freytag

Aristotle wrote, *"We are what we repeatedly do."* It's so true. Despite what you may have heard, you shouldn't try and break bad habits; instead, you should try and replace those habits with good habits. For every bad habit you have that is sabotaging your health, you can replace each with a habit that's good for you—and will support your health.



**Find a big, bad habit to tackle first.** What's the biggest thing you do that sabotages your health? Maybe it's eating ice cream late at night, consuming large portions when you go out to eat, or skipping exercise when the weather gets cold. Identify the one habit you think is hurting you most and find a healthy habit to put in its place. Behind every weight loss success story (achieved in a healthy way) you will find healthy habits. For example, "I used to snack on a bag of chips at a time, but now I eat a handful of nuts." Or, "Chocolate was my downfall, but then I switched to eating just a small square of dark chocolate to fulfill my craving." Or, "Instead of cream in my coffee; I use nonfat milk." The biggest benefit to replacing one of your worst habits is that your success will motivate you to give your other bad habits a makeover too.

## **Swap out. Replace one habit at a time.**

There are all sorts of ways you can replace bad habits. Feel like stopping at the bakery for a donut? Instead, go for a walk or a bike ride. Want a soda? Try drinking sparkling water. Have the late night munchies? Distract yourself and replace the bad habit by reading a chapter of a good book, calling up a friend or taking a power nap. Don't overwhelm yourself by trying to tackle too many bad habits at once. Focusing on one bad habit at a time until you have conquered it is the best way to go.

**Visualize and then act.** Picture yourself making healthy decisions and then follow through. Where we put our head in pictures, typically determines the direction we head. Picture yourself at the gym, drinking green tea, filling your plate up with fruits and veggies, and you are likely to do those things. The old Napoleon Hill quote is true: *"What the mind can conceive and believe; it can achieve."*

**Notice how adhering to good habits makes you feel.** Sometimes, the easiest way to avoid a behavior that is sabotaging you is to imagine how you will feel afterward. When you overindulge in a meal, you feel uncomfortably full afterward. Or, when you skip exercise, you lack energy or feel guilty. Avoid those negative emotions by making decisions you will feel good about afterward. Most people encounter a time when they don't feel like working out, but when

they persevere regardless of mood, they are so happy they did afterward! Tune into how you will feel afterward to make the right decisions.

**Stop saying, "It's hard."** You get what you focus on. If you think it's hard, it will probably be hard. Put your mind on more positive thoughts like, "I can do this" or "just one habit at a time." If you believe you can change your bad habits to good, you are half way there.

**Keep at it for three months to make it a habit.** Most experts agree it takes about three months to make something a habit. Keep at it until your healthy habits become second nature or automatic. When you are barely thinking about all of those healthy decisions you make daily, you will know your healthy habits are around to stay. And ... you will love the direction you are headed.