Habit Building

Goals and Motivation: Making a New Habit Stick

This habit building worksheet helps you pick one small habit, tie it to a cue in your day, and track it until it starts to feel automatic. It follows research by health psychologist Phillippa Lally and psychologist Wendy Wood. A habit forms when you repeat an action in the same situation until the situation starts to prompt it.

1 Pick one small habit

Start with one simple action you can do every day. Simple actions tend to become automatic faster than long routines.

My goal (for example, eat more fruit):

One simple action I can do every day toward it:

Example: Eat a piece of fruit.

2 Tie it to a cue

Choose something that already happens every day at about the same time and place, like finishing breakfast. Link your action to it with an if-then plan.

After I (my daily cue):

Example: After I finish lunch,

I will:

Example: I will eat a piece of fruit.

Why does this work? *In a well-known study by Lally and colleagues, people repeated a new daily action, like eating fruit or taking a walk, after the same cue each day. For a typical person, it took about 66 days for the action to feel about as automatic as it was going to get, though this varied a lot from person to person. Missing a day now and then did not undo their progress.*

3 Make it easy

- Make the new habit easy to start. Put your walking shoes by the door, or the fruit bowl where you will see it.
- Make an old habit you want to drop harder to do. Charge your phone in another room if you want to scroll less at night.

**This worksheet provides information but is not a substitute for therapy. It works best with guidance from a professional.*

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4 Habit tracker

Tick each day you do your habit. Aim for about ten weeks, and keep going after that if you need to.

Week	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
Week 1							
Week 2							
Week 3							
Week 4							
Week 5							
Week 6							
Week 7							
Week 8							
Week 9							
Week 10							

5 Check in as you go

After a few weeks, how automatic does it feel?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

I have to remind myself *I do it without thinking*

If I miss a day, I will:

Example: Start again at my next cue. One missed day does not undo my progress.

What has made this habit easier or harder so far?

If the habit you want to change is tied to alcohol, drugs, eating, or your mood, it may need more support than a tracker. A doctor or therapist can help.

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