

January 2020  
Happy New Year!



# Targeting Wellness Newsletter

## Good News for Good Health!

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### New Year! New Opportunities To Be Your Best Self!

"THIS CANNOT BE THE YEAR OF TALKING. OF WISHING. OF WANTING. THIS HAS TO BE THE YEAR, YOU GET IT DONE!"

ERIC THOMAS

#### WHAT'S COMING UP?

- The Power of Habits
- Steps to take to change a habit
- What is a "keystone habit" and how can it affect other habits
- Beliefs influence habits



Just when the caterpillar thought the world was over, it became a butterfly...  
*proverb*



Happy New Year! It's that time when we tell ourselves we're finally going to change that "bad" habit we have struggled with for too long. It's that time of year when we remember all the past attempts that failed but know this year will be different. Why? Why do we expect something different as a result of following the same restrictions and beliefs we placed upon ourselves before?

What if you looked at setting this New Year's "resolution" with a new set of eyes, a new vision (20/20 vision to be exact)? Let's explore how habits are formed, how they can be successfully changed by our thoughts, and how this year can be different as a result of finally replacing those undesirable habits with healthy ones.

Are you up for it? First thing to do is be honest with yourself. What is it that you really want to accomplish? Take the time to really listen to your heart. Be as specific as you can and write it down. What outcome are you seeking (i.e. To stop smoking? To lose 30 pounds? To exercise more?) Now build towards that outcome by setting small weekly goals that focus on behavior modifications.

In this newsletter I hope to share some insights on making those new habits stick this time. It boils down to one key component...Change your approach and you change your life!

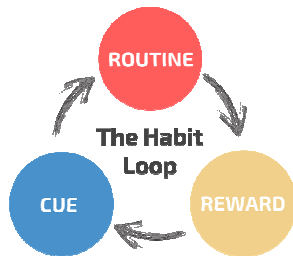
To change a habit, make a conscious decision, then act out the new behavior.

Maxwell Maltz

## The Power of Habits

The definition of habit is “an acquired behavior pattern regularly followed until it has become almost involuntary.” According to *The American Journal of Psychology*, a habit is basically a fixed way of thinking or feeling based on a repeated sequence of actions that yield a desired mental experience. Many times our habits go unnoticed; those unthinking, automatic *choices* we make every day. Each one is stimulated by an emotional connection and when performed, triggers a unique “payoff” or “reward”. But every habit can be changed no matter how complex or ingrained it may seem. It goes beyond willpower. Think about how many times you really wanted to break a habit but continued to give up. The real obstacle to change is not a lack of determination, rather, a lack of understanding how habits really work.

**BAD HABITS ARE LIKE  
A COMFORTABLE BED,  
EASY TO GET INTO, BUT  
HARD TO GET OUT OF.**



It turns out that all habits can be modified in basically the same way. Researchers at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology discovered that all habits have a neurological loop that consists of three parts known as the “habit loop”. Knowing that, almost any habit can be changed by learning to follow these three steps:

1. Identify the routine around the habit.
2. Experiment with different rewards to satisfy the craving the behavior is trying to fulfill.
3. Isolate the cue that triggered the behavior in the first place.

Let's take a hypothetical situation. Pretend you have a habit of walking to the employee kitchen every day around 3:30pm to take one cookie or any other delicious treat. Could this one cookie be contributing to the few extra pounds you have gained? Perhaps. So you force yourself to stop...going so far as to put a Post-it note on your computer that reads “NO MORE COOKIES”. But every afternoon around the same time you ignore the note, get up and wonder over to the kitchen, pick up a cookie and, while chatting with a co-worker, you eat it. Tastes great! Feels good right? But then it feels bad. You promise yourself tomorrow will be different. You will muster the willpower to ignore and resist the urge. But tomorrow the same thing happens. In fact everyday it's the same thing.

How do you hope to ever change the behavior especially when the cookie tastes so good and it's only one small cookie after all? What harm could it really do? Yes this one cookie may not be the only reason for your weight gain. However it can be a huge indicator to other unhealthy choices you might be making. Tackling this one could actually help to change others! Okay now let us try applying the steps mentioned above.

**Identify the routine**—this is usually the most obvious part of the habit. It's the behavior you want to change: getting up from your desk in the afternoon, going to the employee kitchen, eating a cookie and chatting about work. **Now some less obvious questions to ask yourself: What's the cue for this routine? Is it hunger? Boredom? Low blood sugar? Or do you just need a break from your tasks?**

**Experiment with Rewards**—These rewards or payoffs are powerful because they satisfy cravings. But most often we aren't aware of the cravings that drive the behaviors. To figure out this connection, you'll need to experiment with different rewards. It may not happen right away; it could take days, weeks or longer. No matter how long it takes you should not feel pressured to make a real change yet. At this point you are merely collecting data so you can make a plan for change. So how do you do this? Here is an example of how you might do this.

- The next day, you go to the kitchen and instead of a cookie, you eat a piece of candy. You enjoy it while chatting with a co-worker.
- The day after that, go to the kitchen and eat an apple from the fresh fruit bowl you never paid much attention to before. You enjoy it while chatting with a co-worker.
- The day after that, try a cup of coffee, chat with co-worker.
- Then instead of going to the kitchen, you walk over to a not-too-busy co-worker for a few minute catch-up before going back to your desk.

Okay you get the idea. What you choose to do instead of eating the cookie is not important. The purpose of this experiment is to find out what you are truly craving which has been driving your routine. Are you really craving the cookie or a break from work? If it's the cookie, are you hungry, in which case the fruit will work? Is it because you need energy (afternoon sluggishness)? The fruit will help here too. Or are you wandering into the kitchen for an excuse to socialize with a co-worker? AN IMPORTANT STEP: after consuming the reward, jot down on a piece of paper the first three things that come to mind regarding the following: what are your emotions right now, or random thoughts, or feelings, or just three words that pop into your head.

The reason why it's important to write down three things (even if they are meaningless words) is twofold. It forces a momentary awareness of what you are thinking or feeling. And studies show that writing down a few words helps you recall later what was taking place in that moment. *(continued on next page)*

**“THE SECRET OF  
CHANGE IS TO FOCUS  
ALL OF YOUR ENERGY,  
NOT ON FIGHTING THE  
OLD, BUT ON BUILDING  
THE NEW.”**

— SOCRATES

## The Power of Habits (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2)

**Isolate the Cue**—these are the triggers that cause your behavior. They are usually the most difficult part of the habit to identify but studies have shown that they typically fall into one of these categories: location, time, emotional state, other people, and what immediately preceded the action.

When an urge arises, write down the information to these five things. Let's use our example to do this.

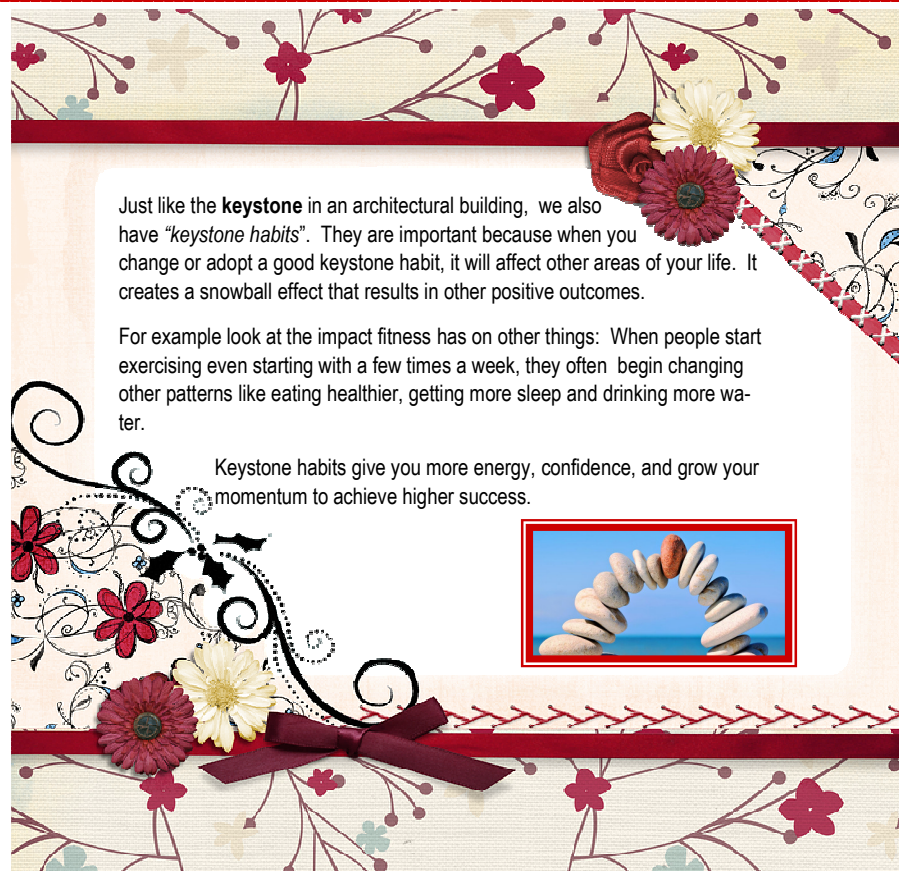
- Where are you? (sitting at your desk)
- What time is it? (3:30pm)
- What's your emotional state? (Stressed)
- Who else is around? (1 co-worker)
- What action preceded the urge? (Answered a long email)

Do this for a few days and it may become perfectly clear which cue is triggering your habit of getting up and going for that cookie. You may find out that it's not hunger driving your behavior. Instead you may be seeking a temporary distraction or break from the daily routine and getting up, stretching your legs and talking a few minutes with a friend, helps you refocus and get back to work feeling energized.

**Final step, have a Plan**—as I already mentioned, a habit is a choice we make without even thinking about it. It's automatic and often done every day. Basically, when you see the cue, you will do this routine in order to get that reward. To change the habit you now need to create a plan, or an intention, **to do something different**. Maybe it's every day at around 3:30pm, you walk to a friend's desk for a 5 minute chat and you refill your water bottle while focusing on taking a few deep breaths. Or maybe you realized you do get hungry and need a little "pick-me-up" in which case you can start packing your own healthy snacks to have on hand.

We all have habits we'd like to change. Some habits are easier to reprogram than others but all attempts should follow this same pattern.

One last and very important thing to consider is having support! Tell a friend what you are trying to change and ask for help to stick with your plan. Sometimes change takes a long time. Sometimes it requires you to keep trying new experiments even after many attempts have failed. Don't give up on yourself after your first or second or even third slip-up. Make this year's "resolution" one that lasts a lifetime. And like with mastering any new skill, it takes practice every day. Repetition of the healthier behavior will eventually create a healthier habit!





## What You Believe Influences Your Habits

**What is a belief?** It's something that you have thought over and over and you "believe" it to be true.

**Recall the meaning of a habit:** It's a behavior that you have repeated over and over again until it's automatic.

We have been talking a lot about habits and the prospect of change with the start of a new year. We are all creatures of habit. Everything we do, say, feel is a result of a habit which you do without consciously having to think about it. Most of us follow a daily routine that is pretty much on auto-pilot. However, when you change your habits, you fundamentally change your life.

Your habits are a product of your beliefs. Your actions and words reflect these beliefs. What you say to yourself, if you truly believe it, becomes reality. Your beliefs can propel you forward towards change or they can hold you hostage, refusing to allow movement towards your best self.

*Believe  
you can  
— & —  
you're halfway  
there.*  
T. ROOSEVELT

I recently listened to an interview with Dr. Wayne Dyer who used a metaphor of a boat propelling through the water. The wake, as we all know, is the trail left behind as the boat moves forward. Would you ever say that that the wake is causing the boat to move? Of course not. It's the present moment energy, produced by the motor, that is making such propulsion. Often times, we "hold ourselves back" because we believe our trail of actions and past experiences (the wake) determines our ability to move forward. If you can change how you think and start to look at your current situation as a new beginning in which you do have the power to propel forward, you will have a much greater chance of breaking those habits once and for all.

Eckhart Tolle also says that if you can become aware of your negative thoughts, you can start to ask yourself if these thoughts are helping or hurting you? Are they thoughts you want to keep or change? Remember you have the choice either way. This is not an easy task to master with one or even two attempts. That's why resolutions are often broken. It's difficult. It takes longer than you expect and our ego tells you it's just easier to give in to the belief that this is who you are, this is what is familiar and comfortable. You cannot **fight** the negative state because that in itself is another negative state. However, by becoming aware of it, you aren't completely "addicted" to the habit anymore, because only in NOT seeing it are you fully in it. So what can you do differently this year to reach your goals, change those unwanted habits, and transform your life?

**Stop Complaining.** Complaining about what you don't have in life only makes your life lack more. Start to look at what is good about being you. Focus on those things that you are proud of, grateful for and brings you happiness. Focusing on the negative breeds more negative.

**Practice thought-stopping.** Similar to what Eckhart Tolle talks about with "becoming aware", recognize when you are thinking in that negative pattern and realize it's NOT FACTUAL. There is momentum in thought. What you start thinking about causes a trail of other similar thoughts. Stop it before it clouds your perception.

**Remove the "Yes, but..." attitude.** This is a phrase that marks negative thought. For example if you were asked "Do you like your job?" you respond, "Yes, but it doesn't pay enough." If someone were to suggest looking for a better-paying job, you may respond, "Yes, but then I might have a longer commute." You get the picture. Happiness is a state of mind. You cannot *find* happiness; it has to *come from within*. Instead of "Yes, but..." start saying "Yes, and...". Same question, "Do you like your job?" New response, "Yes, and I'm working hard to further my career."

**Beware of self-fulfilling prophecy.** How we think and act attracts more of the same. You could actually be pushing yourself in a particular direction by holding onto negative thoughts about yourself and your life. Our ego always wants to be right even if in being right you feel awful! Don't remain the victim. Becoming aware of your thoughts and examining your feelings might actually reveal that you are the author of your own misfortune. Change your thoughts and you change your life experiences!

**You always have a choice.** Everything you do, everything you say, everything you think, you have a choice to follow through or not. You can believe it as truth or something your ego is just making up. Focus on what you want this year that will *improve your overall well-being* (physical, mental, emotional and spiritual). When you set your goals, say **"this is on it's way"**. Stay in the moment realizing that change is challenging. Look at the small accomplishments every day (write it down). Become aware of words that sabotage your drive to keep moving forward.

- ➔ Practice self care through exercise, proper nutrition, adequate sleep and managing stress (reach out to me if you want more help in these areas).
- ➔ Surround yourself with people who support your best intentions.
- ➔ Create an environment that supports your goals and keeps you on track.
- ➔ Give yourself time to accomplish your priorities. Don't give up!
- ➔ And change your thoughts. Practice having a positive attitude by looking at the things you are grateful for each day. Focus on your values, talents and strengths.

***What we are today comes from our thoughts of yesterday, and our present thoughts build our life of tomorrow.  
Our life is the creation of our mind." – Buddha.***

## Easy Meal Ideas



### Chickpea Pasta Salad in a Jar for Lunch On-the-Go

Just flip it over, watch the dressing run down, and dig into this veggie-packed mason jar salad. Doesn't get any easier than that!

#### Ingredients:

- 1/4 very small onion, finely chopped
- 2 tbsp. red wine vinegar
- 2 tbsp. olive oil
- Salt and pepper
- 1/4 c. canned chickpeas, rinsed
- 1 c. grape tomatoes, halved
- 2 tbsp. kalamata olives, halved
- 1 c. cooked spiral pasta
- 1 1/2 c. baby arugula, chopped
- 2 tbsp. crumbled feta



#### Directions

In a 1-quart jar, shake onion, red wine vinegar, and oil, and a pinch each salt and pepper. Add chickpeas and gently shake to coat. Top with tomatoes, olives, pasta, arugula, and feta. When ready to serve, turn upside down and let sit for 2 minutes for the dressing to run over the rest of the ingredients.

***Tip:** Prepare your jar as directed and refrigerate for up to 2 days. Let sit out at room temperature for at least 10 minutes (this allows the oil to become liquid again) before turning over and dressing.*

### Buffalo Chicken Enchiladas Dinner in 30-minutes

#### Ingredients

- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted, plus more for greasing the pan
- 4 cups shredded rotisserie chicken
- 8 ounces cream cheese, at room temperature
- 2 cups shredded Cheddar
- 1 cup hot sauce, plus more for serving, such as Frank's
- 1 bunch scallions, thinly sliced, white and green parts separated
- 1/4 teaspoon ground cumin
- 16 corn tortillas



Total: 30 min and Yield: 4 to 6 servings

#### Directions:

1. Preheat the oven to 400 degrees F. Butter a 9-by-13-inch baking dish.
2. Mix the chicken, cream cheese, 1 cup of the Cheddar, 1/3 cup of the hot sauce, white parts of the scallions and cumin in a large bowl until well combined. Stir together the butter, remaining 2/3 cup hot sauce and 3 tablespoons water in a medium bowl.
3. Microwave the tortillas in batches until warm, softened and foldable, about 30 seconds. Keep warm between damp paper towels.
4. Spoon a portion of the chicken mixture down the middle of each tortilla and roll up. Place them side by side, seam-side down, in the prepared pan. Pour the hot sauce mixture over the tortillas. Sprinkle with the remaining 1 cup Cheddar and the blue cheese and bake until the cheese is melted and bubbly, 15 to 17 minutes.

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***Think in terms of the day's resolution, not the year's! Every day is an opportunity to succeed.  
 Take one at a time and just keep going!***

