



Business



Designing Healthy Habits that Last



Resource Guide

Table of Contents

Learning Objectives	03
Introduction to Habits	04
Reward-Based Learning: The Story of Habit Formation	06
An Effective Blueprint for Designing Long-lasting Healthy Habits	08
Design a Habit Recipe	15
Start today	17
Group Activity	19
Calm Resources	20

Learning Objectives

Transforming a habit isn't necessarily easy or quick. It isn't always simple. But it is possible...



Charles Duhigg

During our session you will

- Explore why your brain forms habits and how habits work
- Develop a blueprint for behavior change that will enable your habits to last
- Recognize and avoid the common pitfalls of habit formation
- Design a personalized habit recipe

Introduction to Habits

A habit is an auto-pilot behavior that we repeat on a daily basis.¹ For example, you may have a habit of waking up in the morning and drinking coffee or watching shows in the evening. These behaviors feel automatic because they skip the decision-making part of your brain. This frees up energy for your brain to think about other things. Research from Duke University shows that over 40% of our daily actions aren't actual decisions but habits.⁴

The Benefits of Healthy Habits

- Help your brain to be more efficient¹
- Organize your time and energy to reach your goals¹
- Establish routine which is a form of self-care

Introduction to Habits

What is a healthy habit that you want to commit to and enhance your life?

Next, take a moment to imagine your life three months from now. Your new habit is firmly rooted in your life and you are on your way to achieving your goal. What's different for you now?

I want

(enter the habit you want to create)

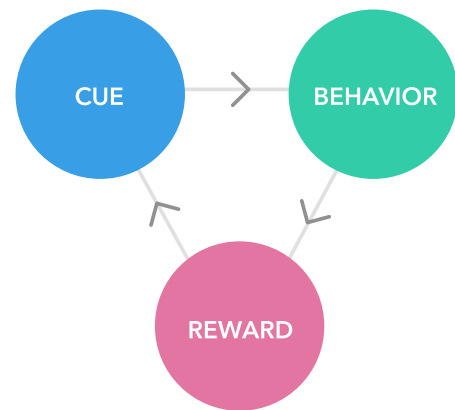
because

(what's your why)

How would your life be different with this new healthy habit?

Reward-based Learning: The Story of Habit Formation

Reward-based learning is the process in which habits are formed and it consists of three parts: cue, behavior, and reward.



Img (Right): Reward-based Learning

Here's an example of reward-based learning:

1. **Cue:** It's 5 PM and the work day is done
2. **Behavior:** Tidy up my desk before heading home
3. **Reward:** Experience satisfaction in knowing that the workday is over

Fueling the Reward-based Learning Loop

Dopamine, the neurotransmitter that's often referred to as the feel-good hormone, is the fuel that drives reward-based-learning. The mere anticipation of a reward increases the level of dopamine in our brains. When dopamine rises, we feel good and the brain remembers this good feeling. In the example above, when the work day is over tomorrow, you will be prompted to tidy up your desk. You'll create a habit once you repeat this behavior enough times.

Reward-based Learning: The Story of Habit Formation

Fill in the boxes below and identify the three parts of a habit in your life, from cue, behavior to reward.

Cue	Behavior	Reward

“

You do not rise to the level of your goals,
but you fall to the level of your systems

James Clear

An Effective Blueprint for Designing Healthy Habits that Last

The following steps are a blueprint for designing long-lasting habits:

1. Reset and clarify
2. Identify bite-sized behaviors
3. Leverage habit stacking
4. Remember to celebrate

Step 1: Reset and Clarify

The first step is to pause. This gives us the opportunity to pop out of autopilot and ask ourselves, “who is the person that I want to be in my life?” From this question, you get to determine the goals and habits that will get you there. A daily mindfulness practice and the resources on the Calm app can be wonderful tools to bring more clarity in your life. You can start with a short meditation from Dr. Eric Lopez. Once you create time to reset, you can clarify what you want. Start with a goal and then identify the behavior that will support that goal.

Here’s an example:

- My goal is to walk 5k or 6,600 steps every day.
- The habit that will help me achieve my goal is to walk for 10 minutes each day.
- I want to walk for ten minutes every day because I want to be healthy for my family.

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Activity

Fill in the blanks below.

What is your goal?

What's a habit that will help you achieve your goal?

I want

(enter the habit you want to create)

because

(what's your why)

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Step 2: Identify bite-size behaviors

We all know motivation comes and goes. There are times when we have lots of motivation—whether it’s after a fun weekend or a good night’s sleep. In those moments, we might set big goals and habits for ourselves such as biking to work every day even when we never biked to work before. Or it could be to stop consuming sugar, effective immediately. But you’ve been in back-to-back meetings and could use the sugar boost so you munch on some chocolates. Where’s motivation when we need it?

Barriers to new habits

It’s not easy to create behavioral change but it’s feasible with consistent efforts. We listed five barriers below that can derail you from your original intentions. Rank them in terms of how big the barrier is on your road to positive behavioral change.

1 is a minimal barrier and 5 is a big barrier.

- Time:** “I don’t have enough time”
- Energy:** “I don’t have enough physical or mental energy”
- Motivation:** “It feels too big/hard”
- Resources:** “I don’t have enough money”
- Know-how:** “I don’t know how to get started”

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Activity

Based on your ranking above, take the top two and write them down in the box below on how they're showing up as big barriers when you're establishing your new healthy habit.

Barriers to Healthy Habits

Ex: Time: When I get busy I will rationalize that I don't have enough time to do a 10-minute walk
Energy: When I am tired I will tell myself, "I'll get to it tomorrow."

“

Our approach to change is a design flaw,
not a character flaw

BJ Fogg

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What is a design flaw? When we either go big or go home when it comes to building a new habit. The remedy is to start small—a bite-sized behavior that you can do in less than 30 seconds. For example, if you're to eat healthier instead of optimizing your diet to include protein and vegetables every meal, try to drink a glass of water per day or bring an apple for work.

When you start small, you set a solid foundation for building your habit consistently. Bite-sized behaviors don't rely on the natural ebbs and flows from motivation. Your self-esteem will increase as well as your belief that a behavior change is actually possible. Let's shrink the walking example above into a bite-sized behavior:



Walking 10 minutes a day

Requires motivation, energy, and time



Walking to the end of my driveway

Requires minimal motivation, energy, and time

What is a bite-sized behavior you identified for your new, healthy habit?

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How likely are you to start this new behavior? 10 being fully committed and 1 being not at all committed. Rate on the scale below:



Brainstorm Bite-sized Behaviors

Is your commitment level less than 10? If yes, then let's create an even smaller behavior to start with. As you go through the exercise below ask yourself: "is this a behavior I can do when I am sick? Is this a behavior I can do following a bad night's sleep? Is this a behavior I can do on the busiest of days?" If the answer is yes, then write it down on the lines below.

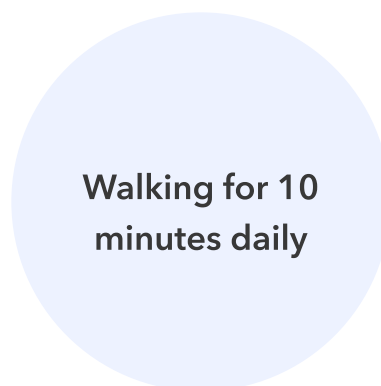
1. In the circle below, write down the habit you'd like to form in the circle.
2. Brainstorm and write down bite-sized behaviors on the side. Star the behaviors that have the least amount of barriers.

Sample:

Put my walking shoes ★
by the door

Put my walking clothes
out the night before

Put my active clothes ★
on each morning



Walk for the length of
my favorite song

★ Walk to the end of my
driveway and back

Put the dog leash by
the door

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Choosing one of the behaviors from above, write down your habit and the bite-sized behavior that will lead to this new habit.

Habit	Bite-sized Behavior

Design a Habit Recipe

As part of designing healthy habits, it's important to think about how you'll fit the bite-sized behavior in your day.

What time during the day can you execute this new behavior?

- Morning
- Afternoon
- Evening

Step 3: Habit Stacking

Now that you've identified the optimal time to execute your new behavior then let's pair it with your new, healthy habit. For example, morning is the best time to walk to the end of your driveway and you already make coffee in the morning. Making coffee is your cue to do the new behavior and begin your new reward-based-learning loop. This is habit stacking in which you build a new behavior on top of an old habit.³



Your Turn:



Design a Habit Recipe

Step 4: Celebrate

Positive emotions help create habits more quickly and efficiently. It might feel disingenuous to celebrate bite-sized behaviors at first. After all, how difficult can it be to walk to the end of your driveway? We recommend trying one of the celebration ideas below or create one that works for you! When we pair celebrations after doing a new behavior then we prime the brain to remember this new pattern with reward-based-learning.

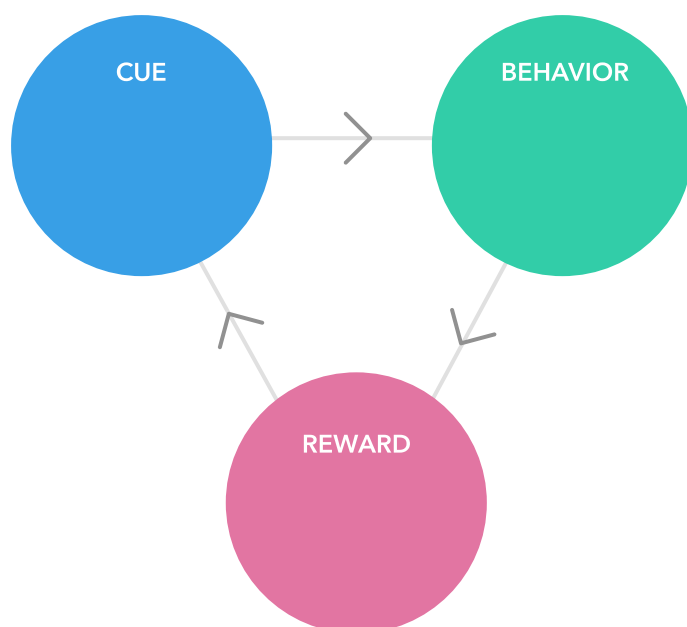
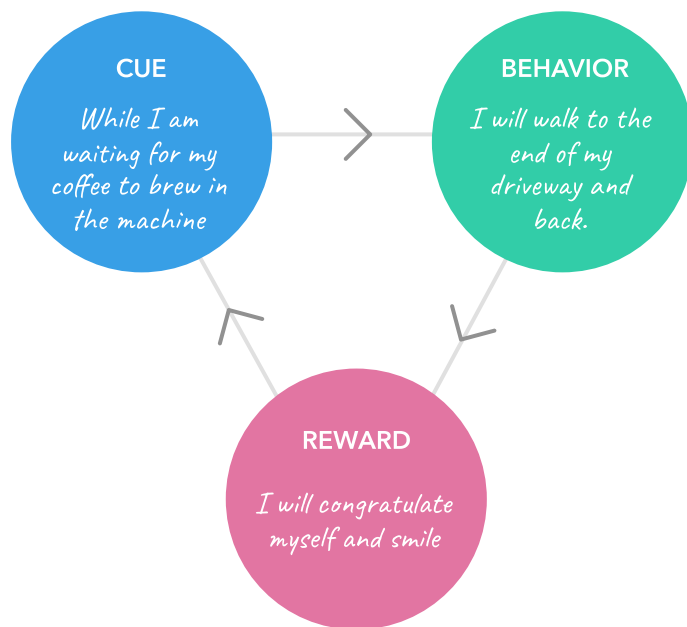
Celebration Ideas:

- Smile
- Say “awesome”, “nice”, or “woo-hoo”
- Fist bump
- Repeat a positive affirmation
- Make a sound like boom or ding-ding-ding
- Listen to the sound of a crowd roaring with applause
- Do a little dance

Design a Habit Recipe

Cooking up a habit recipe

Using the reward-based-learning diagram below, create your own habit recipe by filling in the cue, behavior, and reward.



Design a Habit Recipe

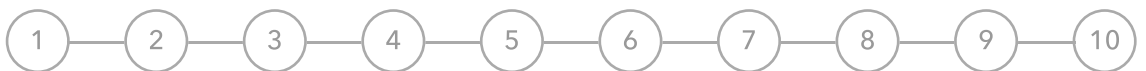
How will you celebrate?

Start Today

Take a moment right now to do your bite-sized behavior and celebrate. If it's not something you can do at this moment then create a calendar invite for yourself. This calendar invite will be a reminder to do your bite-sized behavior after the cue you shared above.

Assess your recipe

On a scale of 1 - 10, rate your confidence in starting this new behavior:



Group Activity

Identify the bite-sized behavior you are committing to and explain why.

Gauge your confidence level and strengths. If your confidence level was 7 or less, discuss some ways that you can make it more bite-sized to score 7 or higher.

If your confidence level was 8 or higher, what made it higher than a lower number like a 5?

What are ways that your group is increasing confidence levels in relation to starting new habits? As peers, how might you support each other in implementing healthy behaviors in your daily life?

What's Next?

As you begin to put your habit recipe in place, notice what happens. Is your desired behavior beginning to take root and flourish? If the answer is yes, then excellent. Time for more high-fives and woo-hoos. If not, then pay attention to what you need to adjust. In the wise words of BJ Fogg, "Think of your habits like a recipe. If the results aren't to your liking, then you need to change the ratios and fiddle with the ingredients, not beat yourself up or give up."

Calm Resources



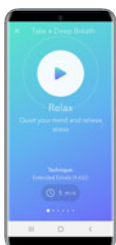
[Calm Check-ins](#)

You can find the Check-Ins by navigating to the home screen on the Calm App and selecting Check-Ins. This feature is designed to support you in developing and strengthening a Calm habit.



[Breaking Bad Habits Masterclass](#)

Join Dr. Judson Brewer, psychiatrist and world renowned addiction specialist, in this masterclass to learn how you can transform your life through proven techniques in overcoming bad habits.



[Breathing Bubble](#)

Use Calm's breath bubble for a quick reset. You can find the Breath Bubble by navigating to the home screen of the Calm App and selecting Breathe. This feature can be used anytime and provide you with the opportunity to pause, breathe, and reflect.

References

¹ <https://newsinhealth.nih.gov/2018/03/creating-healthy-habits>

² Fogg, B. J. (2020). Tiny habits: the small changes that change everything. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

³ Clear, James. Atomic habits: an easy & proven way to build good habits & break bad ones. Penguin: Avery, 2018.

⁴ Duhigg, Charles, author. The Power of Habit : Why We Do What We Do in Life and Business. New York :Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2014.



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for your life. Start today.

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