

# Give Bad Habits the Boot!

By Chris Widener

**E**verybody has bad habits. Everybody. Now, granted, some people have fewer than others and some people's bad habits are more grating than

those of others, but we all have them. What is great is that we don't have to! Imagine a life where you couldn't change. What kind of life would that be? But we can change, so let's get started!



There are two kinds of bad habits: those you know you have, but others may or may not know about; and those you don't know you have that everybody else knows you have! For the sake of everybody involved, we ought to get rid of them all, right?

Well, how can I get rid of a bad habit if I don't know I have it? It's simple, but hard: ask somebody to be brutally honest with you! You might think, 'Yeah, but I'll be embarrassed'. Would you rather everyone talk behind your back? Get up the courage and ask. Ask somebody who loves you and has your best interest in mind. Be gracious and don't defend yourself. Just accept what they say and work on it.

What about the bad habits we know about (which are all of them, once your good friend tells you about the ones you had missed yourself)? Those are the tough ones. How do I know they are tough? They must be tough if you know about them, and yet you still have them! If they weren't tough, they would be former bad habits! Got me? Good!

So, how do you break a bad habit? How do you give it the boot? Here are a few things that must be a part of the plan in order to see that it is gone forever!

## **You must want the bad habit to go!**

That's right: some people want their bad habits to stick around. I have seen grandparents choose alcohol over their grandchildren. I have seen smokers continue smoking while watching their parents die of emphysema. The first step is to go deep into the recesses of your heart and ask, 'Do I really want to give this up?'

- 1. You must want the bad habit to go!*
- 2. List all of the reasons you want to quit your bad habit.*
- 3. Make a choice.*
- 4. Take action.*
- 5. Tell somebody.*
- 6. Pick yourself up after failure.*
- 7. Reward yourself.*

#### **List all of the reasons you want to quit your bad habit**

Make them positive. Make the list long! Start with the really powerful and dramatic reasons, if you need to. Then memorise the list. Commit all those reasons to your memory. You are making connections between stopping the bad behaviour and the good things you will get from doing so.

If you want to lose weight, then picture yourself slim and looking good in skinny-people clothes! If you want to stop smoking, picture your wife actually kissing you, rather than sending you to the bathroom to brush your teeth first!

#### **Make a choice**

Once you've made the decision and listed your reasons, your choosing comes down to one thing: an act of the will. Choose to do it. Say to yourself throughout the day, 'I am choosing to...' Eisenhower rightly said, 'The history of free men is written not by chance but by choice, their choice'. It is your choice. You can write your history.

#### **Take action**

This point is tricky because there are two different philosophies about it. According to one, you must take massive action. Go all or nothing.

Using the weight loss example, you would go spend \$500 to join a gym, rework your schedule and hit the treadmill every day for a year. You would get rid of all fat in the house. This 'go all out' strategy works for some people.

Others would burn out this way, feel like failures, and be worse off than before. If you are one of these, you should start out slowly, taking baby steps, and working diligently toward a planned goal. This kind of person decides to start walking three days a week, and limits dessert to two nights a week, down from seven.

See how it works? Either way is acceptable—all or nothing, or slow and steady—as long as you get to the goal you have set.

#### **Tell somebody**

Your best ally is an accountability partner. Tell them your goal, and tell them your plan. Write it down for them, and have them ask you at regular intervals about your progress. This will prove invaluable!

#### **Pick yourself up after failure**

Inevitably, people have setbacks when they are trying to break bad habits and develop new ones. The key is to have setbacks, but not turnbacks!

Pick yourself up and get going again. You may plan to lose 30 pounds, and after losing fifteen, you eat a gallon of ice cream. When that happens, don't feel bad and give up! Reset your goal for another two weeks and get going again.

Chalk your setback up to experience! Say to yourself, 'Sometimes you win and sometimes you learn'.

#### **Reward yourself**

You should regularly congratulate yourself by rewarding yourself with some gift to yourself. Start with little gifts for small victories, and plan a big gift when you are finally, completely over the bad habit.

Is it that simple? Most of the time, no. Bad habits are hard to break. There are so many intangibles in changing behaviour, that it would be hard to cover them all in an article like this. But here is a simple and workable plan that will help you make great strides, if you are willing to apply the principles.

Get going! Give those bad habits the boot! Good luck!

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