

# Forming Healthy Habits

Check out this quick guide to building healthier habits!

A habit is defined as “a learned behavior pattern regularly followed until it has become almost involuntary.” Research has shown that 40% of people’s daily activities are performed each day in almost the exact same way. In “The Power of Habit,” the author, Peter Duhigg, describes a 3-step process to forming habits:

**Cue -> Routine -> Reward = Habit**

The **cue** is used as a prompt for your brain that tells you what habit to use.

The **routine** is how a habit influences what you do, think or feel.

The **reward** helps you place a value on the habit and determine whether it is worth remembering or not.

Peter Duhigg writes that since habits are simply how we respond to cues, they are neither bad nor good – instead, how we see a habit is based on the reward that comes from it. The good news is that we can change a habit if we do not like the reward or the side effects that we receive .

So how do we develop or change a habit? The answer lies with **cravings!** Once our habits become well practiced, our brains begin to *expect* the reward. Then, if we see a cue and do not receive the reward, we develop a craving. However, if a habit is not well practiced and we see a cue without receiving a reward, we will not develop the same craving. Cravings can be powerful tools that we can use to build (and keep) healthy habits or change unhealthy ones. For example, if we notice that we crave sugary treats throughout the workday, this may give us an idea that we have practiced a habit of eating unhealthy foods at the workplace and can work to change this habit!

Now, let’s say you want to create an exercise-focused habit of going to the gym in the morning. You might try this:

**CUE:** Keep your gym clothes by the door.

**ROUTINE:** This is the response you want to develop by seeing your cue, such as grabbing your gym clothes and heading straight to the gym.

**REWARD:** Feel rewarded with a refreshed, energetic, and mood boosting feeling or treat yourself to a green smoothie after each workout.



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Once this habit becomes well-practiced, you will begin to crave exercise (and/or the reward after), which will help keep you on track with your exercise goals! To help you practice habits that lead to better health, be sure to choose a healthy reward that you really want. This will keep you motivated.

Regardless of what healthy habit you may be working toward, scheduling time in your day to purposefully work on it will be helpful. Whether exercise, nutrition, mental health, or sleep-related, it is important to try to perform your new habit on a consistent basis. This will increase the likelihood that it will become a part of your daily routine.

Good luck!



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