



The “Big 5” of Habit Change

1. Be sparkingly clear about what you want

How will you know you’ve arrived if you don’t know what it looks like when you’re there? Granted, it might be your first time “there,” and it might look different than what you expected when you arrive. However, one doesn’t begin a trip without at least an idea about where s/he’s going.

Describe success in as much depth as you can. Use numbers whenever possible. Create images. Focus on the feelings of being successful. Use concrete descriptions.

Counter-productive examples:

- I want to be more organized.
- I will lose weight.

Positive examples:

- I will clean and arrange one drawer in my office every week until every drawer is completed.
- I will weight 175 pounds and wear a size 32 pair of pants comfortably.

2. Take ridiculously tiny steps.

Small steps done regularly will always generate more results than large steps done intermittently.

In other words, it’s better to walk a block and really do it than to swear you’ll run a mile and never get around to it.

Avoid saying “*I will try*” or referring to your lapses in the third person (such as “the weight is just not coming off”). If after saying, “*I will...*” you’re not sure you can, or you really will; then the step you chose is too large. Make it small enough so that you have no excuse to not do it.

If your inner critic is telling you’re not doing enough, you’re probably on track.

3. Embrace the rough patches

Just because the road has bumps doesn’t mean it’s not the correct road.

Difficult times don’t throw us off; it’s mistakenly believing that we wouldn’t have difficult times that throws us for a loop. If we think it’s a straight shot from here to there, when we hit a barrier we think, “It’s all over! I’ve lost my mojo.”

Even the best relationships cause some pain. However, we don’t dump our

partner just because we don't see eye-to-eye. We work through it. Expect that there will be difficult times – and expect you'll work through it.

Since 80% of setbacks are caused by the same couple of issues repeated over and over and over again, a rough patch – if handled correctly – gives us an opportunity to finally get past a long-term barrier we've had that's consistently held us back, probably causing relapses.

If we handle it well, we'll NEVER have to face it again.

4. Close the back door

Don't leave yourself an escape route.

Make it as easy as possible to move forward and as difficult as possible to stop. Clean your environment of triggers and replace it with support.

Examples:

- If your goal is to lose weight, put your scale, measuring cups, and journal right in plain view. Get rid of "red light foods." As soon as you lose a size, get rid of your old clothes. Keeping them "just in case..." usually turns out to be "it just so happened..."
- If your goal is to be more active, wear your activity monitor wherever you go. Put your walking shoes right in front of the door; better yet, get a second pair and keep them where you can see them. Look for opportunities to walk.

Too often, because we mistakenly believe we "failed" before, we keep our goals secret. That's a mistake. One of the best ways to close the back door is to tell anyone who cares about you what you're doing and how they can help.

If you decide to stop moving forward, that's your option, but after closing the back door, it becomes a conscious decision and you must "own it," rather than believing you were a victim and it "just happened."

Remember: Don't sneak into success; leap loudly with as much noise as you can make.

5. Get support

Let's be honest, if you could achieve your goals on your own, you would have already done so, right?

Nothing changes if nothing changes.

Each of us is at times a teacher and other times a student. In some areas, we show others the way forward. In other times, we must be guided.

There is no shame in learning and there is great courage in asking for help.

Reach out; there will always be a hand ready when you need it.

(If you don't like feeling indebted, you'll repay the favor later.)



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