

STICKY HABITS

*A simple way to create new habits
using sticky notes and a pen.*

Barney Matthews

Why are habits so important?

“We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence then, is not an act, but a habit” – Aristotle.

“First we make our habits. Then our habits make us.” – John Dryden.

What you do day in and day out ultimately determines your future. Exercising once will not get you fit. Exercising every day however, will. Writing one page will not make a book. Writing every day however, will. Studying once will not get you to pass the certification. Studying everyday however, will.

Studies have shown that habits comprise 40% of our daily actions. If a person develops good habits, good things will happen in their life. The great thing about habits is the changes happen without really having to 'think' because it becomes automatic.

The good news is new habits are actually simple to create. You just need sticky notes and a pen. The 3" x 3" adhesive note pads (also known as "Post-its" or "Stickies") work perfectly for creating habits.

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HABITS

The first step in creating a sticky habit is to decide on your goal. The change, or improvement you want the new habit to help you make. Then pick a habit that you can do every day that will help you achieve this goal.

If your goal is to lose weight, your habit could be to drink a glass of water before you eat, to use smaller plates or to go for a walk at lunchtime.

If your goal is to write a book, your habit could be to write for 20 minutes every night after dinner.

If your goal is to pass a certification, your habit could be to read 5 pages of a study book a day.

As you are thinking about a new habit to create, keep the following attributes of a good habit in mind. A 'good habit' is defined as one you have the best chance of being able to build successfully.

Good habits are:

- Small.
- Simple.
- Sustainable.

Small: Good habits are 'small' because research has shown that people are more successful in sticking to their habits if they start small and build

them up over time. Think about it, are you more likely to go from never running at all to running 5 miles overnight? Not likely. You are far more likely to go from never running to walking half a mile, to walking a mile quickly, to jogging a mile, to jogging 2 miles and so on. Start small, make that a habit and then grow it over time.

Simple: Good habits are 'simple' because you want to remove as many obstacles to creating your new habit as possible. If you want to eat more healthily, you could create a spreadsheet to track how many vegetables you eat at each meal every day or you could just decide to fill half your plate with vegetables. If you go the

spreadsheet route you'd have to also remember to record your vegetable consumption as went through the day and then you'd have to remember to enter it in your spreadsheet. Go simple!

Sustainable: Good habits are 'sustainable' because you want to be able to do this new habit everyday, everywhere you go. If your new habit was to use the stairclimber machine at the gym but you travel for work every other week you aren't going to be able to sustain this habit for very long.

You could make your habit to workout for 20 minutes a day. You can find a bodyweight workout you can do anywhere or you can use the stairclimber machine when you are able to get to the gym and do something else when you travel.

TRIGGERS

Once you have a small, simple and sustainable habit, now you need to pick a trigger for your habit, something that will cause you to do your habit. It is difficult to create a whole new habit or routine from scratch. It is much easier to create a new habit if you can find a trigger for your habit, and thus your chances of success are far greater.

Triggers are typically things like:

- An existing habit.
- A specific time of day.
- An alarm or calendar reminder.

Some examples of triggers are:

- After your shower.
- Before you eat breakfast.
- After you brush your teeth.
- After you get dressed.
- Driving to work.
- When you make your lunch.
- After you drink your first coffee.
- When an alarm goes off.
- When a reminder pops up.
- At lunchtime.
- After you have eaten dinner at night
- At 8.00pm.

Sticky Habits is all about creating new habits. If you have an existing habit you want to stop, then replace the existing habit with the new one. For example if you wanted to stop smoking, and you could replace the smoking habit with a new habit of chewing gum. Your trigger would be the old habit of lighting a cigarette. Or if you wanted to stop snacking during TV commercials you could replace the existing snacking habit with a new one of running on the spot for the duration of the commercial. The trigger would be the commercial.

Decide what the trigger for your habit is going to be and **write your habit and trigger on a sticky note in the present tense.**

For example *"I workout at 6.00am for 20 minutes every day."*

Place this note near your trigger to serve as a reminder to do your new habit.

EXAMPLE

***I workout
at 6.00 am
for 20 minutes
every day.***

PROGRESS

You want to make this habit something that you continue doing for an extended period of time. Commit to doing your habit every day for 30 days. Research has shown that this is how long it typically takes to create a new habit. Easier habits can actually take slightly less time to form but almost every habit can be formed within this timeframe.

Draw a small grid with 30 squares on your third note and mark down every day you do your habit.

Commit to never missing more than one day in a row. The mind doesn't like to see breaks in a pattern so by seeing your growing chain of

successful days it will encourage you to keep going. It's also a great motivator to see how many days you have already done.

EXAMPLE Workout habit

X	X	X	X	X	X	X
X	X					

SUMMARY

To summarize Sticky Habits:

- Pick a small, simple and sustainable habit.
- Do the new habit at the trigger every day.
- Record every day you do your habit on the sticky note with a grid.
- Commit to never missing more than one day in a row.
- Stick to your habit for just one month initially.

Habit suggestions

If you are unsure of what habit to pick, a study on the habits of 400 people earning more than \$150,000 found the following:

81% keep a todo list.

44% wake up more than 3 hours before work.

63% listen to audio books on their commute.

79% network with others in their field 5 hours or more a month.

88% read 30+ minutes a day.

76% exercise 4 or more times a week.

70% watch less than 1 hour of TV a day.

67% have a written down goal they work on daily.

About the author:

Barney Matthews is a writer, speaker and cookie lover. Using ebooks, talks and web posts he likes to inspire people with positivity. Originally from England he now lives in Vermont, USA with his family. Find him on the web at:

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