

Why are Habits so Challenging to Break or Change

1. Habits operate in a vicious cycle and are maintained by a need that is not being fulfilled.
2. Excessive eating maybe a desire for satisfying the body at an emotional level.
3. Smoking might be an escape from the daily pressures of life or to avoid stress
4. Willpower never works because it has resistance built into it. The more you want to change a habit without knowing what the need is that you are not fulfilling, the more energy is place on this perpetual cycle. It just continues without change.
5. The best attitude is to avoid the battle, ***don't fight resistance***, be gentle!
6. Reduce the habit to its lowest denominator, what's the need not fulfilled?

Changing UnHealthy Habits & Creating Healthy Ones

Habits can be broken down into several elements:

- 1. All habits are learned.**
2. They tend to operate on an unconscious level.
- 3. They involve the repetition of similar behavior at regular intervals.**
4. They perpetuate and reinforce themselves.
- 5. They are developed to fulfill a need and the development of habits is one way of coping with them.**
6. Once a habit has been established, any attempt to disrupt it meets with resistance. The resistance is felt like stress when we force ourselves to behave differently. The stress results from the fact that habits are created to fulfill a need and when we brake the habit the need still remains unfulfilled.
- 7. Habits can be both positive and life-affirming or negative and life-denying.**

How to Break a Habit

Step 1: Choose the Habit You Want to Change

- 1. Make a list of all the reasons why you want to “break” this habit.**
- 2. Then narrow the list down to the 5 most important reasons, be specific!**

Examples:

I would be healthier if I stopped overeating / My health is failing

I have less energy during the day / My family needs me to stick around

It's expensive to keep smoking / I feel depressed when I keep doing it.

Step 2: Make a list of 5 reasons why you **don't want** to break this habit

1. Choose 5 reasons why you don't want to break this habit and maintain habit.
2. ***What needs are this habit fulfilling?***
3. ***What's the payoff, what am I getting out of this behavior?***
4. Be honest with yourself and have a willingness to find the truth.

Examples:

I get a warm feeling when I smoke / It's relaxing / It helps with stress

I enjoy the comfort of eating late at night / Food gives me a sense of safety

Step 3: Make the list of what needs that are being fulfilled.

1. Make this third list of all the needs that might be fulfilled through this habit.
2. ***Narrow this list down to 1 or 2 most important needs.***
3. ***Don't over analyze what these needs are, feel them without censoring.***
4. After deciding your 1 or 2 most important needs, think of all the ways that you could fulfill these 1 or 2 important needs.

Examples:

Smoking helps me to relieve stress in social situation or when I get upset.

Eating helps me feel secure and safe. / It adds to my self-confidence.

Step 4: Take a step back and get an overview of the structure of habits.

1. Notice that habits are adapted to help fulfill a need, while noticing the pain it is causing you.
2. When you are able to substitute an alternative behavior which will fulfill these needs, then the habit will no longer be necessary.
3. Remind yourself that the substitution of one form of behavior for another will not be brought about by denial, suppression or resistance.
4. Be positive and avoid any negative feelings towards yourself if changing this habit is a bit more challenging than you might have planned originally.