

How to Create Daily Habits as Consistent as Brushing Your Teeth

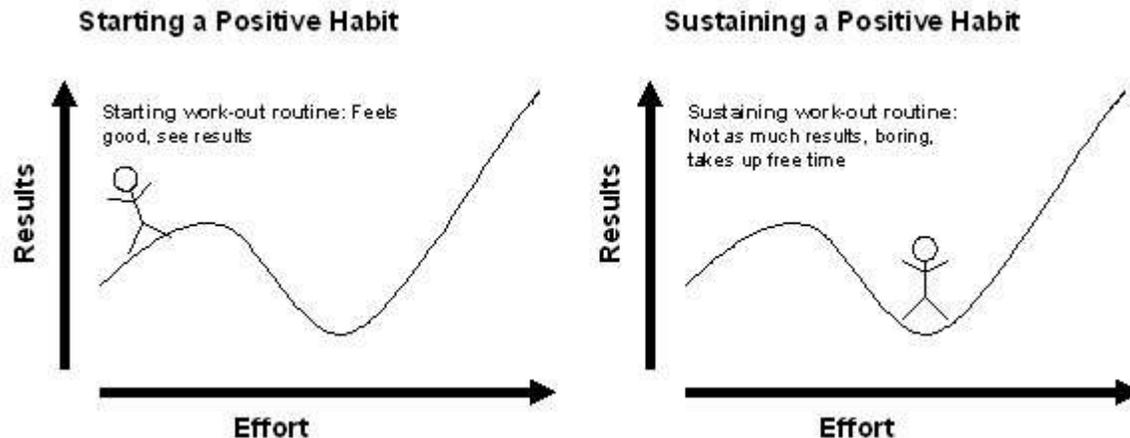
Think of any positive daily habit you would like to acquire. Daily exercise. Daily meditation. Spending more time with your kids. Now imagine two potential versions of yourself- one has acquired that daily habit for the long-term, the other has not. Which version of yourself would you prefer to be? If you chose the one with the positive daily habit, then why haven't you already acquired it? What is stopping you? Most likely, accountability, acceptance, and 21 days.

We first make our habits and then our habits make us.

John Dryden

You have already acquired the daily habit of brush your teeth each morning. When you were a kid, your parents probably got after you if you didn't brush them. This habit is now so deeply ingrained in you, that if you accidentally forgot to brush them one day, you might feel a bit grossed out, and your mouth wouldn't feel clean.

As an adult, when you try to acquire a new habit for the long-term, it may seem more difficult. For example, exercise routines can be tough to maintain. Most of us can easily start a work-out routine for a short period of time. It feels very good to work out at first. But what happens? Excuses. You get too tired. You have no time. You enjoyed working out at first, but it became boring.



Sustaining a positive daily habit, such as a daily workout routine, can be difficult in the long-term

The problem with only acquiring positive habits in the short-run is that you put in a lot of time and effort, but you don't get to keep the results. It's like giving up on the last leg of the race. You are so close, but you let excuses get in the way. Why did you even start in the first place if you don't get to keep the results?

Instead of focusing on cultivating self-discipline, introduce rituals similar to brushing your teeth.

Incremental change is better than ambitious failure. Success feeds off of itself.

Tal Ben-Shahar

Take a moment to think about a positive habit you tried to acquire for the long-term in the past, but only kept for the short-term. What stopped you? Chances are, the habit never became a ritual.

Tips to Creating Daily Habits for the Long-Term

Here are three tips to creating a new daily habit for the long-term:

1) You must practice your new habit each day consistently for the first 21 days

You've probably heard this one before, but scientifically, it has been proven as true. If you don't perform your new daily habit every single day for 21 days, chances are, you won't keep it. It will never become as ingrained as something like brushing your teeth. It is easier to stay consistent during the first 21 days if you perform the habit at the same time each day.

2) To succeed, you must be accountable to yourself

You aren't always going to have someone else to be accountable to. So be accountable to yourself! I've found it is easiest to do this by keeping a daily log tracking my progress in maintaining positive habits.

3) To succeed, you must accept yourself

Should you give up the first day you don't perform your positive habit? Of course not- you are only human. Accept yourself in your present moment, while understanding that your future self will be better-able to maintain the positive habit. Then move on without looking back.

That's it. Now you get to keep the results of your positive habit for the long-term. I've tried this, and it works. After 21 days of practicing the new daily habit, if you keep yourself accountable, and are accepting of your mistakes, you will succeed. It's best to try it with one habit at a time. Your daily habit will then become so ingrained in your daily schedule that not performing it will be like not brushing your teeth.

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