

The Power of Habit:

7 Steps to Successful Habits





You Are What You Do

“Habit my friend, is practice long pursued, that at last becomes the man himself.” (Evenus)

Many years ago, I began asking the question, “Why are some people more successful than others?” This question became the focal point of a lifelong search, taking me to more than 80 countries and through many thousands of books and articles on the subjects of philosophy, psychology, religion, metaphysics, history, economics, and business. Over time, the answers came to me, one by one, and gradually crystallized into a clear picture and a simple explanation.

It is this: You are where you are and what you are because of yourself. Everything you are today, or ever will be in the future, is up to you. Your life today is the sum total result of your choices, decisions and actions up to this point.

You can create your own future by changing your behaviors. You can make new choices and decisions that are more consistent with the person you want to be and the things you want to accomplish with your life.

The Power of Habit

Perhaps the most important discovery in the fields of psychology and success is that fully 95 percent of everything that you think, feel, do and achieve is the result of habit. Beginning in childhood, you have developed a series of conditioned responses that lead you to react automatically and unthinkingly in almost every situation.

To put it simply, successful people have “success habits” and unsuccessful people do not. Successful, happy, healthy, prosperous men and women easily, automatically and consistently do and say the right things in the right way at the right time. As a result, they accomplish ten and twenty times as much as average people who have not yet learned these habits and practiced these behaviors.

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The Definition of Success

People often ask me to define success, and my favorite definition is: “Success is the ability to live your life the way you want to live it, doing what you most enjoy, surrounded by people who you admire and respect.”

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In the pages ahead, you will learn how to develop the habits shared by the most successful people on the planet. Men and women who go from rags to riches in one generation. Leaders who stop at nothing. What is it that separates their success from the masses, but more importantly, how can you do the same? Read on to learn how to think more effectively, make better decisions, and take more purposeful actions than other people.

One of the most important goals you must achieve to be happy and successful in life is the development of your own character. You want to become an excellent person in every respect. You want to become the kind of person that others look up to and admire. You want to become a leader in your community, and a role model for personal excellence to all the people around you.

In each case, the decisive factors in the achievement of each of these goals that we all hold in common is the development of the specific habits that lead automatically and inevitably to the results that you want to achieve.



Make it Happen

“Thoughts lead on to purposes; purposes go forth in action; actions form habits; habits decide character; and character fixes our destiny.” (Tryon Edwards)

Almost everything you are or will be will be determined by your thoughts, feelings and behaviors. The key to becoming a great person, and living a great life, is for you to develop the habits of success that lead inevitably to your achieving everything that is possible for you.

New Habit Pattern Development

How long does it take to develop a new habit? The time period can be any length from a single second to several years. The speed of new habit pattern development is largely determined by the intensity of the emotion that accompanies the decision to begin acting in a particular way.

According to the experts, it takes about 21 days to form a habit pattern of medium complexity. By this, we mean simple habits such as getting up earlier at a specific hour, exercising each morning before you start out, listening to audio programs in your car, going to bed at a certain hour, being punctual for appointments, planning every day in advance, starting with your most important tasks each day, or completing your tasks before you start something else. These are habits of medium complexity that can be quite easily developed in 14-21 days through practice and repetition.

Seven Steps to a New Habit

How do you develop a new habit? Over the years, a simple, powerful, proven seven-step methodology has been determined for new habit development. It is very much like a recipe for preparing a dish in the kitchen. You can use it to develop any habit that you desire. With practice, you will find it easier and easier to develop the habits that you want to incorporate into your personality.

1. First, make a decision.

Deciding what habit will make the biggest impact on your success is crucial. Don't confuse urgent tasks with important ones. Your inbox will always be full, so schedule time for the items that truly will take you to the next level so they don't get overlooked by daily email or "kitchen fires."

Later in this eBook, we will discuss specific habits that lead to success, but everyone is unique. Be sure to make a list of all of the habits you feel can make an impact on your goals, then prioritize them.

Whatever your goal is, decide clearly that you are going to begin acting in a specific way 100 percent of the time, whenever that that behavior is required. For example, if you decide to rise early and exercise each morning, set your clock for a specific time, and when the alarm goes off, immediately get up, put on your exercise clothes and begin your exercise session.

2. Second, never allow an exception to your new habit pattern during the formative stages.

Exceptions are the root of all new habit demise. It's easy to rationalize exceptions when they seem isolated. Important interruptions come in many forms such as unexpected visitors, technical malfunctions or simply a late night out. If you let one exception creep into your plan, it becomes easy to let another slip by, and soon your whole goal is derailed. Commit to the goal without exception.

Don't make excuses or rationalizations. Don't let yourself off the hook. If you resolve to get up at 6:00 a.m. each morning, discipline yourself to get up at 6:00 a.m., every single morning until this becomes automatic.

3. Third, tell others that you are going to begin practicing a particular behavior.

It is amazing how much more disciplined and determined you will become when you know that others are watching you to see if you have the willpower to follow through on your resolution.

It's easier to allow exceptions or deviations from your goal when you are the only one that knows. If you have to announce partial failure or explain something to others in a public fashion, stretching the truth is suddenly not an option.

Tell one, tell all. You also will become more likely to stay on track with the support of those who want to see you succeed.

4. Fourth, visualize yourself performing or behaving in a particular way in a particular situation.

The more often you visualize and imagine yourself acting as if you already had the new habit, the more rapidly this new behavior will be accepted by your subconscious mind and become automatic.

The same muscles are activated whether you are physically or mentally imagining a task: this means you actually derive the benefits of practice in both situations. This even applies to physical behaviors like golf or dance.

You can bridle your fears in your visualizations before you venture out into the real world. By visualizing, you also allow yourself to problem solve for expected obstacles and be ready for them when they happen in reality.

5. Fifth, create an affirmation that you repeat over and over to yourself.

This repetition dramatically increases the speed at which you develop the new habit. For example, you can say something like; "I get up and get going immediately at 6:00 a.m. each morning!" Repeat these words the last thing before you fall asleep. In most cases, you will automatically wake up minutes before the alarm clock goes off, and soon you will need no alarm clock at all.

It's true that what you focus on grows. Simply filling your mind with more of what you want to achieve is an undeniable strategy for changing your mindset. Directly and intentionally, change your thought patterns.

6. Sixth, resolve to persist in the new behavior until it is so automatic and easy that you actually feel uncomfortable when you do not do what you have decided to do.

This is a true test of transformation. While personality is arguably inherent, anything is learnable and you can change any behavior if you are committed. Some goals take hours to change while others take years. Only you will know when you have fully embodied the change and have reached your goal. And only when you stay strong and committed to your goal will you no longer gravitate towards old, automatic behaviors, and finally reap the benefits of the new, desirable behavior.

7. Seventh, and most important, give yourself a reward of some kind for practicing in the new behavior.

Why is this important? Each time you reward yourself, you reaffirm and reinforce the behavior. Soon you begin to associate, at an unconscious level, the pleasure of the reward with the behavior. You set up your own force field of positive consequences that you unconsciously look forward to as the result of engaging in the behavior or habit that you have decided upon.

Even if you believe you are devoted to your goals, rewarding yourself is insurance to keep you going even in face of obstacles. At minimum, it will be a fun practice that underscores the respect you deserve for your hard work.





The Habits of Success

“Self-command is not only itself a great virtue, but from it all the other virtues seem to derive their principle luster.” (Adam Smith)

Success may appear in society as leadership, extraordinary sales numbers, positive press or perhaps an impressive industry award. But what are the daily habits, the thoughts, the behaviors of those who rise to great success? What happens inside the mind of those we admire? How are the actions they take different than those who don't achieve their goals? In the pages ahead, uncover the secrets of those who have created a system for success through nothing less than deliberate mastery of nine key habits.

Self-Discipline

The most important habit you can develop for success, achievement and happiness is the habit of self-discipline. Perhaps the best definition of self-discipline comes from Elbert Hubbard, “Self-discipline is the ability to make yourself do what you should do, when you should do it, whether you feel like it or not.”

The habit of self-discipline is closely tied to the Law of Control that says, “You feel happy about yourself to the degree to which you feel you are in control of your own life.”

Self-discipline is the key to self-mastery and self-control. The more capable you become of disciplining yourself to do what you have decided to do, whether you feel like it or not, the more positive and powerful you will feel.

There is a direct relationship between self-discipline and self-esteem. The more you discipline yourself to behave in the manner that you have decided, the more you like and respect yourself. The more positive and confident you will feel. The stronger and more in charge of your life and situation you become. This is why the happiest, most successful and most respected men and women in our society are all men and women of great self-control, self-mastery and self-discipline.

Become a Lifelong Optimist

Perhaps the most helpful mental habit you can develop is the habit of optimism. Optimists are usually the happiest, healthiest, most successful and most influential people in every group and society.

If you become what you think about most of the time, what is it that optimists think about most of the time? In its simplest terms, optimists think about what they want and how to get it, most of the time. They think about where they are going and how to get there. The very idea of thinking about what they want makes them happy and positive. It increases their energy and releases their creativity. It motivates and stimulates them to perform at higher levels.

Pessimists, on the other hand, are the opposite. They think and talk about what they don't want most of the time. They think about the people they don't like, the problems that they are having, or have had in the past, and especially, they think about who is to blame for their particular situation. And the more they think about the things they don't want and who is to blame for their problems, the more negative and angry they become. The more negative they become, the faster they attract into their lives exactly those things that they do not want to happen.

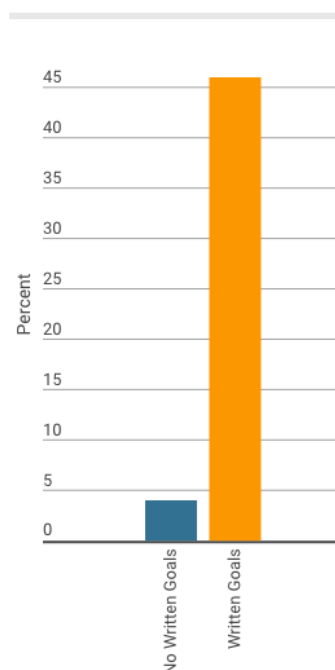
Think About Your Goals

Goal-orientation is a second quality or way of thinking practiced by optimists and all successful people. In future-orientation, you develop a clear, ideal image of what you want to accomplish sometime in the future. With goal-orientation, you crystallize that image into specific, measurable, detailed goals and objectives that you will need to accomplish to achieve that ideal future vision.

Successful people soon develop the habits of personal strategic planning. They sit down and make a list of exactly what they want to accomplish in the short, medium and long term. They then use a powerful, seven-part goal setting methodology to create blueprints and plans of action that they follow every day.

Once you develop the habit of setting goals and making plans for their accomplishment, it will become as natural for you as breathing. By following a proven goal setting process, you will increase the likelihood of achieving your goals by as much as ten times, by 1000 percent or more. This is just not a theory; it has been proven and demonstrated on a national basis.

New Year's Resolution Achievement



USA Today reported on a study of people who had set New Year's Resolutions the year before. They found of the people who had set New Year's Resolutions, but not in writing, only 4 percent had followed through. But of those people who had written down their New Year's Resolutions, fully 46 percent had carried them out. This is a difference in success rates of more than 1100 percent!

The habit of doing something every single day that moves you toward an important goal develops within you the power of momentum. Daily action deepens your belief that the goal is achievable, and activates the Law of Attraction. As a result, you begin moving faster and faster toward your goal, and your goal begins moving faster and faster toward you.

I have spoken to people all over the world, for many years, who have told me that the habit of taking action every day on one or more of their major goals has been life-transforming. They have told me that this single habit has been more responsible for their success than any other idea they ever learned. Try it for yourself and see.

Set Your Goals Each Day

One of the most important habits you can develop is the habit of daily goal setting. Daily goal setting is quite simple. Get a spiral notebook to write your goals in, and resolve to keep it nearby for the rest of your life. Each morning, before you start out, open your spiral notebook and start a new page. I always begin with the words "My goals are the following: . . ."

You then write down your top 10-15 goals in the present tense, as though you have already achieved them. Your subconscious mind is only activated by commands that are stated in the present, positive, personal tense. So instead of writing a goal such as, "I am going to lose weight in the months ahead," you would write instead, "I weigh xxx number of pounds by (a specific date.)"

Instead of saying, "I will earn more money over the next year," you would say, "I earn X number of dollars by such and such a date."

The more specific you can be in terms of what you want and when you want to achieve it, expressed in the positive, present tense, and beginning with the word "I," the more powerful the effect will be on your subconscious mind. Goals written and stated in this way activate the Laws of Expectation and Attraction. They cause you to develop new beliefs about what is possible for you. They activate the Laws of Emotion and Correspondence. They increase your energy and stimulate your creativity.

Positive, personal, present tense goals, written down repeatedly each day, activate your subconscious and superconscious minds and step on the accelerator of your own potential. As a result, you start to move more rapidly toward the achievement of your goals and they begin to move more rapidly toward you.

Identify Key Professional Skills

Professional success requires that you make a list of the key skills that are essential for success in your field. There are usually only about five to seven skills, or key result areas, that determine most of the success that one achieves in any field of endeavor. Your first job is to identify these key skills and write them down.

Here is an interesting discovery. You have achieved your level of success in your field today because of your talent and ability in certain key areas. But at the same time, you are being held back by your weaknesses in other areas. The rule is that your weakest key skill determines the height of your results, and your income. In other words, you could be excellent at six out of seven key result areas, but your weakness in the seventh area will determine your overall results and rewards in that job or field.

You therefore ask yourself this question, "What one skill, if I developed and did it consistently in an excellent fashion, would have the greatest positive impact on my career?"

This is one of the most important questions that you ask and answer throughout your career. You must develop the habit of continually identifying and working on your weakest key skill. Bringing up your ability in this one area will usually have a greater and more immediate impact on your results than anything else you can do.

Commit To Lifelong Learning

Another key habit of thinking and acting practiced by top people is growth orientation. It is the high road to excellent performance and essential to developing the habit of optimism. This method of thinking and living is the foundation of excellence orientation, and is essential for you to develop if you want to move into the top 10 percent of your field.

Growth orientation requires that you develop the habit of continuous learning, the habit of continuous personal and professional development. Just as you exercise physically on a regular basis to remain fit and healthy, you must exercise mentally on a daily basis to become better and better in your chosen field.

Merely reading a book every now and then is enough. Truly successful people embrace a deeper, lifelong attitude of learning and regularly grow their knowledge through three methods. These methods include waking early each morning to read 30-60 minutes in their field, learning from experts at seminars and conferences a few times a year, and making use of commuting time to listen to audio books. The average person spends 500 to 1000 hours each year in his or her car. This is the equivalent of three to six months of 40-hour weeks, or the equivalent of one or two university semesters.

Adopting a mindset of continuous learning enables average people to become top performers in their fields. It enables people to rise from poverty and frustration to affluence and success. It increases your intelligence and creativity and puts you onto the fast track in your career. It is one of the best habits you can ever develop, and the pay-off from continuous learning will last you all the days of your life.

What You See Is What You Will Be

The most powerful affirmation or message that you can send from your conscious mind to your subconscious mind is a visualization or mental image. Develop the habit of creating clear, positive, exciting pictures of yourself performing at your best, and of your goals as if they were already achieved.

Each time you create a mental image in your conscious mind, you send a message that activates your subconscious mind, triggers the Law of Attraction, stimulates your creativity, and moves you toward the realization of that mental picture in your external world.

Positive, successful people make a habit of continually visualizing the outcomes that they desire, thereby programming their subconscious minds and shaping their self-image and their external performance.

Be Around the Right People

Make it a habit to only associate with the kind of people that you like, admire, respect and want to be like. Do not drink coffee with whoever is sitting there. Do not go out for lunch with whoever is standing at the door. Do not socialize after work with whoever invites you. Be very conscientious and clear about the kind of people that you are going to allow to influence your thinking and feeling by their conversations and opinions.

Dr. David McClelland found that fully your “reference group” would determine as much as 95 percent of your success or failure in life. These are the people that you habitually associate with and consider yourself to be one of. These can be members of your family, your coworkers, members of your political party, church or social organizations. The fact is that, “Birds of a feather flock together.” Or as Zig Ziglar says, “You can’t fly with the eagles if you continue to scratch with the turkeys.”

Take Initiative

The American Management Association reported on a study of managers who had been divided into two groups, those whose careers has flattened out and those whose careers were moving upward and onward at a rapid rate. They interviewed both groups to try to determine the differences that accounted for their relative levels of success and failure.

What they finally concluded was that it was not education, experience, background, networking or intelligence. The critical difference between success and failure was contained in the habit of taking the initiative. Managers and executives who were on the fast track were constantly moving out of their comfort zone and taking the initiative to try new things in new areas.

On the other hand, managers who were being continually passed over for promotion were continually waiting for someone to come along and tell them what to do. Once they had been given clear instructions, they seemed to be quite competent at carrying out their responsibilities. But the idea of initiating in the first place was alien to them.





You Can Do It

Once you have defined your ideal future, set and determined your goals and plans, developed a strategy for achieving excellence in your field, and committed yourself to continuous learning, develop the habit of moving quickly and taking the initiative in each area of your life that is important to you. Instead of waiting for things to happen, develop the habit of making things happen. Instead of waiting for things to get better, take the initiative to change or improve whatever situation you find yourself in.

If you have learned something that is important to you in these pages, or if you have an idea about something that you can do immediately that can improve some part of your life, resolve to take action on it immediately. Do it now. Develop a sense of urgency. Resolve to become known as the kind of person who moves fast on any new idea or possibility. This can be one of the most important habits you ever develop.

There is only one you. And you are in a continual state of growth and evolution, shedding old ideas and habits and developing new ones. It doesn't matter where you are coming from; all that really matters is where you are going. And where you are going is only limited by your own imagination.



Action Exercises

1. Review the nine success habits described in this eBook. Select the one that you think stands to make the most impact on your life. Now take this habit and work through the seven steps to creating a new habit process above.
2. Commit to the habit of self-discipline by not allowing exceptions within the first 90 days of developing a new habit.
3. Experience the power of the habit of optimism some day this week. Select one thing you want in your future, then commit to actively thinking about it at least six times throughout the day.
4. Develop the habit of being goal-orientated by selecting one main goal, making a plan for its accomplishment, and then working on it every day.
5. Develop the habit of daily goals by rewriting your goals in a spiral notebook each morning before you set out.
6. Identify the top five to seven skills of success in your field and write them down. Which one are you weakest in? Use the seven step process to develop a habit that will help you develop this skill. (e.g., If the key skill is writing, identify a way to practice writing and walk through the seven steps to practice this daily.)
7. Develop the habit of continuous learning by reading, listening to audio programs and attending seminars as a normal and natural part of your life.
8. Develop the habit of visualization by imagining your ideal future in your business or personal life, and working toward it.
9. Think about where you can be around more people of success in your field, and people who inspire you in general. Schedule time to be with these people in the next month.
10. Develop the habit of taking initiative. The next time there is an opportunity in your work to take the lead on a project, move out of your comfort zone and step up to take the lead.

“If you can win complete mastery over self, you will easily master all else. To triumph over self is the perfect victory.” (Thomas A. Kempis)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Brian Tracy is Chairman and CEO of Brian Tracy International, a company specializing in the training and development of individuals and organizations. Brian's goal is to help you achieve your personal and business goals faster and easier than you ever imagined.

Brian Tracy has consulted for more than 1,000 companies and addressed more than 5,000,000 people in 5,000 talks and seminars throughout the US, Canada and 70 other countries worldwide. As a Keynote speaker and seminar leader, he addresses more than 250,000 people each year.

He has studied, researched, written and spoken for 30 years in the fields of economics, history, business, philosophy and psychology. He is the top selling author of over 70 books that have been translated into dozens of languages.

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He speaks to corporate and public audiences on the subjects of Personal and Professional Development, including the executives and staff of many of America's largest corporations. His exciting talks and seminars on Leadership, Selling, Self-Esteem, Goals, Strategy, Creativity and Success Psychology bring about immediate changes and long-term results.

Prior to founding his company, Brian Tracy International, Brian was the Chief Operating Officer of a \$265 million dollar development company. He has had successful careers in sales and marketing, investments, real estate development and syndication, importation, distribution and management consulting. He has conducted high level consulting assignments with several billion-dollar plus corporations in strategic planning and organizational development.

He has traveled and worked in 107 countries on six continents, and speaks four languages. Brian is happily married and has four children. He is active in community and national affairs, and is the President of three companies headquartered in Solana Beach, California.

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