

One-Page Summary

Which Habits to Create to Set You Apart From the Crowd

Researchers have found that there are seven habits that you can create to support your mental health. They don't mean improve your mental health just a little bit. They mean a lot. This study found that people who maintained most of the healthy habits they identified — five or more — had a 57% lower risk of depression.

Classroom Exercise

One way to support healthy dancer lifestyle habits is to encourage them to attach one habit to another more established habit.

Ask dancers to brainstorm some habits they would all like to create and then choose established habits to attach them to. For instance, they could attach changing into pointe shoes to drinking water or choose to practice one-footed relevés while waiting in the hallway for class. Check in every couple of weeks to see how it's going!



Understanding the Habit Loop

If you've read any of James Clear's or Charles Duhigg's books on habits (we highly recommend them both), you will know that habits happen in a loop process. There are three parts of the loop - a cue, a routine, and a reward. The more you loop around this circle, the more ingrained a habit becomes - it's more automatic, less brain power is used, (and the harder it is to change it). One of the most effective ways to change a habit is to keep the cue and reward the same and swap out the routine.

How Long Does a New Habit Take to Form?

Philippa Lally, in a study published in the European Journal of Social Psychology, says a habit can take anywhere from 18 to 254 days to solidify, but on average, it takes 66 days. However, the likelihood that a habit will form is largely dependent on environment. For instance, a person might be more likely to eat healthy foods if they live with other people who stock the cabinets with healthy options rather than someone who prefers "junk food".

Seven Healthy Habits for Mental Health

You didn't think we'd leave you hanging without telling you the seven habits, did you? They are: getting enough sleep, exercising, eating good food, connecting with community, limiting alcohol, refraining from smoking, and limiting sedentary time. When it comes to dancers, it might also be helpful to link these habits to how they can improve their dancing as well.