

The power of routine



Your brain is designed to follow routines. It loves to learn something and then do it automatically. Because your brain's main job is to protect you from danger, it only makes sense that once your brain learns something that works, it will tend to keep doing it that way to avoid any risk of danger. For example, the route you drive to work has always successfully gotten you to work, why risk another route? The kind of beer you love always tastes good and helps you "loosen up", why risk another brand? The way you wash your body in the shower is working fine (shampoo hair first, then rinse, then soap upper body, then rinse, etc.) why make an effort to learn a new way when the current way is automatic. Thinking is effort, effort is pain, and your brain automatically avoids pain. Think of the routines in your life as "mowed paths" through a forest. Why would you want to forge new paths

when you have the old perfectly fine paths to keep going down? If you find yourself "not liking" most things different or new, you are being held hostage by your brain's natural love for routine!

You are the sum of your routines

Just by looking at someone you can tell some of their routines. You can see if they routinely lift weights, smoke, exercise, overeat, or spend time outside. **You BECOME the routines you follow.** So to become something new, you must change your routines.

Routines are not easy to change

Because routines are "invisible", we don't see the powerful hold they have on our lives. We don't see how darn hard it is to break out of a routine. Even routines as unimportant as where you park at work, powerfully controls you even after parking in the same spot for a few days. When you come to work and someone is in "your spot" you feel upset because now you have to find a different spot! Think about how stupid that is. If you get upset and feel angry because you have to change to a new parking spot, imagine how your brain will react to changing from the years-old routine of not exercising regularly to regular exercise? Imagine how your brain will reject going to the gym at 5:30pm when your routine used to be going to the comfort of

your home at 5:30! Imagine all the routines in your life (how you cook, what you eat, when you eat, portion sizes, etc.) that will need to change and the massive signal your brain will send you to keep going down the old familiar path and reject forging a new path!

This is the BIG problem when it comes to weight loss—getting past the power of your routines!

Forging new routines

Forging new routines requires:

1. **Patience and Understanding.** Know how your brain loves routines and understand that it will be sending you signals in the form of emotions to keep your old routines. Think of how a child wants to hold on to the old routine of using his Sippy cup or old “Blanky”. Your emotional attachment to your routines is just as powerful and just as silly as drinking out of a Sippy cup at age 10! When it comes to changing routines, weaning off the old routine is better than cold turkey. This requires patience.
2. **Gradual reinforced action.** Remembering the Law of Reinforcement, you’ll understand why going “cold turkey” from your old routine to a new routine usually doesn’t work. *This massive change is massively painful and the new routine gets associated with massive pain.* By gradually weaning yourself off the old routine and onto the new routine, you’ll have much less pain and thus you’ll better be able to focus on the enjoyment of the new routine and **associate pleasure to the new routine**—which is necessary to make it stick as your new routine! The challenge with this is having the patience to do it this way. Most people want results fast and thus feel and experience lots of negative reinforcement causing failure!
3. **Train your brain to like change.** When you were a kid your world was constantly changing. You went to a new grade each year, you got new toys several times a year; you were learning new things on a daily basis. As adults, we have the same job, same house, eat at the same restaurants, same people in our lives, same everything! We also stopped learning after school is over. In fact the older you get the more set you get in your ways (routines)! I know some older folks who you could set your watch by their routines. Everything in their life is *exactly* the same, day after day! **So as an adult,**



you're likely either a routine lover or completely addicted to your current routine!

The only way to pry yourself away from your routines is to become a kid again by changing things in your life on purpose! Take a new route to work. Park in a different spot each day. Buy a different brand of toothpaste. Change your coffee to half caffeine. Eat something totally different at the restaurant. Go to a restaurant you've never gone to before. Wear a hat if you never wear hats! Read a book when you used to always watch TV!



By *forcing* regular change, your brain will become use to it and eventually start to see the benefits of it (just like the child eventually sees the benefits of using a regular cup over the Sippy cup). The HUGE added benefit of training yourself to like change, is that you will become better able to handle stress in your life (*most stress comes from not dealing well with change*). Stress makes losing weight nearly impossible and turns you into a grumpy person nobody wants to be around! ☺

YOUR ASSIGNMENT:

Start a regular program of making change just for the sake of change to program your brain into accepting and even liking change. Look for easy things like changing to a different brand of coffee or where you park or buy your gas or groceries. Forge through the natural fear you will sense in trying something new. This will help “reprogram” your mind to allow your new healthy routines that will cause weight-loss to stick and help you eliminate stress from your life!

1. **Old routine:**
What I did new:

2. **Old routine:**
What I did new:

3. **Old routine:**
What I did new:

4. **Old routine:**
What I did new:

5. **Old routine:**
What I did new: