

The Law of Reinforcement

The law of reinforcement is so simple, yet is the very core of why you do what you do. You can't bypass or escape this law and when it comes to change most people ironically use it AGAINST themselves!

The Law of reinforcement is:

*You will develop a liking for things that bring you pleasure,
You will develop a disliking for things that bring you pain.*



Before you say “no kidding” and move on, think about the last time you tried to lose weight. Was your new “diet” or exercise program highly pleasurable? Most people experience emotions such as feeling deprived, restricted and dissatisfied when on a “diet”. These emotions all fall into the category of “pain”. Whenever you eat a carrot and think to yourself, “*man this carrot tastes like I’m eating a stick*”, you feel deprived, angry, frustrated, etc. All these emotions then become associated with the carrot making eating carrots LESS appealing to you in the future. Each time you forced yourself to eat restrictively and felt negative emotions, you reinforced in your subconscious that eating that food or amount was painful.

So under this common scenario, your subconscious disliking of healthy foods and healthy portions will actually increase the longer you stay on the diet and keep experiencing emotional pain!

We human beings seem to be totally oblivious to the law of reinforcement because for many of the things we want the most; we actually use the law of reinforcement AGAINST ourselves!

Take for example the common scenario of a husband and wife who gets into a fight and the husband comes and apologizes to make peace. What *usually* happens? The wife will use this opportunity to make sure her husband heard her by reiterating what he did or said wrong, giving the husband a healthy dose of pain, reinforcing him toward NOT apologizing in the future! This keeps happening until soon the wife has a husband who never apologizes and never admits he’s wrong! How many wives have this type of husband!?!

The law of reinforcement MUST be used if you want to create any permanent change in your life. You must also keep this irrefutable law in mind when comparing what you do and what outcome you really want with those that you Love the most like your kids, spouse, family and friends. What you do and say may be reinforcing the OPPOSITE of what you really want! Ask yourself, “Is what I am saying or doing to this person giving them pain or pleasure?”

Remember, we’re talking mostly emotional pain or pleasure not physical pain or pleasure. Criticism is pain, agreeing or understanding is pleasure. Many times a criticism “feels” like the right thing (they did something wrong or hurt me and deserve it), but often it only reinforces the exact opposite of what you really want!

How can I feel good when I’m doing something that sucks?

How can I think good thoughts that reinforce eating carrots instead of my favorite snack—peanuts? How can I lie to myself?

The natural tendency to think that your feeling of “dislike” is because of the thing you dislike is what keeps people from changing. In the previous example of a person feeling “dislike” toward carrots because their favorite snack is peanuts, the dislike is not coming from the carrots, it is coming from the person’s INTERPRETATION of the carrots. The carrots don’t MAKE you feel anything!

This concept is so simple, it was hard for me to understand the first time so let me give another example. A carrot can be interpreted as many things to many different people. The same is true with rain. A farmer would love rain if his crops needed it. You might hate rain if you were planning an outdoor wedding! So the rain itself has no intrinsic meaning. Just like a carrot, broccoli, small portions or a glass of water **has no meaning other than the meaning YOU GIVE it.**

So how does a meaning get put on something that makes you feel good or bad and therefore reinforce or not reinforce it? YOUR THINKING!

But you might still be thinking, “But wait Dave, carrots still taste bad to me!” No, the carrot has no inherent taste. The same carrot that tastes “bad” to you tastes great to someone else!

So the problem doesn’t lie in the carrot, but in **your thinking about the carrot.** Somewhere along your development you subconsciously developed the association that “carrots taste bad”. Maybe as a child you were given a carrot instead of the sweet roll your mom normally gave you and in comparison, it tasted different. Maybe your Dad hated carrots, and he made it verbally clear at the dinner table, so you just picked this up because of his powerful role-model influence on you. Maybe you were full and your mom made you eat your carrots and you were crying wanting to go



outside and play but your mom made you stay at that “damn table until you finish every one of those damn carrots!” creating a traumatic experience you subconsciously associated with carrots.

How it happened really doesn’t matter. Most of the associations we have as adults we long ago forgot consciously how we formed them. What does matter now is how to change them! How do you get your brain to LOVE the taste of carrots?!?

The answer is simple; **you use the law of reinforcement!**

Using the above examples of how you may have gotten your negative association with carrots, you just do the opposite to create a positive association with carrots. Some people have this happen naturally to them over time. I have acquired some new tastes over time as I have been re-introduced to things I previously “disliked” from people important to me like family and friends. But for you to take control of your life and create the programming that creates the body you want, you’ll need to learn how to **create your own reinforcements**. This skill is worth learning because it’s a life-changer!

How to use the law of reinforcement to change what you “Like”

What you “like” is simply an association—a subconscious positive emotion attached to something. Have you ever learned to dislike something after initially liking it? We all have. What happened? We experienced different emotions attached to the thing and now we “dislike” it. The classic example often occurs with puppies. Puppies are so cute and loveable, so we easily attach these positive feelings to puppies. Often this positive emotion is so strong and pleasing to us, we don’t want to lose it, so we buy the puppy and bring him home without



considering the long-term ramifications. Soon after arriving home, the puppy is pooping on the carpet, chewing up the TV remote and we are now experiencing lots of anger, frustration and worry about what the puppy might do next — all negative emotions. For many, the negative emotions soon OUTWEIGH the positive emotions and within even a few days, the person no longer “likes” puppies and is looking for ways to get rid of the puppy!

How you create the feelings you experience

Most people think that feelings just “happen” to them. But **feelings are created by what we say to ourselves---our internal thinking and dialog.** For example, when the puppy’s owner discovers poop on the carpet, one can interpret that event in many ways. All these different interpretations carry different types and levels of emotion. If the puppy’s owner were to say or think to himself: “Son-of-a-bitch, is that poop on my new carpet??? I can’t have a damn dog shitting on my carpet every day!” This self-talk or self-think would cause highly negative feelings associated with the puppy. On the other side, another puppy owner could say: “Oh there’s a little present from Jimmy....Good thing I got some good pet carpet cleaner...that’s what puppies will do until I get him trained!” This self-talk or self-think will elicit totally different feelings and would not damage the person’s positive association with puppies.

Your conscious thoughts create your subconscious programming

Furthermore, your reaction to anything elicits your subconscious feelings—which you cannot consciously choose. This is your current programming. Your conscious thinking can be whatever you choose it to be and over time can change your subconscious programming.

In the above example, the person who reacted negatively has subconscious programming that her carpet and what others think about her home is very important to her. She can use her conscious thinking to over-rule her subconscious reaction and start new programming. She can stop and think, *“Wait a minute....I feel angry about this crap on my carpet, but I know puppies do that and I will need to accept that until I get him trained.”* This thought creates an even greater subconscious imprint if it is said out-loud. (Remember the more senses you use, the greater the subconscious impact).

How to like the things you must like to lose weight permanently

Step 1: Identify the things you should LIKE in order to reach your goal

Step2: Consciously think about the reasons WHY you should like the thing identified. Include emotional reasons!

Step3: Create positive feelings through self-talk and then imagine doing what you want to LIKE.

Step 4: Create positive feelings through self-talk and then experience doing what you want to LIKE.

Example:

Step 1: I identify that I should start eating an apple a day, but I don't like apples.

Step 2: I consciously think about what is great about apples (make a list)

1. Apples are super healthy "an apple a day keeps the doctor away"
2. Apples are portable and easy to take with me on the go
3. Apples are low in calories
4. Apples are water-based and full of fiber
5. Apples kill cancer
6. I want my daughter to see me choosing apples (emotional)
7. Apples will help me get the body I want (emotional)
8. I no longer have to be embarrassed to be a fitness expert who doesn't like apples! (emotional)
9. We could go to the apple festival and enjoy it (emotional)
10. I won't disappoint my mother-in-law when she brings apple pie any more.

(What you are doing here is giving your conscious tons of PROOF that your current belief is stupid, and if you believe you are not stupid, your subconscious will be drawn to adopt the new belief!)

Step 3: I read my list and then **imagine** eating an apple. As I am imagining eating an apple, I think and/or say to myself:

- "Man, this doesn't taste that bad!"
- "I can't wait to show my daughter I now eat apples!"
- "I can feel the nutrients feeding my cells exactly what they want!"
- "I am proud of myself!"
- "I am a good role model!" (repeat)

Step 4: I think through this list and then say the list out loud to get myself into a peak positive state. I then take a big bite out of the apple! I keep saying my list out loud as I chew the apple and take more bites. If the bites taste "good" or "OK", I keep taking more bites. If the new taste starts to overwhelm me, I stop and call it good and celebrate my accomplishment!

Keep in mind that I might not finish the apple. I want to just keep taking bites as long as I feel in a peak positive state. If I start to feel a negative taste sensation after the 3rd bite I would stop. I had 2 positive bites of an apple and on the 3rd, my mind started to slip back to the old association. No problem, so next time I'll go for more! After a few attempts, I'll soon be enjoying the whole apple! It all starts with this thinking this is "not bad". It will progress to "I like it" and then to "I love it" if you keep it up.

If you can get yourself to like smoking, you can like anything you want!

If you can get yourself addicted to inhaling smoke from a cylinder of tobacco that makes you sick and cough the first time by thinking thoughts of being “cool” and having the approval and respect of your peers, it proves the massive power of one’s thoughts when it comes to developing habits! You can get yourself addicted to anything by your thoughts; including eating fruits and vegetables, drinking water and exercise!

Also keep in mind that you probably didn’t smoke the full cigarette the first time you tried cigarettes. You probably puffed 2 or 3 times, coughed and quit before finishing. Keep this in mind when you’re doing your own reprogramming.

More examples of Self-talk to change what you like!

- “I’m feeling deprived, but I also feel really good about eating healthy.”
- “This food will make me strong so I can achieve my goals in life!”
- “I am no longer an idiot; mindlessly shoveling food into my mouth...I eat with a purpose!”
- “I love this healthy food... I can see it killing the cancer cells and building my muscles!”

With this kind of internal dialog you’ll feel:

- Empowered
- Driven
- Victorious
- Proud
- Confident

Assignment

Print off the two .pdf documents. Start making a list of things you need to start liking to create the new body & health you desire. Using the second document, brainstorm reasons why liking this thing (food, exercise or healthy habit—like going to bed early to read) will benefit your life. Use these reasons to get yourself into a peak positive state by first imagining what you want to make a habit and then experiencing it.

Check off each new thing you add to your life that will help you become what you really want to be! **This is HOW you change YOUR Life!**