

Overcoming Our Biggest Obstacle to Creating Habits

Whether you want to start a new exercise habit, start meditating or writing daily, start to get out of debt or clear your clutter ... creating a new habit isn't always easy.

The steps themselves might be deceptively simple: pick one habit, keep it small to start with, and remember to do it every day.

But it's not always so easy — there are a number of forces that can stand in the way:

- People in our lives create resistance to the habit.
- Our environment itself creates resistance (i.e. Internet distractions get in the way of writing).
- We forget.
- A crisis or other disruption comes into our life unexpectedly.

All of that is difficult ... but there's one obstacle that gets in the way more than any other.

Our biggest obstacle is ourselves.

I'm guessing you're not so surprised by this. We have seen ourselves give up on habits many times, because:

1. We are busy.
2. We procrastinate because we're tired or just don't feel like it.
3. We get distracted by our addictions.
4. We are afraid of failure.
5. We don't like the discomfort of the task.

We are our own biggest obstacle to the new habits we want to create in our lives.

The biggest reason is because we come up with *all kinds of objections*.

And then we listen to those objections.

We object to waking up early to write, because we're tired. Tiredness is a big objection of ours.

We object to doing yoga or exercising, because it's hard and we don't feel like it right now. We'd rather check our phones. Procrastination because distraction is easier than discomfort is another major way we deal with our objections.

We object to the difficult studying, because it makes us feel like losers to not know what we're doing. This feeling of uncertainty is another huge objection.

We object to the daily practice, because it feels restricting. It feels useless somehow, to practice but not get anywhere. It's not working.

We object to discomfort, uncertainty, being overwhelmed, having to do something regularly, not being able to comfort and reward ourselves whenever we want.

How do we overcome these objections? How do we overcome the obstacles of ourselves? Let's investigate a few ideas.

Overcoming Our Own Objections

There might not be just one answer to this obstacle. I interviewed Gretchen Rubin yesterday for my new Habit Mastery Course (she's got an amazing new book out, the *Four Tendencies*, on this very topic) ... and her theory is that people respond differently depending on how they respond to expectations — their own expectations, and other people's.

So the right answer for me might not be the right answer for you.

Let's look at a few different approaches — I suggest you try one out, and see if it works. Experiment!

Have Answers to the Objections

If we have a set of common objections to sticking to something, then we can pre-plan our answers instead of blindly believing the rationale we usually use.

Here are some common objections, with examples of how you might plan to answer them:

1. **I'm tired (or don't feel like it).** Answer: Just do a little bit of it. You don't have to do it for very long ... if you can do one minute (or write one paragraph), you can call that a win for today.
2. **Why should I put myself through this.** Answer: This is a gift to yourself. Doing this habit is a loving way to make your life better, and always putting it off is a harmful habit. See the deliciousness in this experience!
3. **You deserve a break/treat.** Answer: Take a break right *after* you do it for a minute. Or ... let this be your treat!
4. **I'll do it in a minute (or "One won't hurt").** Answer: You know that rationale is a lie. Don't listen to the lies you tell yourself when you're tired or afraid. Instead, tell yourself that doing the habit for one minute won't hurt. Or putting off doing something you're trying to quit (cigarettes, for example) won't hurt.

5. **This is scary/sucks because I don't know what I'm doing.** Answer: Yep, the uncertainty is scary! And yet, everything good in your life has come because you pushed into uncertainty. So see it as something to savor, this uncertainty, because it is the ground where you learn, grow, and get better. Learn to relish in it.
6. **This is hard, I'll do it later.** Answer: Do a small dose of the hard stuff now, then go to your favorite distraction after. Switch up the order and things get a lot better in your life.

Of course, the answers above won't necessarily be the best ones for you ... so figure out what answers work for you.

Set Up Your Environment

If having answers to your objections doesn't work, you might set up your environment to be more conducive to habit success, when you're feeling good and optimistic.

Some ideas:

- Clear away distractions. Make it hard to get to them.
- Make your best option the most convenient option. Put out the healthy snacks where you can see them, and make yourself have to drive to the store to get the unhealthy stuff.
- Tell others in your house/office that you're not going to do something (not go on Facebook, not eat candy) ... and if they catch you doing it, you owe them \$50.
- Get others to join you in a challenge.
- Put reminders or inspiration everywhere.
- Make your Instagram or Twitter feed only filled with inspiration, not distractions.
- Ask others to encourage you on your goal every time they see you.
- Set up your yoga mat, meditation cushion, writing space, or sewing area so that it's easy to dive into your new habit.

Again, what works for one person won't work for others, so experiment!

Find the Freedom

Some people really don't work well with restrictions or being told they have to do something over and over. If that's you, then find the freedom in the activity.

Why eat broccoli and kale? If you make it something your mom is telling you to do, you might hate it. But if you find the deliciousness in fresh, healthy, whole food, maybe it can seem like a wonderful choice. If you think about the freedom it gives you to be healthy, strong, fit and able to do all kinds of outdoor activities, then kale becomes a beautiful empowering leaf.

Why give up cigarettes? Instead of thinking of this as a restrictive thing, think of it as freedom from the burden of having to buy cigarettes, financial freedom, freedom from being tied to a burdensome habit for the rest of your life, freedom from getting super sick from smoking (which will absolutely suck for you and your loved ones).

Why sit down every day to write your book? Think of it as freedom from procrastination and distraction, freedom to express yourself, freedom to finally create when you've been running from it for so long.

Find the deliciousness, the treat, the freedom, the fun. And soon you'll be not your own biggest obstacle, but your own biggest supporter.

My Habit Mastery Course

I'd love for you to join my new video course, **Habit Mastery**, which **starts this week**, and is designed to help you practice and level up your habit skills.

It's a 12-week course with two video lessons a week, daily practice, and interviews with 11 other amazing habit experts.

This is one of the best things I've ever created, and I really hope you'll join me.

The course includes weekly Q&A where I answer your habit obstacle questions, a Facebook group for support from fellow participants, and 7 bonus ebooks. All of this for \$299. The course starts this week (but you can start anytime) ... and it will run for 12 weeks.

What will we cover in this course? Basically, the goal is to get you from one level of mastery to the next:

1. **Beginner to Intermediate:** You struggle to create habits, and feel a bit lost in sticking to anything over the long term. We'll have you practice the basics and some key skills to overcome the most common beginner problems.
2. **Intermediate to Advanced:** You have successfully created some habits, but often have them fall apart when things get disrupted, and struggle with more difficult habits. We'll have you practice advanced skills, and your habits will get more solid overall.
3. **Advanced to Habit Master:** You are pretty good at creating habits, but are in a place where you're trying to optimize your day, and are dealing with the more dynamic aspects of habit creation. Also, you'd like to tackle some of the hardest habits — mental habits. You'll practice these and be amazing at everything.

Of course, it will all depend on how much work you put into it, but with the video lessons, daily practice, Facebook support group and ability to ask questions ... we believe you'll be in the optimal conditions for getting good at habits.

Read more here, and please consider joining me.