The 5 Keys to Forming Any Habit

We all struggle with our habits — sticking to them, staying motivated, getting started, dealing with disruptions, it can become a big struggle.

And yet, to change our habits is to change our lives. If we can't make habit changes, we will be stuck in our current way of doing things, which might not be so helpful.

If you want to lose weight, beat procrastination, write a book, get fit, live mindfully … you have to develop habits.

Luckily, the process is simpler than most people realize. Simple, not easy: you have to be committed and really want to make the change. Otherwise you'll just quit when things get difficult.

Here's the first thing to keep in mind: **just choose one habit for now**. Yes, you'll want to change a bunch of things. Don't ignore my advice. Later, you can form more, but for now, focus on *just one*.

With that in mind, follow these simple steps:

1. **Start super small**. I've said this a million times on this blog, so you might gloss over this one — but don't. It's the most important thing. Do one habit at a time, and do it super small. How small? Just meditate for 2 minutes. Just write for 5 minutes. Just do 5 pushups or 5 sun salutations. Just eat one vegetable a day. If you start small, you remove the resistance to starting, which is the hardest part. I used to tell myself, "Just put on your shoes and get out the door," and that's how I formed my running habit, and I ended up running several marathons and an ultramarathon because of this small habit. For meditation, I tell myself, "Just get your butt on the cushion." For drawing, just get out your pad & pencil.
2. **Remove choice**. Don't think about it — make a decision ahead of time to do it every day at the same time for at least a month, then each day, don't make it a decision. Just start. Have a trigger that's already in your daily life (like waking up, or showering, brushing your teeth, starting the coffee maker, eating lunch, whatever) and use that as the trigger for an when/then statement: "When I wake up, I'll meditate for 2 minutes." Put written reminders near where the trigger happens. The main point is: make the decision to do it every day, and then just do it without thinking.
3. **Get some accountability**. Have at least one person you report to — an accountability partner. Or a group of friends. Or a walking/running partner. It doesn't matter how you set it up, but having someone to report to means you are much more likely to push yourself past resistance when it comes up.

4. **Make it fun, find gratitude**. Don't just do the habit as if it were a chore. See if you can enjoy it. How can you make it fun, play, joyous? Can you find gratitude in the middle of your workout? The habit is much more likely to stick if you focus on the parts you enjoy, rather than mindlessly try to check it off your to-do list.
5. **Be committed**. Why are you doing this habit? Reflect on this during the first week, as you do the habit. What deeper reason do you have? Are you doing this habit to help others? As an act of self-love, so that you can be healthier or happier? If you're just doing it because you think you should, or because it sounds cool, you won't really push past the resistance.

You can start with just the first item above, but I would recommend adding as many of the other four as you can during your first week or two, because you'll be increasing your odds of success with each one.

This is doable. You can change your old ways by consciously doing something new repeatedly, until it's a habit. Take small steps to get started, remove choice so you don't think about whether to start or not, get some accountability and understand your motivation so you push past resistance, and find gratitude in the midst of the action.

One habit, done daily. Small steps with intention, support and a smile. It can make all the difference in the world.