

5 ways to create healthy habits

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You may make new year's resolutions with the best of intentions of sticking to them. You want to eat healthier, exercise more often, get enough sleep...But sometimes you may set goals that are too high and quickly lose interest when you don't see results overnight.

However, forming habits is not an overnight process. You probably know the saying, "Slow and steady wins the race." Habit forming is no exception. That's why we suggest small, easy steps that may help you form healthy habits that you can stick to successfully.

1. Set realistic goals

Think realistically about what actions you can take every day to form a healthy habit. For example, it would be unrealistic to aim to run 5km every day if you've never run a day in your life. Start with small, attainable goals, such as alternating walking and jogging between streetlights for 1km on the first day, and going a bit further every day until you're fit enough to run those 5km you're aiming for or even further.

Another example may be that you'd like to cut out sugar from your diet, but you don't like the bitter taste of coffee without sugar. Include a little less sugar every day to adjust your palette.

2. Remove temptations and disrupt bad habits

If you have a bad habit that involves unhealthy temptations, for example, reaching for cookies instead of fruit, or a fizzy drink instead of juice or water, don't replace those unhealthy snacks and drinks when they run out. When they're out of sight, they may not always be out of mind, but it will force you to make a healthier choice. You'll soon discover how much more energetic you feel if you opt for low-sugar, low GI snacks and drinks instead.

You could try to disrupt bad habits by creating new, healthy ones. An example is limiting your screen time after work for a better night's sleep. Blue light transmitted by LED screens may slow or stop melatonin production. Melatonin is a hormone that let's the brain know when it's time to sleep. To help, use a blue light filter and set an alarm to turn off your electronic devices at least 30 minutes before bedtime. Make a conscious decision to change your bedtime routine by taking a long bath or reading a book instead of binge-watching series before you turn out the lights.

3. Find an accountability partner

It can be difficult to change your behaviour and/or mindset on your own. Invite family and friends to take on a challenge with you. You'll be able to support each other and keep each other accountable.

For example, exercise together (even via video chat), or share healthy recipes, lifestyle tips and motivational quotes, and check in with each other often to make sure you're both on track with your goals.

4. Focus on the process, not the goal

Beethoven did not enter the world with his fingers hovering over a keyboard, not did Leonardo da Vinci all of a sudden paint a masterpiece. They both had to learn the basic skills first, practice and experiment to become masters in their fields. They focused on what they needed to do next to be successful and not on the end result.

You may find that you so become anxious to reach your goal, whatever it may be, that you lose momentum and even motivation. You may even lose patience and forget about the steps you need to take to get there. Again, set realistic goals and remind yourself often that forming habits, like music and art, takes time and effort. What do you need to do next to achieve your goal?

5. Seek professional help

If you suspect that unhealthy behaviour may be linked to a mental condition, such as anxiety or depression, it may be best to make an appointment with a mental health professional. They may be able to help you address underlying issues and find strategies that will be able to help you develop good, healthy habits.

Dieticians and biokineticists should also be able to help you with personalised diets and exercise programmes to get on track with your goals. Bestmed members, you can find healthcare professionals near you via the Bestmed App. Also, view the [Bestmed Tempo wellness programme](#), free to all Bestmed members.