

8 Ways to break bad habits

The unfortunate truth about the human mind is that it's easier for us to create good habits than it is for us to break bad ones, especially when those bad ones are outright addictive like smoking and drinking. We like to stay in our comfort zones and our bad habits often provide some form of comfort. Even when they don't we are often simply afraid of change, making it extremely difficult to move forward.

Still, if you're prepared to put in the work **you can break bad habits with these 8 strategies:**

1. Accept discomfort

No matter what bad habit you're trying to get rid of, it's going to be uncomfortable. Things like cigarettes and alcohol actually have physical withdrawal symptoms that can be extremely painful, but even quitting biting your nails can be stressful.

If you're serious about becoming the person you've always wanted to be, you're going to have to accept discomfort—and not just when it comes to breaking bad habits. There will never be a better moment than right now to start moving towards a better version of yourself and it will only get harder the longer you wait.

2. Have an actual written plan

Many people give themselves a date for giving up their bad habits but fail to do any other planning. This makes it easy for them to give in when faced with a temptation they hadn't planned for.

You can't plan for every possible temptation or setback but chances are you already know what most of the triggers for your bad habit are. It might be something you do when you're nervous, something you do with certain friends or at specific times of day. Write all of these potential setbacks down and actually create a plan for how to deal with each one. And while you're at it, plan how you'll reward yourself for breaking the bad habit.

3. Get rid of temptation

Planning for how to deal with temptation is great but the best way to break your bad habit is to get rid of the temptation altogether. Don't keep whatever you're trying to avoid in the house. If you live with other people, make sure they're keeping any temptations out of the house or at least well hidden. If your bad habit is something like biting your nails you can still get rid of temptation or at least dramatically reducing it by doing something like covering your nails with an awful tasting coat of clear nail polish. There is always a way to get rid of the temptation, you might just have to get creative.

4. Track your successes and gains

Many people only mark big milestones like their first full month free of the bad habit but at first every day without it is a success. Mark each successful day even if only with a check mark on your calendar. Once you've been free of your bad habit for a month, mark every week after. After six months, just mark the months—but make sure you're still celebrating that you're free of your bad habit. You should also be tracking your gains in a journal. Do you feel better about yourself? Are you healthier now? Have you saved money? Track these benefits in detail so when the going gets tough you can turn to this journal and remind yourself of everything you've gained by giving up your nasty habit.

5. Institute a bad habit jar

Parents have been making their kids give change up to swear jars for decades. Why not start your own bad habit jar? Every time you partake in the habit, you have to put money in the jar. Commit to giving the jar to a charity you don't like when it's full and make sure you have a friend to hold you accountable. If you really don't want to give up your hard earned cash, try it the other way: for every successful day, put \$1 in a jar. Once the jar is full, treat yourself to something extravagant.

6. Go slow and steady

Every year millions of people make long lists of resolutions for self improvement around New Years' and within a few months most have given up on their resolutions and returned to their normal lifestyle. This is because most people try to tackle too much at once. They try to quit all their bad habits at once or

throw themselves into an hour long daily workout routine and within a few weeks they hate the struggle and themselves.

The truth is most people have a few(or more than a few) bad habits they're trying to get rid of but we can't do it all at once. Even quitting one bad habit is hard. Pick the one that's causing you the most harm and focus on quitting that first. Focus on finding small tricks you can use to get rid of temptation. Accept that you are on a journey and it will take time.

7. Change your environment

Do you usually partake in your bad habit in the same place? A place can quickly become a trigger for your bad habit. Sometimes you can just avoid that place, like a certain bar or park, but if the place is your own home you need to find a way to break the connection.

Often you don't even need to make a huge change to break the connection. Even moving a couple pieces of furniture can do it. Or getting rid of a specific piece of furniture or art that you associate with your bad habit. Of course, you might want to use this as an excuse to completely rearrange your furniture or paint the house—and those bigger changes will likely be even more effective.

8. Train yourself to think differently about your habit

You obviously know the habit you're trying to get rid of is a bad one(otherwise you wouldn't be here) but you still get some kind of satisfaction from it. Pay close attention to your thoughts around the habit for a few weeks before you quit and figure out exactly why you've stuck with it for so long. Every time you catch yourself thinking a positive thought about the habit, counter it with a negative fact about the habit. Write down a list of these facts if you have to.

It's also important to train yourself to believe that you can quit. Whenever you find yourself thinking about how hard it is, counter that with a thought about all the things you gain by giving up this bad habit. Always counter "I can't" thoughts with memories of things you've already accomplished and a gentle reminder that yes, you can do this too. Don't berate yourself for a slip up, just figure out how you

can avoid another one like it and then move on. This is the most difficult of all these strategies but it is the most important one if you want to quit your bad habits for good.

Remember that none of these strategies will work on their own, especially not if you're trying to quit an addictive bad habit like smoking—but combine all 8 of these strategies and you're sure to beat your bad habit.