**Part 1: Creating positive new routines**

While we all have areas we can improve, when it comes to building a new routine, your advantage will lie in discovering your strengths and using them to the best of your ability. Research on “strengths-based approaches” suggests that solely focusing on and developing your weaknesses can have drawbacks, actually diminishing energy, productivity, and motivation. On the other hand, striking a balance and developing strengths has been found to improve performance, productivity and self-confidence, while increasing engagement and reducing turnover.

One of the hardest parts of establishing a new routine is getting started. However, by breaking a routine into small steps and practicing for as little as a few minutes every day, you can overcome this common barrier. The key lies in making small, sustainable changes rather than attempting drastic overhauls.

**Remember, it's not about how fast you progress, but how steadfastly you commit to the practice of self-improvement.**

So focus on incremental change that integrates seamlessly into your lifestyle. Allow yourself the opportunity to adapt gradually, both physically and mentally. You’ll find that with repeated practice of these seemingly small, easy changes, you are reinforcing your commitment and building momentum, propelling you toward your ultimate goal.

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| Routine Building Process |
| 1. Break your desired routine into approximately 5 steps. The first step should be very easy and take no more than a few minutes to complete. This small step not only reduces the barrier to entry but also sets the stage for long-term success. By the final step, you should be practicing the entire routine. 2. Complete step 1 every day, until it becomes routine. You may complete more steps when you feel motivated, but completing step 1 consistently is the most important goal. 3. When step 1 becomes routine, it serves as a building block toward step 2. At this point, make it your goal to complete steps 1 and 2 every day. Continue this cycle until each step becomes a routine.   Tips   * Make it simple * Make it convenient * Enlist support / accountability * Reward Yourself |

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| Example 1 | |
| **New Routine** | **Walk for 30 minutes every evening.** |
| Step 1 | *Change into exercise clothes after work.* |
| Step 2 | *Walk around the block.* |
| Step 3 | *Walk for 10 minutes.* |
| Step 4 | *Walk for 20 minutes.* |
| Step 5 | *Walk for 30 minutes.* |

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| Example 2 | |
| **New Routine** | **Go to bed by 10pm every night.** |
| Step 1 | *Be home by 9pm every evening.* |
| Step 2 | *Brush teeth and shower by 10pm.* |
| Step 3 | *Turn off all electronics by 10pm.* |
| Step 4 | *Do all previous steps one hour earlier.* |
| Step 5 | *Be in bed by 10pm.* |

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| **New Routine** |
| What is the new routine you would like to create? |

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| **Benefits** |
| What are the benefits of this routine? |

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| **Progress Rewards** |
| What rewards can you give yourself for sticking with your new routine? Make these exciting enough to motivate you. |

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| **Breakdown** | |
| **Step 1** |  |
| **Step 2** |  |
| **Step 3** |  |
| **Step 4** |  |
| **Step 5** |  |

**Part 2: Breaking negative old routines**

For most routines, the reward is a short-term positive feeling or outcome. In order to break bad routines we need to have a plan to avoid events that activate the routine, and re-write the story in our minds about the rewards of this routine.

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| Routine-breaking Process |
| 1. **Reflect on Routines:** Take a moment to assess your daily routines and behaviours. Consider which routines might be hindering your productivity, well-being, or personal or professional growth. These could include routines like multitasking excessively, procrastinating on important tasks, or engaging in negative self-talk. 2. **Identify Activating Events**: What are the events or environments that activate this negative routine? Examples may be specific events, deadlines, interactions with certain people, or internal feelings such as stress. For example, a looming deadline might activate procrastination, or a demanding email at work might lead to skipping lunch to complete the requested task. 3. **Brainstorm Strategies**: Once you've identified common activating events, brainstorm strategies to avoid or manage them effectively. This could involve setting clear boundaries, prioritising tasks, or seeking support from friends and family. For instance, if the event is feeling overwhelmed by a heavy workload, you could break tasks into smaller, manageable chunks or delegate tasks when appropriate. 4. **Develop Positive Affirmations**: Positive affirmations can help reframe your mindset and counteract any negative thoughts associated with activating events. Try creating affirmations that align with your goals, strengths, and values. For example, if an activating event is self-doubt before a presentation, your affirmation could be: "*I am prepared, and confident in my abilities. I embrace challenges as opportunities for growth and success*." |

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| Example 1 | |
| **Bad Routine** | **Interrupting work tasks to check my emails** |
| What’s the Activating Event? | *Getting a notification on my computer or my phone that I have unread emails* |
| How can I avoid the Activating Event? | 1. *Turn off notifications on my phone and computer* 2. *Put my phone away while I am working* 3. *Set “do not disturb” times in my calendar when my colleagues know I will not be responding to emails* |
| What’s my new story? | *I’m most productive when I work on one thing at a time* |

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| **Negative Routine** |
| What is the routine you want to break? |

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| **Activating Events** |
| What’s activating this negative routine? |

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| **Avoid** |
| How can I avoid these activating events? |

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| **New Story** |
| What’s the new story I can tell myself when an activating event comes along? |

**Part 3: Maintaining Gains**

Now that you have been practicing forming positive new routines and breaking negative bad routines, take things to the next level with these helpful tips:

1. **Differentiate between goals and routines.** Goals are outcomes, such as “getting healthy.” Routines are the actions you take to achieve a goal. For example, eating vegetables with each meal and exercising every day.
2. **Start with small changes.** Make incremental changes toward the behaviour you want, and work your way up from there. Even if you improve at something only 1% every week, the changes that accumulate over months or years are massive.
3. **Update your environment.** Make changes that encourage your new routine and discourage unwanted routines. If you would like to eat healthier, keep a bowl of fruit on the counter, and put unhealthy snacks out of sight.
4. **Tie new routines to other activities**. Make a plan using the format: “After \_\_\_\_, I will \_\_\_.” For example: “After each meal, I will read for 5 minutes.” This is a simple way to remember your routine each day and encourage consistency.
5. **Some practice is better than no practice.** Even if you don’t have a lot of time or energy, do something toward building your routine. Too tired for a long walk? Walk for 5 minutes. Too busy to read a whole chapter? Read one page. Consistency builds routines.
6. **Tell someone you’re starting a new routine.** Doing so creates accountability and makes it more difficult to back out of your commitment. Also, once others know you’re working toward a goal, they may offer encouragement and support.
7. **Track your routine.** Keep a journal, calendar, or spreadsheet to record your routine each time you practice. It can be satisfying to record your behaviour, and to look back and see all the hard work you’ve put in. Plus, it can be motivating to keep a routine streak alive.
8. **Celebrate your successes.** Healthy routines tend to have long-term benefits that take time to kick in. While you’re waiting for these, give yourself immediate, small rewards to sustain motivation. Just make sure they don’t contradict your goals.