

## Foundation idea Summary - Changing Habits



### Behavioural change – making habits work for you

Something like 70% of what we do at work is habit. Habits are semi-automatic behaviours. We do them without needing to think about what we are doing.

The brain developed in this way because intentional behaviour uses up a lot of brain energy. Habits are very energy-efficient. Habits and intentional behaviour are run by different parts of the brain.

It's easier to develop a new habit than to change an old one because of the way the brain functions.

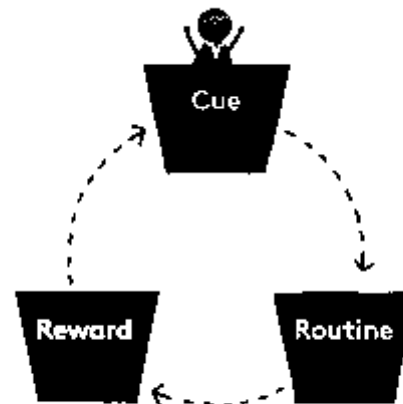
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Creating new habits is easiest when there is:  
**A cue** - something that reminds you to act in the new way.

**A Routine** - the specific steps you want to take.

**A reward** - anticipating the reward is more powerful than just receiving it.

### The habit model



Most of the research suggests a three-stage process for creating a new habit.

Create a plan that contains a cue, a routine and a reward.

Many studies have shown that a cue and a routine on their own aren't enough for a new habit to last. Only when the brain starts expecting the reward will it become automatic. Ideally your cue, in addition to triggering your routine, should also trigger a desire for the reward.

Let's look at this in more detail:

**Cue:** Identify a trigger, something that will remind you to take the action you plan, your new routine. The cue may be a time, a person or a preceding action like saying 'good morning', getting a coffee, entering the meeting room. Cues work when they're linked to something you know you'll do anyway. They work even better when they also trigger the anticipation of the reward. So, in the example in the video the first conversation the manager has triggers the sense of control that she desires and she feels rewarded by. This encourages her to continue to talk to other team members.

**Routine:** Define the steps you'll take. These are the specific actions that you're trying to turn into a habit. This might be walking around and talking for at least two minutes to at a minimum of three members of your team. The more detailed you are when defining these steps, the more likely you are to carry out the routine – and it's a good idea to start

with small goals and then build on them over time. It's also good to plan how you will deal with any slip ups, or people or situations that tempt you to do the old habit

**Reward:** A reward is essential to turning a new behaviour into a habit. The best rewards are neurological and it's even better if there's a sense of real anticipation. That way you get the benefits of the actual reward as well as the good feeling that comes with knowing that the rewards on its way.

Make sure you believe you can make the change and make plans in advance for avoiding or managing anything that might derail your efforts.

### Useful things to remember

- + Telling yourself or someone to change won't work.
- + Setting the intention to change and then relying on willpower is also unlikely to work. Our willpower fails when we are tired, stressed, or distracted.
- + It's easier to build a new habit than it is to change an old one.

- + You need to build new habits to achieve goals, change performance standards and generally grow and develop. As well as apply new things you have learnt
- + Have a plan and contingencies – you may forget to perform your routine one day but that doesn't mean you should give up on the progress you have made
- + Telling other people about your plan makes it more likely you will keep to it
- + No one knows how long it takes to embed a new habit but you need to have checked the new behaviours happens when your broader routine is disrupted like when you go on holiday and when things are stressful
- + Celebrate success and progress along the path to a new habit being embedded.

