

Typically we are harder on others than ourselves when it comes to bad habits. They can be annoyances like someone who starts cracking their knuckles right next to you, or a friend of yours who you love very much but constantly drops "like" into like, every other sentence.

Well, hey you've got one too. Everyone has at least one bad habit that they can't shake. Or can they? Welcome to Wellcast! This week we took another viewer suggestion from Franticow who wrote in asking for a video on breaking bad habits.

So today, you guessed it - we're going to examine why it's so darn difficult to give up chowing down on junk food or chowing down on your fingernails. We've also got a four step method for overcoming your biggest vice. Are you ready?

First and foremost, how do bad habits even form? Studies by the National Institute of Health point to two main reasons: The first reason is repetition. If you do something often enough, say... you twirl your pencil during class, your brain decides it can stop wasting precious neurons thinking about it. So it checks out and goes on vacation. You can be twirling your pencil through AP English, social studies, algebra and trig, without even thinking about it.

The other way bad habits are formed is through positive reinforcement. Which sounds like a really good thing, but it can be dangerous. Let's talk about that energy drink that you insist on sucking back when you're up late studying. Gives you a nice boost of energy! And it helps you get to the end of that mind-numbingly boring paper you're writing on Chaucer. But the reason why this kind of habit is hard to break is that a nice surge of energy at 11 PM is an enjoyable feeling. And enjoyable feelings usually result in your brain releasing dopamine. This is partly why people often crave things that aren't even enjoyable for them anymore. The brain is jonesing for dopamine.

But don't worry my habitual compadres. Human beings are pretty amazing at changing and adapting. Ladies and gentlemen we're going to obliterate that bad habit in four easy steps....

Step one: Let's start at the very beginning - it's a very good place to start. *Write down the bad habit you're trying to quit.* Start simple; choose just one.

Step two: *Learn to avoid your triggers.* Take some time to think about the things that really make you crave doing your bad habit. If biting your nails is your vice, your triggers might be... that last minute quiz. "Oh no I gotta pay my electric bill" or "how much money do I have in my account for rent?". List these triggers in section 2 of your worksheet. Next to these triggers, write ways you can avoid them. For example, read your syllabus every week. Or make sure you plan for automatic deductions for your electric bill.

Step three: *Substitute your bad habits for not-so-bad habits.* Basically, you want to teach your brain, by repetition, to learn a new habit. So, if you tend to bite your nails when you're stressed and alone in your living room, stock your refrigerator with carrots and celery, so that you can reach for something else to chew on when you are stressed out. Write a substitution next to of every trigger on section 3 of your worksheet.

Step four: *Gather your army.* You do not have to do this alone. Enlist your friends to help you to defeat this bad habit. Start by telling them that you're planning on eliminating this bad habit and you need their help. Just this simple act of letting them in on this battle that you're waging is a step in the right direction. Remember, your friends can be bodyguards. They'll stand between you and your brain. Tell them to police you. If they see you reaching for those nails to bite, give them the permission to remind you of your mission, or even slap your hand. Whatever you want.

Alright guys, let's recap. Today you learned four steps for beating your bad habit. You decided which habit you wanted to kick. You figured out your triggers for this bad habit, and you decided ways to avoid and replace these triggers with healthier alternatives. If all else fails, you learned to enlist your friends in the fight.

Type to enter text

develop get out of

pick up shake get into break acquire kick form

a habit

1. Look at the verbs that can go with the word “habit”. Which mean start? Which mean stop?

start	stop

2. Use the vocabulary below to fill in the blanks. You may have to conjugate verbs or change the words in other ways.

be hard on someone crack one's knuckles chow down jonesing obliterate crave
enlist recap a boost of energy check out

1. If you _____ too much while you're young, you may develop arthritis in your hands when you get older.
2. Fraser loves Japanese food, but sometimes he _____ his mother's homemade cooking.
3. I need coffee in the morning to give me _____.
4. "Don't _____ your friend for forgetting your birthday. She has been very busy with work recently."
5. Let's _____ what we studied last week.
6. I can't wait to go to that all-you-can-eat buffet this weekend. I've been _____ for some Chinese food. I'm going to _____ on some ebi-chili.
7. I'm sorry, what did you say? My brain totally _____ for a minute.
8. America has _____ the help of many countries in its war on terrorism.
9. The bomb _____ the car; there was nothing left.