

TO YOUR HEALTH

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Building Healthy Habits

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Most of us follow a daily routine that is filled with habits. Sometimes, these go back to our childhood, like brushing teeth. Later in life, our daily rituals may be ruled by blister packs and bottles of medication. Habits play an important role, but forming and maintaining effective habits takes time to cultivate. It requires reflection, discipline, and a desire to make changes. According to James Clear, bestselling author of *Atomic Habits*, "In the long run, the quality of our lives often depends on the quality of our habits."

In a recent article published in the *British Medical Journal* (January 2020), the authors noted that healthy habits are based on five essential components. Their research highlighted that the following factors all contributed to increased longevity.

- A good diet
- Ideal body weight
- Increased physical activity
- Low alcohol intake
- Never having smoked

They further noted that if these practices were in place by your fifties, women lived 14 years more and men 12 years more on average.

Here are a few healthy and accessible habits to consider:



Exercise Snacks

In 2014 researchers at the University of Otago in New Zealand came up with a new idea to help control glycemic levels with individuals who

were insulin resistant. It was reported that brief intense periods of exercise before a meal is an effective way of helping control blood sugar levels. Six minutes of intense walking or resistance-based exercise were tools employed in this study. The primary point being made here is to just do something. Stretch, tap your feet to music or wiggle a little bit in a chair, just keep your body moving. Savor some daily happiness with bite size amounts of exercise.



Sleep

As we age a good night's sleep can frequently be illusive. The National Sleep Foundation advises individuals to make

their bed every day. You will be 19% more likely to have a good night's sleep. Change your bedlinens regularly and remember to replace your pillows every two years. In his book *"Make Your Bed: Little Things That Can Change Your Life...And Maybe the World,"* Admiral William McRaven added that making your bed may help introduce a sense of accomplishment to the day.

Journals

A wonderful capsule for our thoughts is journal writing. Besides creating a degree of self-awareness,



writing helps us organize and clarify our thinking. Journal writing is a mechanism for reflection. It enables us to imitate past successes and initiate future change. In the words of the great educator and scholar, John Dewey, "We do not learn from experience... we learn from reflecting on experience." Take some time to

(con't.)



sketch your thoughts out and discover the benefits of keeping a journal or diary. There may be a little bit of Samuel Pepys¹ in all of us.

As tax season approaches most of us will be preoccupied with gathering bank accounts, locating Social Security Statements and 401K paperwork. Though this is important, remember to reserve the best hours of your day to self-care.



Shake off stress with a cup of tea or make a call to a friend. Escape with a novel or lose yourself in a craft project.

Find out what makes you happy and set yourself small goals to achieve that joy. Remember to put yourself first. This requires commitment, introspection, and discipline. Research shows that it can take between 21 to 66 days to form a habit. It is also easier to acquire a habit than break an old one.

February originates from the Latin februum, which means to cleanse. Let us use this month to cleanse ourselves of bad habits and acquire a healthy new approach to living.

1. Samuel Pepys was an English diarist who wrote about c17th London.



Gone Phishing

Phishing is a type of fraud, and it is an attempt to obtain information by illegal means. The most common form of phishing is infiltrating email and web browsers. Phishing is also used on telephone and text messages. Phishing hackers use this method to obtain personal data, financial details and sometimes attack an entire network and demand a ransom. This type of social engineering uses tools of fear and curiosity to prey on victims.

The most important thing to remember is :

THINK BEFORE YOU CLICK

- Be wary of email suggesting a change in password or view an attachment. 96% of phishing attacks come via email (Data Breach Investigation Report, Verizon 2020).
- Always check email addresses.
- Beware of pop ups on your screen that may contain corrupt code.
- Be suspicious of spelling and grammar errors.
- Generic greetings like sir or ma'am should raise red flags.
- Make sure you screen messages that say it is urgent and to respond immediately.

When in doubt ignore the bait. Delete the email.