

# 10 strategies to break a bad habit and stick to good ones

We all seem to have a perpetual list of “things to stop doing” (drinking so much wine; worrying; working late etc.) and a list of “things to start doing” (drink more water, exercise daily, meditate, lose weight etc.) Sometimes I get messages from people saying “I saw your yoga sign for the last 6 years and have been meaning to sign up. I have finally done it and started yoga with you and I love it! Why didn’t I do it earlier?!”

Here’s the thing. For many of us it seems to be easier to form a bad habit than a good one! Form a habit of drinking wine every evening: easy! Done! Form a habit to go for a walk every morning: sooo hard! What are the secrets we need to know to be one of those people who seem to effortlessly integrate a new positive practice into their life? Here are the 10 strategies you need to help you form good habits that STICK!

1. **Focus on the end game.** What is the big goal? Why do you want to drink less wine? Why do you want to worry less? To have a long life with your partner? To be able to run around with your grandchildren? Focus on the big benefit. Write it down and recommit to it daily. It is your spiritual fuel for change.
2. **Start small.** Aim for small advances on a consistent basis rather than trying to change the world in a day. Want to drink less coffee? Then gradually switch to half caff, half decaf, and then migrate to full decaf. Want to meditate for 30 minutes daily? Start with just five minutes a day. Break the end goal down to a much smaller increment so it seems easy to reach. This means you will get some momentum up and get some early wins under your belt.
3. **Prepare.** Go to the supermarket. Stock up on low carb snacks. Buy the rowing machine for the garage or the sketching book for your new creative habit. What do you need to do to prepare, so you have what you need set up and at hand so the new habit you are trying to form is low hassle.
4. **Set a short term challenge to get you going.** Maybe you need to lose 25Kgs. Set yourself a target to lose the first 3kgs in the next 3 weeks. Focus on getting under the 90kgs, the next benchmark rather than the ultimate end point. Focus on the next benchmark, as its so much nearer it will be much easier to keep your motivation high.
5. **Reward yourself.** Celebrate your milestones and successes. Bribes are not just for small children! Bribe yourself with a game of golf, or a new copy of Vogue for reaching that first milestone.
6. **Break a bad habit by substituting a good one.** Instead of “drink less wine” link it to “drink more water” so you substitute a bad habit with a good one. Stop smoking by substituting that end of the day ciggie with a walk around the block instead. Focus on starting a life affirming habit rather than just breaking a bad one.
7. **Define yourself.** Who will you be once you have successfully integrated this new habit? Start to define yourself in this way. “I am a runner”; “I like to look after myself”; “I am great at leaving work on time”
8. **Make it public.** This is all about accountability. Making this new habit public can give you a boost of accountability to keep you motivated to stay on track. You can recruit an accountability partner, a friend who will go to the gym with you or meet monthly to check in on the progress you have made on new business and give you a loving kick up the arse to stay on track.



9. **Track your progress.** You can use a cool tool like <http://www.habitforge.com/> or the cute little 21 day habit sheets from Kikki-K to track your progress. It's can be really motivating and help you to stay on track when you see how well you are doing when you track it daily.
10. **Buy in some accountability.** Sometimes you just need to throw a bit of money at the problem. I was struggling to form a habit of getting to the gym when I am so busy. Committing to and investing the money in a personal trainer twice a week has solved that problem and made the gym an easy habit to keep. Don't be afraid of occasionally using your wallet to give you the support you need to form the habit you are trying to create.

We literally are our habits. **What we consistently do defines who we are.** Aristotle said "*We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence then is not an act, but a habit*". Add a little extra juice to your life by selecting the strategies above that resonate for you and make that change that you want to make stick!

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## About Louise Thompson

Louise is the owner of **Positive Balance**, a busy Life Coach consultancy specialising in work/life balance and **Adrenal Fatigue Recovery** as well as a thriving yoga practice on Auckland's North Shore.



Louise's writes her popular weekly Wellbeing column "Habits of Happiness" in BITE, in Mondays' New Zealand Herald, as well as appearing regularly on TVNZ's "Breakfast" discussing a host of wellbeing and happiness topics.

She is passionate about all things wellbeing, loves to run, cook and dance, and is an incurable travel junkie.

Sign up for Louise's popular weekly newsletter "Wellbeing Wednesday" jam-packed with inspiration right here: <http://eepurl.com/SOMn>

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