



ESTABLISHING NEW HABITS

Productive habits simplify the effort necessary to achieve success. They enable us to reach decisions quickly and to move swiftly toward our goals. Establishing new habits requires a concentrated effort of the will. Below are some of the principles of establishing a new habit.

1. Begin with one habit that you feel would be the easiest to change or establish.
2. Make a list of all the negative things that will happen to you if you don't change the habit. Make it as negative as possible. Create a painful picture of your continuing to keep the old habit. Every time you are tempted to engage in the old habit, call up this negative picture so that you associate the old habit with something unpleasant.
3. Make a list of all the positive things that will happen to you when you do change the habit. Create a pleasurable picture of your behaving in accordance with the new habit. Make it as positive as possible.
4. Launch the new behavior as strongly as possible. Tell your friends, if appropriate, that you intend to do this. When you practice the new behavior, call up the positive picture of what will happen to you if you continue the productive habit.
5. Begin at the first opportunity to try the new behavior. Beware of the phony excuses that your mind will offer you. This is the result of the old habit fighting for survival.
6. Practice the new habit in your mind during the period in which you are consciously trying to establish it. Imagine yourself behaving in accordance with the new pattern. Make sure your visualization is "sensory rich," including what you see, hear, feel, smell and taste, if appropriate.
7. Never let an exception occur until you have firmly rooted the habit. It will take about thirty days of continuous practice before the habit is firmly established. If you fail once during this thirty day period, you will have to start over.
8. Do not regard a setback as a disaster; however, regard it as temporary and limited to the one specific instance. Use positive self-talk to reinforce your belief that you are capable of establishing the new habit.
9. Work on only one habit at a time. After you have changed the easiest one, go on to the next easier one to change.