

Strategies to Help You Kick a Bad Habit

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We all have them: those negative behaviors we do over and over again. In some cases, we don't even know why we have those bad habits. It's as if we're caught in a never-ending cycle of performing self-sabotaging acts. However, you do have some options for strategies to help you kick those bad habits.

Consider these techniques:

1. **Commit.** Step one is vowing to yourself that you're going to do it; you'll do whatever's necessary to rid yourself of these annoying behaviors.
2. **Come up with a "filler" behavior.** For example, if you have a bad habit of biting your fingernails, think up a different behavior to do instead. How about wearing light gloves, polishing your nails to deter you from biting them, or keeping your hands busy with knitting, woodworking, or doing other handwork?
3. **List why you want to stop the habit.** You probably have reasons why you want to end the unwanted behavior. Using the example in #2, maybe you think it looks crass to be seen chewing your nails. Perhaps you think it's unsanitary or "germy." Or you just can't stand the way your nails look anymore.
 - **Write down an exhaustive list of every reason you can think of to quit your bad habit.** Then, use the list as your incentive to decrease the behavior.
4. **Ask a friend or family member for support.** If you tell your wife you want to work on stopping the nail-biting, you can then ask her to give you a cue to help you cease the habit. Perhaps she can touch you lightly on your arm or say

gently, “You’re biting your nails,” in order to support you in your efforts.

5. Consider other conditions you might have that contribute to your bad habit.

Continuing with the nail-biting example, do you feel anxious a lot? Do you worry about what’s going to happen in your future? Ponder the other factors in your life that might be causing you to perform the habit that you find frustrating and annoying.

- *It might be time to work to resolve those contributing factors so you can rid yourself of the unwanted behaviors.*

6. Think about past bad habits that you’ve been able to arrest and resolve. Give yourself a pat on the back. How did you handle them? What led you to stop the behaviors? How did your life change or improve as a result of conquering the bad habit?

- *Recognizing that you’ve been successful in beating a bad habit before will infuse new confidence into your current efforts.*

7. Build in a reward. For example, “When I don’t chew my fingernails for one whole week, I’m going to get a manicure.” If I continue not biting my nails, I’ll get a manicure once a month.” ***Rewarding yourself is a way to recognize all your hard work and your success at keeping your commitment to yourself.*** Try to make the reward fitting for the particular habit.

- Or you can even “pay yourself” weekly designating your payment as “fun money” to spend how you wish.

Take some time to reflect on ways you might want to proceed to break a negative habit. You could make a self-commitment, think of a replacement behavior to do instead, or list out why you want to stop the behavior. Ask someone for support and take contributing factors to the behavior into account. Review how you resolved bad

habits in the past. Finally, reward yourself.

You have the power to kick your bad habits. Begin today to take steps to stop your unwanted behaviors so you can live a more tranquil existence.