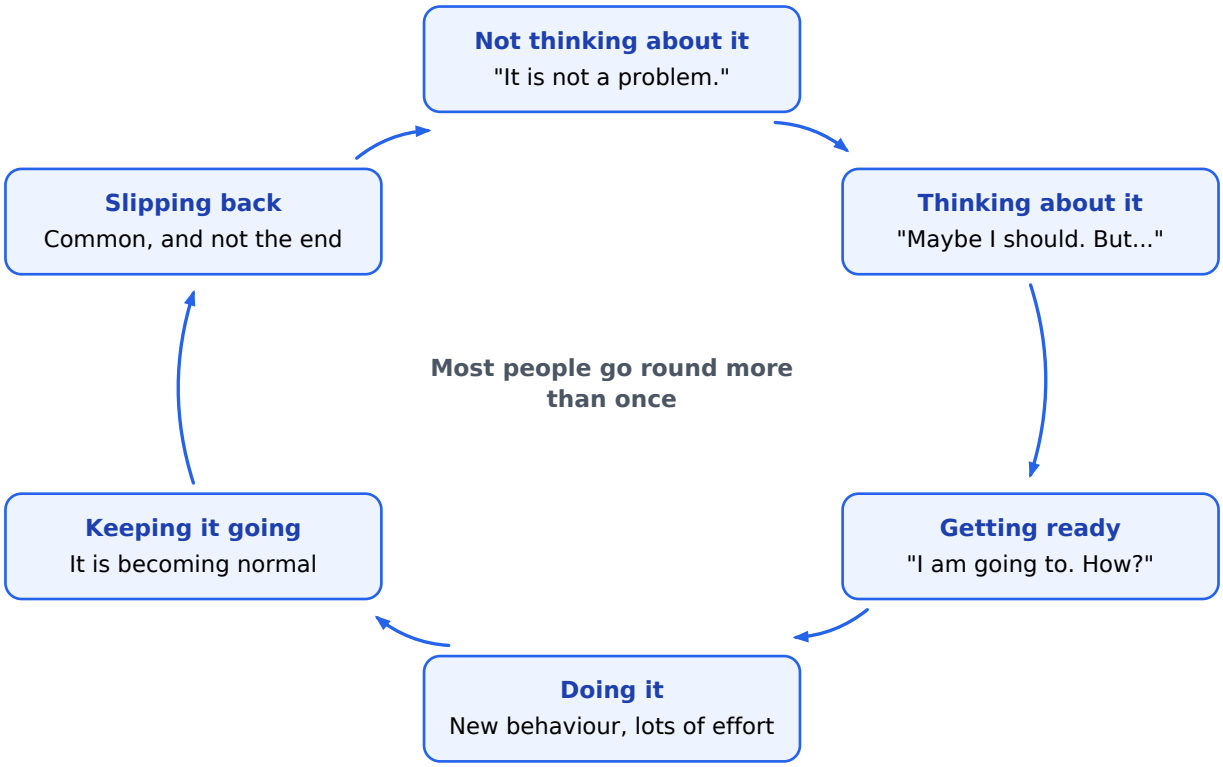
The stages of change

The stages people go through when changing a habit, and what helps at each.

People rarely change a habit in one go. Most move through stages, often more than once. Knowing where you are helps you choose the right next step.



Stage	What helps
Not thinking about it	Information, without pressure. Noticing the effects of the habit.
Thinking about it	Weighing up pros and cons. Thinking about what matters to you. Talking it through.
Getting ready	A clear, realistic plan. A start date. Telling someone. Removing temptations.
Doing it	Support. Coping with urges. Rewards. Taking it one day at a time.
Keeping it going	Knowing your risky situations. Building a life that makes the habit less needed.
Slipping back	Kindness, not shame. Learning what led to it. Starting again quickly.

Being in two minds is a normal stage of change. A slip does not send you back to the beginning. You keep what you have learned.

The change I am thinking about, and the stage I am at

What would help me take the next step?

Based on the stages of change model developed by James Prochaska and Carlo DiClemente.

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My reasons for change

Write down your own reasons for making this change.

Name _____ Date _____

The change I am thinking about

Why would I want to make this change?

If I decided to, how would I go about it? What would I do first?

My three best reasons for doing it

How important is it to me, and why?

What will my life be like in a year if nothing changes?

What will it be like if I do make the change?

So, what do I think I will do?

Read your answers back out loud. Hearing your own reasons in your own voice matters more than hearing them from anyone else.

Based on Motivational Interviewing, developed by William Miller and Stephen Rollnick.

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How ready am I?

Rate how important the change is to you and how confident you are that you can make it.

Name _____ Date _____

The change I am considering

How important is it to me to make this change?

0 — 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 — 6 — 7 — 8 — 9 — 10

Not at all — Extremely

Why did I choose that number and not a lower one?

What would have to happen for it to go up by one or two?

How confident am I that I could do it if I decided to?

0 — 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 — 6 — 7 — 8 — 9 — 10

Not at all — Extremely

Why that number and not a lower one? What gives me some confidence?

What would help it go up by one or two?

What I have managed to change before, and how I did it

The next small step that feels possible

If importance is low, the work is in looking at what matters to you. If confidence is low, the work is in skills, support and smaller steps.

The importance and confidence rulers come from Motivational Interviewing, developed by William Miller and Stephen Rollnick.

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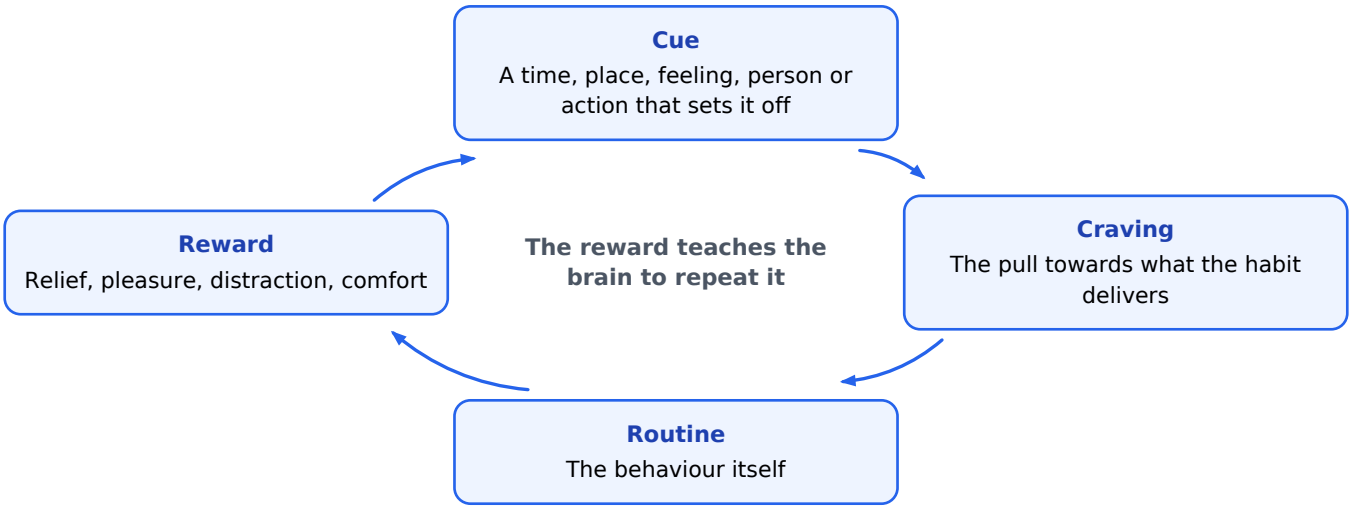
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The habit loop

The four parts of a habit, and how to change one of your own.

Name _____ Date _____

A habit is a behaviour that has become automatic because it was repeated in the same context and brought some kind of reward. This is why willpower alone rarely changes one.



Changing a habit

1. **Spot the cue.** When and where does it happen? What am I feeling? Who is there?
2. **Name the reward.** What do I really get from it? Often it is relief from a feeling.
3. **Keep the cue and the reward. Swap the routine** for one with a similar pay-off.
4. **Make the old routine harder and the new one easier,** then repeat. New loops take weeks, and slips are part of it.

My habit

The habit I want to change

Cue

When, where, feeling, who, what just happened?

Reward

What do I really get from it?

A different routine that could give me something similar

How I will make the old routine harder and the new one easier

The habit loop was popularised by Charles Duhigg in The Power of Habit.

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What does the habit do for me?

Work out what need the habit meets, and other ways to meet it.

Name _____ Date _____

Habits we want to drop are usually solving a problem. They calm us, reward us, fill time, numb something or help us fit in. If you take the habit away without another way of meeting the need, it comes back.

The habit

What it does for me	Is that true every time?	Other ways I could get the same thing
Helps me relax or switch off		
Takes the edge off difficult feelings		
Gives me a reward or treat		
Fills time or relieves boredom		
Helps me feel part of things		
Gives me a break or time to myself		
Something else:		

The need that matters most

The alternative I am most willing to try

When I tried it: how well did it meet the need (0 to 10)?

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My triggers and risky situations

List what sets off your urges and decide in advance what you will do.

Name _____ Date _____

Urges are set off by particular people, places, times and feelings. List yours, and decide in advance what you will do.

Outside triggers
Places (the pub, the kitchen, the sofa). People. Times of day. Pay day. Celebrations. Seeing or smelling it.

Inside triggers
Stress, boredom, loneliness, anger, tiredness, hunger. Feeling good and wanting to reward myself. "Just one will not hurt."

Trigger	How risky (0 to 10)	What I will do: avoid it, change it or cope with it

My riskiest time of the day or week

Who or what helps me stay on track

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Coping with cravings

Three steps for getting through a craving: delay, distract, decide.

Name _____ Date _____

A craving feels urgent, but it passes. Most peak and fade within 20 to 30 minutes, whether or not you act on them.

1. Delay	Tell yourself: "Not now. I will wait 20 minutes and see." Set a timer.
2. Distract	Do something that takes attention and, ideally, moves your body or gets you out of the room.
3. Decide	When the timer goes, check the urge. Remind yourself why you are doing this. Then choose.

What works for me

Things I can do for 20 minutes

- ☐ A walk
- ☐ Ring someone
- ☐ Cook
- ☐ A shower
- ☐ Tidy
- ☐ A game

What I will remind myself

My reasons. What happened last time.

What makes cravings worse

- ☐ Being hungry, tired or thirsty
- ☐ Being around it
- ☐ Arguing with the craving
- ☐ Telling myself "just one"
- ☐ Stress with no outlet
- ☐ Too much unplanned time

My riskiest times, and what I will have ready

Cut along the dashed lines. Keep a card in your wallet or phone case.

Craving plan

Delay 20 minutes. Distract. Decide.
It is a wave and it will pass.

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My reasons

Why I am doing this

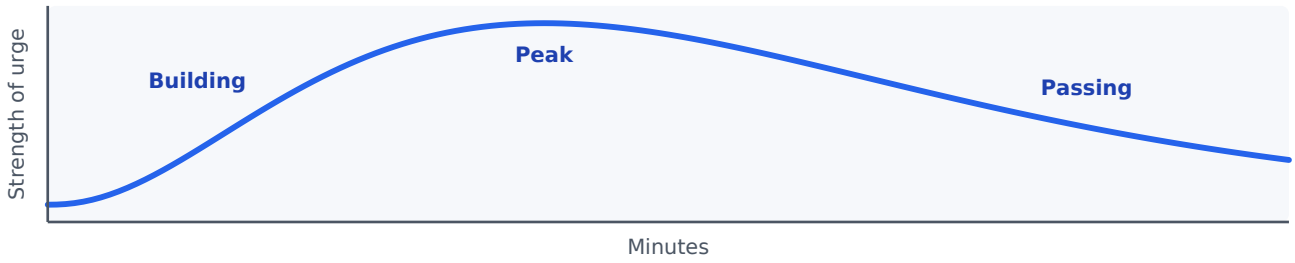
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Urge surfing

How to wait out an urge without acting on it.

Urges feel as if they will keep building until you give in. They do not. An urge rises, peaks and falls, usually within 20 to 30 minutes, whether or not you act on it. Each time you ride one out, the next is a little weaker.



How to surf

1. **Notice and name it.** "I am having an urge to..."
2. **Find it in your body.** Where is it strongest? Tight, restless, hollow, buzzing?
3. **Breathe and watch.** Keep your attention on the sensations. Describe them to yourself as they shift.
4. **Do not fight it and do not feed it.** No arguing, no planning how to give in. Just watching.
5. **Rate it** from 0 to 10 every few minutes.
6. **Stay until it drops.** Then turn to something that matters to you.

When	The urge	Start (0 to 10)	Peak	After 20 minutes	Did I act on it?

Urge surfing was developed by Alan Marlatt as part of relapse prevention.

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What to do after a slip

Why one slip does not have to become a relapse, and what to do next.

Almost everyone who changes a habit slips at some point. A slip, or lapse, is a single return to the old behaviour. A relapse is going back to the old pattern. One does not have to lead to the other.

How a slip turns into a relapse

After a slip, the thought arrives: "I have blown it. I am back to square one. I may as well carry on." Shame and hopelessness follow, and the old habit is the quickest way to escape those feelings. That reaction does more damage than the slip did.

Thinking that leads to relapse

- "I have ruined everything."
- "I obviously cannot do this."
- "I am weak."
- "I may as well keep going."

Thinking that gets you back on track

- "I slipped. That is common."
- "One slip does not wipe out my progress."
- "What led up to this?"
- "My next choice is what matters."

What to do after a slip

1. **Stop.** As soon as you notice. You do not have to finish the bottle, the packet or the evening.
2. **Get out of the situation** if you can.
3. **Talk to yourself kindly.** As you would to a friend.
4. **Tell someone** who supports you.
5. **Work out what happened.** What was the trigger? What was I feeling? What did I tell myself?
6. **Adjust the plan.** What would help next time?
7. **Start again straight away.** Not on Monday.

My slip plan

The first thing I will do

Who I will contact

What I want to say to myself

The "what the hell" effect is known as the abstinence violation effect, described by Alan Marlatt and Judith Gordon.

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Staying on track: my plan

A plan for keeping a change going once you have made it.

Name _____ Date _____

The change I have made, and why it matters to me

What has helped me get this far

My high-risk situations

People, places, times, feelings

What I will do in each

Early warning signs that I am heading for a slip (thoughts, moods, behaviour)

Thoughts that tempt me, and my replies

People who support me

Things in my life that make the old habit less needed

- [ ] Enough sleep
- [ ] Things I enjoy
- [ ] Company
- [ ] Being active
- [ ] A sense of purpose

If I slip, I will...

How I will mark my progress

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