

Habitually Fit

The second half of a man's life is made up of nothing but the habits he has acquired in the first half.

Feodor Dostoevski

My first meetings with new nutrition clients are always interesting, (yet slightly unnerving) adventures. I have each client write me a food log to get an idea of what they're eating. From there, I can determine how we can best proceed to make the changes they would like to make in their health.

I'll argue that it's in receiving these initial food diary logs that I can determine the mental mindset of that individual with more accuracy than if I was to chat with them directly about their goals. It is frightening, (yet hilarious) at how many people lie on their charts. I receive food logs that present the perfect picture of nutritional health. Yet the reason they are hiring me is for one of those general goals mentioned in Chapter 1. If in fact, they were eating a plan similar to what had been sent in their initial food log, I doubt their health would be in the place it is today and my services would not be needed.

But in order to see the changes physically on our body, and arrive at our personal **Fitness Utopia**, it requires a change in current behavioral habits. It is one of my

fundamental beliefs that a person's physicality is a by-product of what is going on inside a person's mind. So if you want to change your body (and make those changes last), you need to first change your mindset. This includes looking at the fundamental beliefs and thoughts that shape your actions and habits today.

For example, perhaps you have the habit of replaying past mistakes over and over again in your head, such as the numerous times in the past that you've started going to the gym, then stopped. As a result the feelings of shame and failure from those experiences stop you from joining any gym currently, or exercising at all.

Perhaps you have a habit of worrying you're going to injure your knees when you squat, because it's what happened the last few times. So you never go to the gym and squat. And guess what? You never learn to squat correctly... and because you don't squat, your knees get even worse.

The stories that we accept as part of our identity, and stories we believe to be true have the power to mould and shape our reality as we see it. We might allow one perceived failure in the past to mould and shape our reality for the same, (or a very similar) event in the future. If we have allowed this perceived failure to take root in our subconscious mind, we will do this without even knowing we have done it. We do this in every part of our lives: our health, our relationships, our career - *everything*.

This can actually be a positive thing, if the story you are claiming as your reality adds to the growth and transformation of you into your best self.

But if it isn't, often a single, perceived random event of failure can have lifetime ramifications on a person. It can change the course of a person's future forever if

these habits are not uncovered and exposed for the frauds that they are.

When I was a kid, I use to run track and field. One day, when attempting a high jump, I launched from the ground to jump over it and I accidentally landed with my back on the bar. Beforehand, I had been decent at high jump. Although it definitely stung, thankfully, I didn't hurt myself seriously. No broken bones, and no bruises!

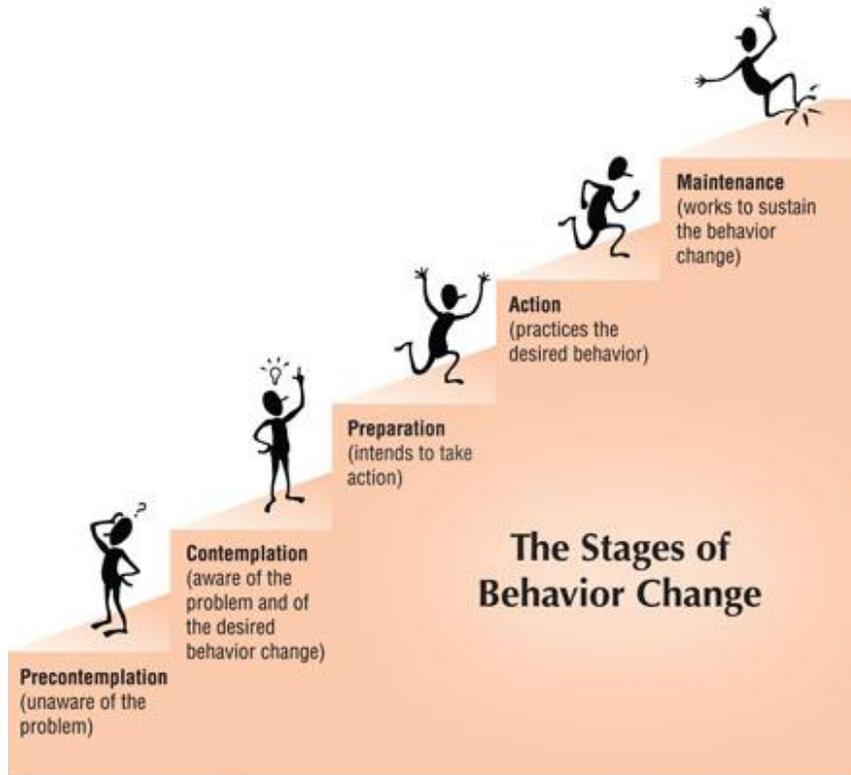
After that single event however, I became very afraid to do high jump. I worked myself up into such a frenzy, worried I would land on my back again whenever I jumped. It took two weeks to muster up the courage to jump again. When I finally did, guess what happened? You guessed it!

From then on, I decided I must be a horrible high jumper and I chose to never do high jump again. And sadly I never have. Knowing what I know now about habits and stories of perceived failure, I could have chosen to write a new story.

You too, can choose to write a new story. Can you think of anything that has happened in your life that has changed the way you behave and interact with the world?

If you raise your standards but don't really believe you can meet them, you've already sabotaged yourself. You won't even try; you'll be lacking the sense of certainty that allows you to tap the deepest capacity that's within you... Our beliefs are like unquestioned commands, telling us how things are, what's possible and impossible and what we can and cannot do. They shape every action, every thought and every feeling that we experience. As a result, changing our belief systems is central to making any real and lasting change in our lives.

Anthony Robbins



Sources: Grimley 1997 (75) and Prochaska 1992 (148)

A change in your behavioral habits is firstly brought about by a conscious change in your thoughts. Simply put: **if you want different results, you gotta think different things.** Because thoughts become things! If you work to consciously think these different things everyday, eventually

these different thoughts will become part of your unconscious habits and beliefs and *voila!* A new habit is made, and you're on the express train to your **Fitness Utopia.**

There is a transtheoretical model (developed by James O. Prochaska, Ph.D. & Carlo C. DiClemente, Ph.D in 1982), which categorizes *'The 5 Different Stages of Change'* an individual exhibits when attempting to change behavioral patterns. Whilst this model was created to better understand the behavior of how smokers give up their addiction to cigarettes, it is also useful in categorize the stage of changes in any type of behavioral habit: good or bad. It's a fairly accurate representation of the general stages you may experience when trying to drop a toxic behavioral pattern (and essentially the

unhealthy actions that go with it), to instill healthier alternatives that work in harmony with your **3W**.

Stage 1. Pre-Contemplation of Habits

This is usually the stage where I find most of my nutrition clients in. Although they have approached me to make changes, subconsciously they will sabotage themselves by their unwillingness to be honest on their log, and accept their situation for what it is. The answers on their food log show me they are *in denial* about their unhealthy habits, and/or are unwilling to see their problem listed so plainly on paper in front of them. It's just too much of the real deal! Information is filtered through selectively, and a victim mentality is often apparent. Do any of these sentences sound familiar?

“I have no idea what happened to me, I don't know why I put on so much weight!”

“It's my husband's fault, he shouldn't bring home Dunkin' Donuts everyday from work.”

“I am just far too busy to have the time to workout and eat right.”

“If I had time, I'd look like you!”

“I can't cook.”

“I'm broke!”

“It’s just one bite and one drink, what’s that gonna do?”

“I don’t have a gym membership and the closest gym is too far away anyway.”

“There have been studies that show you that your genes create your body type, so it doesn't matter if you exercise or eat healthy or whatever. I have a big boned family, so I’m doomed!”

“Weight doesn’t determine your health.”

“I’m too old now.”

“I’ve had kids, things change after kids.”

Sigh.

It’s honestly heartbreaking to see people block themselves from the blessing of how good their body is designed to feel. Although they are different statements, all sentences share a common thread: that each person is un-willing to accept **complete responsibility** for their own health and fitness, and the habits they execute to have gotten them there. They are also unwilling to change those toxic beliefs and habits that will essentially change their bodies, and transform their entire lives.

What has happened, has happened. Make peace with it, forgive yourself, take responsibility for yourself and your life, so you can then move forward.

- Oprah

I am a horrible yogi. But I love yoga for one of its greatest teachings. And that is the concept of accepting yourself in this very moment and everything that makes you, **you.**

In a class, there are many around me in advanced poses, legs behind their head (or in positions I think I would otherwise see in a bondage torture chamber). It can be easy to get frustrated, or embarrassed that I am not where they are. I could also try and fake it till I fall flat on my face. I'll admit that like many of you, I'm a great faker. But I can never do it for too long. The cracks start to show. Plus, while I'm spending all of my energy on faking it, I'm not personally progressing from the true place I should be working from. The place from which I will genuinely progress, and the place that can lead me to my ultimate goal: my **Fitness Utopia.**

However, if I surrender, and accept the un-comfortability of where I'm at without shame. If I am honest about where I am at in each pose (and in my practice), I am able to then lean into these poses. From there, the path of my own progression into more advanced poses appears in a very natural, flowing, progressive, and predestined fashion.

You will never create new healthy habits if you cannot be honest, and *accept the existence* of your current unhealthy ones. Usually an emotional trigger, (or an event) will need to occur for a person to wake up, take responsibility and accept their situation for

what it is. Perhaps your Doctor told you to change. Maybe you finally got on the scale and didn't like what you saw. Perhaps you are reading this book.

The lesson? Wherever you go, there you are. So accept, and surrender. Accept it fully for what it is, and just like Oprah has said, "...forgive yourself, so you can then move forward."

Stage 2. Contemplation of Habits

Have you ever been to those kids playgrounds at the park, and often they have a tiny little horse that's attached to a big spring? The spring makes the horse swing back and forth to large degrees, but the horse never travels anywhere. It's stuck in the playground.

If you're in Stage 2, I'm imagining that you are riding that horse as a fully grown adult in the playground. And it's okay and acceptable for a little awhile. Hell, it's even fun! But after awhile, if you stay on there - you start to look silly, and duh, you never go anywhere.

Overthinking is the thief of progress.

Welcome to the Contemplation stage. If you have gone through reading this entire book without doing any of the steps *yet*, newsflash! You are in the Contemplation stage, still deciding whether the struggle of instilling new healthier habits are worth the fight to exchange them for your older, toxic ones. Your unhealthy habits are under attack, and they are fighting hard to keep everything at the old status quo. They are

best mates with overthinking, indecision and self sabotage. Even reading this book has them rallying together and ready to go to war!

Your quick fix? I always find that mediating on my **why** is helpful if I find myself wanting to stick to an old unhealthy habit; or any habits that don't work in harmony with my **what**; even though I've been given an opportunity to **jump** and change it. Remembering **when** is also helpful in minimizing analysis paralysis, so you can act *right now, in this moment*, and you aren't putting the task of changing your unhealthy habits in the, 'someday pile for someday.'

Additionally, visualization or doing the exercises that are your best triggers for action are useful from progressing from bad habits to good ones. When a plan is only as good as its execution, you can have all the answers in the world. But until you **jump**, until you do it: there you are, rocking back and forth on that kids horse in the playground, putting your dreams and fitness goals aside for someday. Ya feel me?

P.S. You look ridiculous. Get off.

Stage 3. Preparation of Habits

A goal without a plan is just a wish.

Execution of Steps 1-3 of **The Mind Diet** fall under this stage. If you are in Stage 3, setting your calendar up with *The Big D* and forecasted **little d's** along the way, you

are well on your way to *creating new, healthier habits* that last, and will propel you forward to your **Fitness Utopia**. Because the best way to have success (not only in health, but in any area of your life), is to prepare for it!

Stage 4. Action of Habits

We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence is not an event, but a habit.

Now, as this chapter is about instilling habits that create and maintain a habitually fit *you*, Stage 4 and Stage 5 are most relevant in the habit making arena. Congratulations if you've made your first **jump** of Step 4 of **The Mind Diet**. This is the *only way* to begin a new habit. You've pushed past fear, doubt and other evil forces to take your chance at flight. We don't stop there though! To make it a lasting change on your healthy habits, there needs to be a consistent, conscious action of multiple **jumps** that move you towards your **little d's** and ultimately **The Big D**. In short, *you need to create the habit to always jump* when the opportunity is there. Winners recognize that it is the multiple jumps throughout their life that they've taken that has separated them from the pack, and defined them as the winners they are today.

Let's go back and look at our good friend Becky and her specific fitness goal. With her **3W** in mind, I have listed examples of new habits she can execute to create new, conscious healthier habits that help her get to her goal.

BECKY

WHAT: Ten pound weight loss

WHEN: Two months

OLD UNHEALTHY HABIT	NEW HEALTHY CONSCIOUS HABIT	HEALTHY SUBCONSCIOUS HABITS
<p>Becky would eat cake at the office whenever there was a birthday</p>	<p>Becky politely refuses from now on, because she has her wedding coming up. She instead has a stash of healthy protein bars, and whenever there is a birthday, she will eat one of those instead of the cake.</p>	<p>Becky doesn't even want cake because she works too hard to blow it all away on some sugar. Sometimes, she might have a bite but generally the cake seems too sweet for her.</p>
<p>Becky loves going out for Friday night work drinks</p>	<p>Becky stopped going out for Friday night drinks completely for 3 weeks, even though she felt like she missed out on some good times and workplace gossip. For those 3 weeks, she scheduled a spa treatment each Friday instead to reward herself for not boozing up. After the initial 3 weeks, she felt strong enough to go there and not have any alcohol, because she was feeling really good and didn't want to ruin the progress she was finally seeing. Plus, her wedding was now only 5 weeks away and she was down 6 pounds already!</p>	<p>Becky can't go for Friday night drinks because she is training for a triathlon, and they have scheduled ride every Saturday. She doesn't really mind because she finds out all the workplace gossip on Monday, and she really enjoys the company of her triathlon group - who are also great at gossiping.</p>
<p>Becky would be too tired after work sometimes to go to the gym when she was scheduled to go</p>	<p>Becky changed her workout schedule to the morning and scheduled it into her calendar. She didn't like getting up early but she knew she needed to, because she wouldn't go at the end of the day and losing an hour or so of sleep was so worth it when she could envision herself in her wedding dress, walking down the aisle.</p>	<p>Becky is in a regular routine where during the week her alarm is set to go off so she gets up and goes to the gym like she goes to work everyday. She doesn't even think about it anymore. She has created the habit.</p>
<p>Becky took the advice of her unhealthy best friend that that hated the gym and was "naturally skinny". Her friend said she was working out too much and was overtraining.</p>	<p>Becky has a program and nutrition plan designed for her by a fitness professional. She trusts this fitness professional knows what is best for her body and her results, even if it contradicts with the advice of her best friend.</p>	<p>Becky politely thanks her best friend for her advice and offers to refer her onto her own fitness professional who she thinks could help her best friend.</p>

Stage 5. Maintenance

In this model, Stage 5 is defined as sustained successful lifestyle modification. The hard work of changing habits has been completed. New, healthy habits are in place and the older habits can seem unnatural and futile to a person that has successfully arrived or is well on their way to their **what**.

Referring to the example of Becky, the table above shows how a conscious, consistent, (and usually uncomfortable) set of **jumps** or changes in her actions (at the start of her fitness journey in the first column), has created the subconscious shift over time to naturally embody those healthy habits consistently in the third column. As she has created this healthy habit, she will now subconsciously move away from any of the unhealthy actions and habits of her old self. Great success!

Habits, once created, are hard to change, whether they are good or bad. By nature, humans are resistant to change, even if we know that a change in our habits is in our ultimate best interests! An *astronomical* level of energy, faith and continual conscious effort over time is required to uproot any habit, then replace it with another one that contradicts the former. The time taken is highly variable and dependent on each person. It can depend on an individual's personal level of motivation, their level of honesty and acceptance, willingness to change, their current fitness and health level, and what specific habit they would like to change.

OK, calm down. I can feel you freaking out through the cosmos. The good thing is, whilst it is very difficult, it is also **completely possible!** I am a living, breathing and

working example of a person who has made a change in habits, health, body and lifestyle. Knowledge is power! In knowing this, now *you can choose* to make the changes necessary.

Step 5: Create The Habit

It is our choices that show us who we are, far more than our abilities.

- J.K. Rowling

If I'm doing it and Becky is doing it, then this means all the cool kids are doing it. So that means you gotta do it too! It's time to drink your honesty serum. Make that a double shot if it will help you to do it faster. Half the battle is simply recognizing and accepting what particular habits of yours need to be kept, and which ones you need to let go of.

In the following table, write down every unhealthy, destructive habit you can think of that hinders your journey to your **what** in the left column below. On the middle column, write down how this habit can be changed to work in line with your **what** and **why**. In the third column, list something you can do right now to change these habits. **(Jump!)**

The Mind Diet Mental Moves

On Exercising Good Habits

The Balloon Drop

This exercise involves endowing helium balloons to release toxic habits that do not support your greater good. Additionally, *The Balloon Drop* can be useful in letting go of toxic entities outside of yourself, such as other people.

1. Write each of your unhealthy habits/toxic entities on each balloon. You can also grab your workout buddies and do *The Balloon Drop* together. This can be a fun, cathartic group exercise!
2. In a circle, each person takes their turn standing in the middle. Speak of how each particular endowed balloon has stopped you from stepping into your best self, in health and/or life. Dwell on the weight of what each balloon represents. If you are doing this exercise alone, I find it better to speak out aloud as if people were there.
3. When you are ready to let go of each balloon, repeat this sentence: “Today, *I choose* to release the need for this in my life.”
4. Then let go and release. Feels good, doesn't it?

The Squat Alarm

This can be done either by yourself or with a group. It's also a great exercise to do in an office. Set some alarms on your phone. Choose a sound that is different from your ringtone (or anything else.)

This sound is hereby known as *The Squat Alarm*. You can also get another person to set your alarms so you are unaware of when the alarms are going to go off.

When they do go off, you and your group must stop whatever they are doing, and complete fifty squats. Whatever your group is doing, upon hearing the sound you must drop it low for 50 repetitions. It can be a hilarious activity in the office and loads of fun if everybody gets involved!

The aim is for you and your group to associate this alarm with exercise. In time, you can use this sound to indicate it's time for your workouts at the gym or whatever activity you have chosen. This is especially awesome for those early morning workouts. Once you train your brain to associate that chosen sound with fitness and health, it will be easier than you think to get up and get your butt to the gym - because you've created the habit to do so!

Your Mind Diet Mutual Motivator

A great way to keep healthy habits is to choose a *Mind Diet Mutual Motivator*. Your *Mind Diet Mutual Motivator* is exactly like having a workout partner, but better! It is someone who *ideally* has read **The Mind Diet** and is familiar with its principles on programming, and has had some success with instilling habits that have resulted in

sustained change. Your *Mind Diet Mutual Motivator* will be considered one of your cheerful entities that support your journey to success (more on cheerful entities in Chapter 9).

You don't need to be of a similar physical shape to your *Mind Diet Mutual Motivator* for you to both be great match for each other. What is of utmost importance however, is for your commitment level to be the same. And by the same, I mean both of you are committed to keeping it 100%. Your *Mind Diet Mutual Motivator* will have a copy of the program you have designed for each calendar month in advance. You can choose to also have a copy of theirs. Each day, you will both check in and hold each other accountable for what you have set out to do.

You Can Do It!

When I was 18 years old, my staple diet consisted of 2 minute ramen noodles a few times a day. I broke that monotony up with entire blocks of chocolate eaten as my dinner. I ate mud cake for breakfast. Often! If it wasn't mud cake then I had Nutella on toast everyday. In hindsight, my face looked like it had been stung by bees because of all the sodium, but I didn't know any better. I also felt like absolute crap, but the way I felt was 'normal' for me at that point, so I didn't think too much of it. Genetically, I am also allergic to alcohol, but in Australia, (a country that defines its culture in having a few beers anywhere, anytime) it was just not convenient to be allergic. Because it was habitual to do so, I would drink as much as everyone else even though there was a high chance I would faint in public due to the allergy (which happened many times, but that's another story.) You don't need to be a rocket scientist

to know that this was not a habit I executed with my best interests in mind.

Today, I am the oldest I have ever been while also being in the best shape I have ever been in. At an age of... well, I'm no spring chicken, let's just say that. But I have never felt better physically. People ask me, what do you do to stay in shape like that? And I could talk about specific exercises, and squats, and meal plans, and macronutrients, and fitness competitions, and marathons. But the semantics don't really matter. Because the real answer is this:

I created the habit to live my life in my Fitness Utopia.

And just like you might be doing now, I started in a place that was a world away from where I currently am. I struggled and fought through many conscious actions to change when everything inside of me did not want to. I battled through injury, lack of sleep, no motivation, depression, ridiculous work load, money troubles, fuck-boys and breakups. But I made it! And so can you.

Today it's not all smooth sailing, but this is life, remember? It ain't perfect, pumpkin. But in the Maintenance phase, it's not nearly as difficult as you might think it is. Because now my unconscious healthy habits are always working keep me in my **Fitness Utopia**, it would be just as hard for me to regress back to my original fitness level. This would mean creating a new habit, and I've already shown you how difficult that can be. So sometimes I skip the gym. Sometimes I go out and get drunk, and end up at gay bars tipping strippers in their jocks. But in the big scheme of things, it won't matter. I'm in the habit of doing the right thing most of the time, and habits are hard as hell to break!

The Lesson

In fitness, I've got some good habits. **That's all.** So can you.

