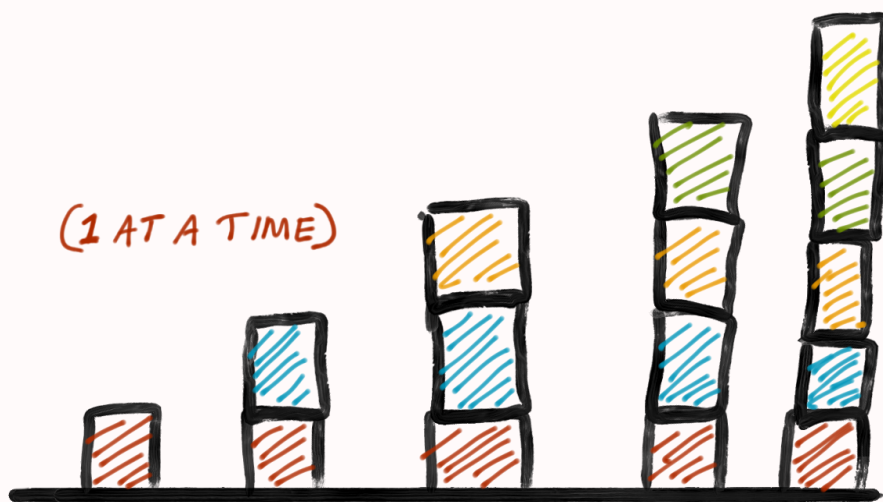


The Road To Better Habits



DARIUS FOROUX

The Road To Better Habits

A Short Guide To Help Transform Your Life By
Transforming Your Habits

Written by

Darius Foroux

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THE “ROAD TO BETTER HABITS” FRAMEWORK

Where you are in your life is a result of your habits. The American historian and philosopher, Will Durant, said it best:

“We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit.”

I think that’s also true for the opposite of excellence. Mediocrity is a result of mediocre habits. That means we can go from mediocrity to excellence by changing our habits. But how do you do that? Before we get into that, I want to clarify my statement: Habits change your life, but they do not *guarantee* success.

Because that’s what “the habits of millionaires” type of articles and books tell us. We get it, Elon Musk sleeps 2 hours a day and eats Cheerios for dinner—or *something like that*. But what the writers of those type of shortsighted articles hide from you, the reader, *is that correlation doesn’t mean causation*. Waking up early, working hard, and taking cold showers do not *cause* success. No one illustrates that point better than Nassim Taleb, who wrote this in *Fooled By Randomness*:

“Hard work, showing up on time, wearing a clean (preferably white) shirt, using deodorant, and some such conventional things contribute to success—they are certainly necessary but may be insufficient as they do not cause success.”

In addition to that, the authors of those types of “success” articles make another thinking mistake: The survivorship bias. It’s a common mistake to only look at successful people without looking at people who did the same thing and failed.

So when I talk about habits, I don’t talk about outcomes. I talk about changing our actual behavior so that it improves the quality of our lives.

Now that we’ve got that out of the way, I want to introduce my “road to better habits” framework, which is based on 5 practical steps.

Step 1: Decide what habits are worth it

Look, I can talk to you about the habits that have changed *my* life habits all day long, but that's not helpful. The reason is that only YOU can decide what a good habit is.

Deciding if a habit is worth it to you is critical to forming new habits. Too often we hear about something, and we think: "I should do that!" Really? Should I wake up an hour earlier? Should I take cold showers? Should I eat like a cave person? Should I run every day? Maybe waking up early is actually helpful to you. I don't know. When I wake up early, I behave like a grumpy old man who hates people—that deteriorates the quality of my life.

Hence, I don't wake up very early (7 AM or earlier) no matter how many people tell me it will make me successful. Just ask yourself this:

"Will habit x improve the quality of my life?"

The reason you want to ask yourself that question is that we all need a *reason* to change. We need something that's bigger than superficial reasons. "I want to read one book a week," you might say. Why? So you can do what? What's your vision? What are your goals?

For example, I read two books a week because I'm a teacher/trainer. I need to learn every single day so I can do my job better. I do strength training because I want to be a useful person. I do many chores around my house and the office. I want to make and fix things. I need to be in good shape to lift heavy things or do strenuous tasks.

That's my *why*. What's yours? Answer that. And then, adopt habits that bring you closer to the things you want in life.

Step 2: Form one habit at a time

I wrote about how I successfully formed a daily exercise habit. It was something I tried to do for years. There were many reasons I failed, one of them is that I always tried to form a million habits at the same time. I don't know why, but sometimes I get on this whole self-improvement spree. I feel like reading more, writing more, working more, living better, eating healthier, you name it.

It's best to hold back the enthusiasm if you're the same. In general, when you do too many things at the same time, you end up with chaos. And you always end up right back where you started. Sounds familiar? One of the reasons we try to do so many things at the same time is that we overestimate ourselves. We think we can achieve a lot in a short period. That's false.

We can achieve A LOT over a long period. That's true. So focus on one thing at a time **per area of your life**. To me, the areas are career, health, learning, money, and relationships. Stack one habit on top of the other, one by one.

Step 3: Quit all your bad habits

I made the mistake to apply the previous strategy (about forming habits) to quitting habits. But I learned that it's not effective. If you want to make a change, it's best to go cold turkey.

We're not talking about alcoholism or addiction here. We're talking about by habits like procrastinating, complaining, worrying, binge watching, etc. You *can* quit those types of habits. So if you're serious about making a change. Make a BIG change. And don't be surprised to see a BIG return on your life.

Step 4: Set the bar very low

We often want to do big things, without understanding it. Starting a business or building a career requires effort. In fact, everything in life that's remotely valuable requires a lot of work to achieve. So before we do something big, let's start small. Similarly, before you change the world, change yourself first. Leo Tolstoy, the author of ***War and Peace***, put it best:

"Everyone thinks of changing the world, but no one thinks of changing himself."

Focus on small things. Build a strong foundation. Without it, we can never achieve anything meaningful.

- Want to run daily? Start by walking.
- Want to write a book? Write once sentence.
- Want to start a business? Get one client.

- Want to read two books a week? Read one page a day.
- Want to save for your retirement? Don't buy another shirt you're only going to wear once.
- Etc.

Big things follow by themselves.

Step 5: Track your habits

A few years ago, I started a daily reading habit. I messed up very often in the beginning.

I would read for five or six days straight, and then all of a sudden, I would completely forget about it. It's like the desire for reading more just vanished from my head. You want to do something. You do it. And then you forget about it. Shit happens, right?

No, that's too easy. You know why I forgot about my habits or quit them? It's because it didn't keep track. I had no accountability.

Don't let yourself off the hook like that. We must track our progress *every day* remind ourselves of what we're trying to achieve. Remember: We form habits to transform our lives—to make things BETTER.

So track your habits *daily*. One day, you'll be surprised by how much your life changed by such, seemingly, small habits. At least, that's what happened to me and the thousands of other people who focus on their habits. And I'm sure it will happen to you too.

That's the framework. Just 5 simple steps that lead you to forming better habits. Let's get started with step 1. To help you decide what habits are worth it to you, I will share my own habits in the next chapter.

THE BEST HABITS I HAVE FORMED

Over the years, I've adopted many different "positive" habits. To me, a habit is positive when it improves the quality of my life. A lot has been written about forming habits.

How hard is? How long does it take? What's the best way to break habits? How do we adopt new habits? My experience is that everyone can adopt any habit they want. There's only one condition though: You need a good reason to make a change ([I talk about that in-depth on this podcast episode](#)).

And in 99% of cases, the reason to change comes from personal suffering, sadness, and hurt. At some point, you can't stand your current behavior anymore. Don't worry about *how* you will change. Focus on *what* habits you want to form and *why*.

Here are my current habits (which I have been consistently doing for at least 4 years)—with a brief explanation of what the habits are good for.

1. Exercising

Strength training has several benefits. It protects bone health, muscle mass, keeps you lean, increases energy levels, and prevents injuries. I've been lifting weights since I was 16. It's the only habit on this list that I've been doing for that long. Like many people who lift weights, I started with split routines.

That means you work out different muscle during every session. With most routines, you're training a specific muscle only one time per week. It turns out that muscles need more stress to become stronger. Ideally, you want to train all your muscles, 3 times a week. That's why I've been doing full body workouts. It's simple, practical, and it works.

If you can't MAKE the time to go for a daily walk, you're not in control of your life. I don't even walk for the health benefits. Sure, walking keeps the body moving and is good for you.

But I go for a daily walk (at least 30 minutes) because it breaks the pattern of our mundane lives. Look, we can't deny that life is routine. And there's nothing wrong

with that. But when you walk outside, you're forced to be one with the world. It heightens your senses. You can go alone or with someone else. You can have a good conversation. Or you can simply enjoy the surroundings.

2. Setting Daily Priorities

This is one of the best productivity strategies there is. We all know that focus is what brings us results. No focus? No results. So how do you focus? By limiting your options and tasks. Elimination is the key. Be very clear about what you want to achieve every single day, week, and year. Every day, work on 3-4 essential (and small) tasks that **will bring you closer to your weekly and yearly goals.**

3. Reading

I get it, you're too busy to read. Or maybe you just don't *like* to read. Well, you're not getting off that easily. Reading is essential for your cognition. But you already knew that. How about this? Reading will also turn you into a better thinker and writer.

"But I still don't like to read." Well, there are many things in life we don't like, but we still do them. Instead of telling yourself you don't like to read, learn to enjoy it by doing it every day. And like magic, one day, you'll *love* to read.

4. Sleeping 7-8 hours

I never sacrifice my sleep for anything. I recently canceled a meeting in the morning because I slept late. The night before, I was reading a good book that totally consumed me.

After reading, I started taking notes. And before I knew it, it was 2 am. I had to wake up at 7 AM to make it to the meeting. I canceled the meeting. I'm not going to sleep for 6 hours so I can take a meeting when I know that I'll be tired the whole day.

Some people can perform well with 5 hours of sleep. But most of us need more. If you're part of the latter group, make sure you get enough sleep. And be dead serious about it. If you're not in a position to cancel meetings, sleep early.

5. Practicing Gratitude

Nothing will make you happier than being grateful for what you have. Every morning, I write down a few things I'm grateful for. The people in my life, my job, house, the weather (no matter how cold or warm it is), you name it.

I also think about the things that did not happen to me. Too many people in the world live in poverty or without freedom in a country that oppresses its citizens. If you're alive and live in a free country, it's like hitting the jackpot of life.

6. Meditation

We're so focused on our goals that we forget to enjoy the present moment. This is one of my biggest pitfalls. I really need to remind myself EVERY SINGLE day that I should enjoy the now. We're always *waiting* until we achieve something. "I will be happy then." Nope, you won't if you're always stuck in the future. Find a trigger that brings you back to the present moment.

For example, I recently bought a new watch. During the same time, **I was reading a lot about this spiritual stuff**. Now, every time I look at my watch, I say, "What time is it? NOW."

7. Tracking Money

If you can't save 30%, save 10%. Saving is not about how *much*. It's about how *often*. You save by cutting out useless things you do daily or weekly. You don't need to buy a latte every day. You also don't need to buy "organic" cashew nuts for \$10.

Save on the small things. They will turn into big lumps of cash in time. **Especially if you invest that extra cash**. And that is also the secret to these 10 habits. They are all small. And the daily progress you make seems insignificant. You will only see the return it has on your life over time. You must stick to these habits until your life gets better. And when that happens, you'll keep going—not because you have to, but because you want to.

8. Writing

I need to get my thoughts in order every day. I do that by writing. That helps me to focus on what matters to me. That's why I journal. Even when I'm not writing articles, I sit down and journal—only for myself. I don't write in my journal for others. Journaling is also an excellent tool to become a better thinker and person.

Writing every day is the most important habit that I have formed in my life.

Without question, writing every day has brought me many great things: A better career, fulfillment, self-improvement, and most importantly, the ability to share my ideas with you, the reader. I wanted to be a writer for a decade before I became one. All it took was a decision. At some point, you have to look at yourself and say, "I'm a writer." And then, start doing your job by writing every day. I recommend that to everyone because of these 5 reasons:

1. **Better self-discipline**

Living a life of pleasure is simple. Everyone can "Netflix and chill." It's easy to "hang out" all the time. But those easy things will not give you inner satisfaction. The reason that we don't do anything useful with our precious time is that we lack self-discipline. But when you write every day, you strengthen your discipline. You can use that better self-discipline to achieve virtually anything in life.

2. **Improving your persuasion skills**

Writing is nothing more than persuading the reader with words. But your tools are limited—you can only use words to tell a story. And when you write for yourself, you're trying to convince yourself of your own thoughts. So the more you write, the better you become at persuasion.

3. **Cultivating self-awareness**

Nothing will help you to get to know yourself more than translating your thoughts into words. When you force yourself to write every day, you automatically become more aware of your thoughts. And self-awareness is one of the most important skills that predict career success.

4. **Better decision making**

Too often, we do something without fully understanding why we do it. Think about it. How often do you answer, "I don't know" when someone asks you, "Why did you do that?" That's the sign of weak thinking. Sure,

we don't know everything. But we must be aware of that too. And when you write about your **decision-making process**, you will automatically become more aware of the "why."

5. **Seeing the power of compounding in action**

When you do something every day, you don't notice any difference at that moment. You think, "Where are the benefits?" But when you *keep doing* it for a long time, the positive effects **compound**. Writing every day will demonstrate the power of compounding like very few other things can.

To be honest, there are many other benefits to writing every day. It's great for reflection, dealing with anxiety, and coming up with new ideas. On top of that, you can use writing to inspire others or achieve your goals.

Pick One Habit Per Area Of Your Life

Often, people give advice like, "Just get started!" And there's truth in that. Starting is important. But here's the thing: Anyone can change their life for a day—or two, or three. But there are very few people who are consistent for years. But you need to do good things for a *long* time to see the actual benefits.

So don't just get *started*. Keep going.

And that's what you will be able to do by the end of this book. For now, it's important to pick only one of these habits per area of your life. No need to do everything. For example, you could focus on forming a daily writing habit. For your health, you can focus on working out every day. But remember to not overdo it. You don't want to start working out daily, taking all kinds of supplements, *and* start with intermittent fasting. That's what Step 2 of the road to better habits is about: Form one habit at a time. Once you've formed a habit, you can move on to the next on your list.

I hope you have identified habits that are worth it to you by now. Step 3 is to quit all your bad habits. Don't know which habits are bad? We'll talk about that in the next chapter.

QUIT THESE HABITS

The reason I study productivity is because I'm an unproductive person. I truly am. I sleep too much. I talk too much. I read too much. I listen to music all day. I watch movies. I buy gadgets that turn me into a zombie.

If it wasn't for my productivity system, I wouldn't get anything done. I wouldn't even write this article. But if you browse social media, all you see is super productive, healthy, and wealthy people. Is that really the case? I don't know. I just know this: You can't be productive 24/7. And a big part of being productive is about getting rid of unproductive habits we all have. What follows is a list of 11 unproductive habits that I learned to do less, or to eliminate.

1. **Overworking**

Some days I can work 12 or 13 hours straight. I just take a break for exercising and eating. And I can keep that up for a few days. But after a few days, there always comes a crash. Big time. I struggle. I can't get stuff done. I don't even want to get stuff done. It's not good. So I learned to be more calculated with how much I work. Like Ernest Hemingway, *stop working at the height of your day.*

2. **Worrying**

What if I go broke? What if I lose my job? What if she doesn't love me? What if I get cancer? What if this plane crashes? What if I lose my sight? What if I...? You got your head so far in the sand like an ostrich that you can't see how self-absorbed that way of thinking is. Here's the thing: **YOU'RE NOT GOING TO DIE RIGHT THIS SECOND.** Get over yourself. Stop worrying. And do something useful.

3. **Stubbornness**

We deal with people all the time. Do you ever think: "Why should I listen to this guy?" Or: "What does she know?" I don't know. Maybe more than you do? We just don't know until we listen to others. When you're always cynical and stubborn, you're actually sabotaging *yourself*.

4. **Ignoring Your Health**

The way you feel determines the quality of your work. If you're always tired and feel bad, how do you expect to do great work? When you're in good shape and eat well, your work will reflect that.

5. **Checking Things**

What are you doing? We often say something like, “I was just checking Instagram,” or something like that. But “checking” is not a useful activity. It might be a verb, but it’s not a real action. When I started blogging, I always checked my stats for no reason. Then I thought: What’s the outcome of checking? Nothing. So stop doing it.

6. **Not Having Goals**

Every time successful people say, “I don’t have goals,” I know they are full of shit. Who can be successful at anything without aiming for it? Don’t believe the stories. People just want to make you believe they became successful without effort. **Set a goal, and then work towards it.**

7. **Saying Yes**

Most people are afraid to say no. Maybe you don’t want to let people down. Maybe you are uncomfortable with the word no. I don’t know. Doesn’t matter, really. What matters is this: If you keep saying yes, you’re living someone else’s life. Think about it. Deep down, we all know that it’s true. We’re not even in control of our own time. Want to be in full control of your life? Say no to a million things and yes to a few things that matter.

8. **Relying On Your Memory**

Not writing down your thoughts, ideas, tasks, etc. is insane. Why? Because you’re wasting a lot of brain power when you rely on your memory. When you write everything down, you can use your brainpower for other things. Like solving problems. That’s actually useful and advances your career.

9. **Neglecting Your Personal Education**

“Woohoo! I finished college. Goodbye lame old books!” Who learns one thing and stops forever? I don’t even know why we have that idea planted in our brain. I always thought that learning stops when you get out of school. But the truth is: Your *life* stops when learning stops. Invest in yourself. Learn something. Read books. Get courses. Watch videos. Do it from home or go places. It doesn’t matter. Just learn new things. You’ll be more productive and more excited about life.

10. **Complaining**

We all know, and yet, we all *do it*. Complaining is one of those habits we always try to quit. But it never lasts. I’m no different. That’s why I always remind myself that complaining is a waste of effort. Just the awareness of that will help you to stop.

11. **Lack Of Focus**

Many successful people say that the **ability to focus** is the number one reason they've made it big. And it's no surprise. The people who are all over the place never seem to get anywhere.

Often, people don't understand why I focus on what *not* to do. The reason is that I like to learn by inverting. It's the same strategy Warren Buffett and **Charlie Munger** used to become the most well-known investors of the world.

When you want to become successful or productive, look at how you become the opposite. Turn things upside down. That's what we've done in this section too. By simply avoiding these unproductive habits, you'll automatically become more productive. When you combine this with a handful of productivity tips (**see here**), you have a reliable system.

And I always rely on my system to work smarter, better, happier, and more effectively. It took me years to figure out that having a system is a good thing, and a few more years to create one, but it was worth it. Because now, I get to be a productive person. Not bad for an unproductive person, right?

What's next for you? How about quitting all the above habits?

A FEW THOUGHTS ON QUITTING BAD HABITS

I've tried many different ways to break my bad habits. But none of the conventional tips and tricks brought me lasting success. We try the weirdest things to get rid of our bad habits. And we blindly believe every single person who gives us advice on the topic. The most popular advice is this: *"Replace a bad habit with a good one."* It's wrong. It doesn't work. I've discovered a much more effective way of changing our lives by changing our habits. I'd love to share it with you. But first, let's ask ourselves a question.

What's A Bad Habit?

To me, everything we do that doesn't have a positive return is a bad habit. Sometimes, it's what we *don't* do that's the bad habit. For example, I consider laziness as a bad habit.

If you're too lazy to get out of bed in the morning, clean your house, or go to the gym; you're not a worthless person—you simply have a bad habit that you need to get rid of. That's how I look at most unproductive behavior. I'm not saying that everyone has the same ideas about the meaning of life. But if you, like me, **believe that the purpose of life is to be useful**, you need the right habits to back that up.

Simply put, anything that prevents you from being useful is a bad habit. We all know that a lot of our behavior is bad. It doesn't require a genius to understand that eating junk food, smoking, drinking alcohol, complaining, watching the news, browsing social media, lashing out at people, and sitting on your ass all day are bad things. They have no positive return. No one feels good after doing those things. And yet, we keep sticking to our bad habits because we can't break them.

Advice About Habits Is Misunderstood

What's the best way to form a habit? I've been researching that question for more than a decade. And I've tried every piece of advice that I've read about.

I've learned that you're more likely to actually form a habit when you **focus on ONE habit at a time**. To be honest, that's not a groundbreaking finding. Every single person who writes about habits will tell you that.

But as humans often do, we'll blindly assume that the same is true for BREAKING habits. However, it doesn't work that way. I only discovered that recently. I will tell you more about that in a minute. Here's something else that I've learned: We have the ability to form *more* than one habit at a time.

“What?! So I don't need to focus on one habit at a time?”

The most common criticism that I've heard about the “form one habit at a time” idea is that it takes “forever” to change your life. I think there's some truth in that. Given that it sometimes takes months to form a habit, it can take years to build a foundation of good habits that support your goals.

To be honest, that's not my biggest concern. Like the cliché says, *patience is a virtue*. And I think we all need to be more patient. Good things come in time. But that's not the problem most people face with habits. Most of us give up *before* we actually have *formed* a habit. And if we quit a good habit, we'll often fall back to our old (bad) behavior before the season changes.

You Need A More Extreme Approach

Look, I'm not saying that replacing bad habits with good habits is bad advice. The problem is that most of us only apply that advice to one habit at a time. And yes, **that does not work**. Think about it. If you drink alcohol every day and eat unhealthy food, what will happen if you quit drinking? If you continue to eat candy bars, salted nuts, potato chips, burgers, pizza, it will not take long before you think, “A beer would sure taste nice with this burger.”

If you're addicted to consuming content on social media and watching tv shows, you can't “just” get rid of your social media apps on your phone. If you have a tv, you'll simply binge watch some crap on Netflix. And before you know it, you'll reinstall those apps with one click. Most of the time, you can pick up right where you left off. You don't even have to sign in again. Don't go down that road. Instead, be committed to change. If you truly want to break your bad habits, go extreme on yourself. Yes, I'm actually saying you should take it seriously. Why? Because your life is a serious matter.

Remember this: If you want to break your bad habits, BREAK THEM ALL AT THE SAME TIME. Go all in. Or don't go at all.

What We Need Is A Different Lifestyle

It all comes down to one question. *How serious are you about living a purposeful life?* I've asked myself that question many times in the past. And every now and then, I still have to ask myself that. Falling back on bad habits happens for a reason.

Life is hard. We experience setbacks, stress, and hurt all the time. And our natural reaction is to escape our challenges. Every time we say things like "I need to relax with a glass of wine on the couch," we're fooling ourselves.

We're trying to escape the desperation of life. Inside, we feel lonely and empty. And we try to fill it with bullshit. Now, that bullshit is different for every person. I might crack open a bag of potato chips and watch a movie, you might be on the phone all night with your friends, another person might hit the nightclub to pop pills, and another one might buy the latest gadget.

But if you want to make a contribution and make yourself useful during the little time you've been granted on this planet, you and I both need a different *lifestyle*. We need to take care of our body and mind. We need to sleep well, eat healthy, work out, **read books**, reflect on our lives, and most importantly: Be someone others can count on. You can't do that with bad habits.

What's Next?

Think about how serious you are about living a meaningful life. Once you've identified your bad habits (previous chapter), decide to quit them ALL. And decide that RIGHT NOW. Now, all of a sudden, you're a new man or woman. You've been given a clean slate. You can form new habits. Remember earlier, when I said that you don't have to form only one habit at a time? What I meant was that if you quit ALL your bad habits, you'll have the mental ability to form more than one habit at a time.

As we discussed earlier, there's only one limitation: **Focus on one habit per area of your life**. To me, the areas are career, health, learning, money, and relationships. For your career, you might want to show up earlier every day. For your health, you can run every day. For learning, you can spend an hour a day

on learning a new skill. For your relationships, you can practice kindness. For your money, you can save 20% of your income.

And yes, you can do all those things. Why not? But remember, your chance of success decreases when you try to take on too much. Can you learn multiple skills *at the same time*? Can you save money for your retirement *and* buy a new car? Maybe, but you'll be much more successful if you do just one thing at a time. We can achieve many great things in life. We only need the right habits to support us.

Next up: Set the bar very low, which is Step 4 of the road to better habits. By now we've laid the foundation. Without that foundation, you don't have a reason to make a change. And as you probably know, having a reason is the most important factor of change.

SET THE BAR LOW—VERY LOW

Forming a new habit is hard. I don't have to tell you that by now. We all know how difficult it is to live a prosperous and healthy life. If it were easy, everybody would do it. We also know that our chance of succeeding is much higher if we start small, right? It's common sense. "Don't take on too much in the beginning — you'll have more reasons to give up." So goes the advice, which is solid. I'm not going to argue with that.

But far too few people *actually* start small. In fact, I see more people starting big than starting small. Why is that? I think we can get *too* excited about making a change or doing new things. When we dream about making a change in our lives and start believing in it, the excitement usually takes over. *That's why we end up doing too much too soon.*

“But how can I prevent myself from getting too excited?”

To be clear, I don't think excitement is bad. You need energy to make a change. And it's great to be fired up about achieving something in your life. Always remind yourself that you want to *stay* fired up. Because when things get hard, we can lose that fire.

So when you start forming a habit (writing, working out, reading, eating healthy) or learning a new skill, remember that it should *not* feel like a challenge. The activity should be easy. If that's not the case, we'll all procrastinate — even the most self-disciplined people do that. When you start something new, it's not about your results. When I started writing every day, I couldn't care less about how many words I wrote. Or when I started exercising daily, I didn't care about the type of exercise. I just wanted to make sure I did it.

- Wrote for 4 minutes? Great — you did it.
- Went for a 20-minute walk? Great — you did it.
- Read a book for 2 minutes? Great — you did it.

James Clear, the author of *Atomic Habits*, which is about changing your life by forming small habits, writes about this idea in his book. I like how he removes all barriers for starting a habit. He writes:

"A new habit should not feel like a challenge. The actions that follow can be challenging, but the first two minutes should be easy. What you want is a "gateway habit" that naturally leads you down a more productive path."

Remember, the action itself is not easy. But as James says, the first two minutes should be easy. And what you'll find is that you can scale down nearly any habit or activity into a two-minute version.

- **Want to read every day?** Read one page.
- Want to meditate every day? Sit in a meditation position.
- Want to study for an exam? Open your book.

I like this strategy because it makes it nearly impossible to procrastinate. When I look back at all the times I've procrastinated, it was always related to getting overwhelmed. When you haven't even started something, the end result seems a million miles away.

That's how you end up saying, "screw this." So instead of focusing on the BIG outcome, focus on the SMALL start. Look at what you want to achieve in your life. Then, look at what habits will make that happen. For example, want to be a CEO? Most leaders are readers. So you might want to start a daily reading habit. Then, scale down the habits you need to succeed into a two-minute activity.

"And then what?"

The goal is not only to get started — *it's to keep going*. Nobody wants to read one page a day for the rest of their lives. To me, this strategy is all about getting used to doing something every day.

Look, changing your lifestyle is not an easy thing. Let's say you've been living in a certain way for 30 years. What do you expect? That you change overnight? You and I both know that it takes time. So we should change our perspective accordingly. Your first priority should always be to form the habit— something you do regularly. And remember: Habits are not about results. No one cares about how many pages you've read, how hard you've worked out, or how long you haven't smoked a cigarette. You should only care about what you did *today* — and don't focus on metrics.

Life is a competition with *yourself* — not others. And if you want to win, you must make it easy for yourself.

And we're not only competing with ourselves, we're also accountable to ourselves. That brings us to the last step of this eBook: We must track our progress along the way.

KEEP TRACK OF YOUR PROGRESS

Habits are the basis of achieving your goals. Achieving success is not about hitting home runs. It's about doing the right things, every day. It's important to develop a sense of inner accountability. You don't want to rely on others for motivation. It must come from within. I've found that keeping track of your progress is important to long-term success.

How often have you started a new habit to only quit after a few weeks or months? Our natural state of mind is to do nothing. It takes energy to live according to your habits. It's a high standard for living. And it's definitely not for everybody. But you've read this far already. That means you're serious about making a change. And tracking your daily progress is a part of the change. Here are a few things I learned about tracking your habits:

1. **Always track your habits.** Don't take a day off. And don't stop tracking your habits after a while. You want to change your lifestyle here. And an important part of that lifestyle is continuous feedback.
2. **Don't track too many habits.** It's not helpful to track 30 habits that you want to form. Keep the list small and only focus on the most important ones. I track the 8 habits we talked about earlier.
3. **Make it easy.** Use an app like [Coach.me](#) or [Way of Life](#) to track your habits. It literally takes a *few seconds* a day once you've set up the app. These apps let you set a goal you want to reach and will help you track your daily progress.

Without an accountability system in place, we'll forget about our goals as quick as we set them. As you can see, keeping track of your habits is not that complicated. So let's not spend too much time talking about this. Just make sure you're accountable towards yourself. It's your life. Who else would you answer to? Every good thing you do is in your own best interest.

WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU FALL BACK

We've covered the 5 steps that lead you to better habits. But what should we do if we have a setback along the way? It's advice that I always missed when I read books like this. Do you know that feeling of being in the zone? And that everything goes well?

- You wake up early every day to hit the gym.
- You write 500 words a day.
- You make daily prospecting calls.
- You journal profoundly, and never skip a day.
- You don't eat junk food.

And consequently, everything is going great in your life. Every productive person has been there. When you do the things you know you should be doing, you feel in control of your life. Like Woody Allen says, "Eighty percent of success is showing up." And you're showing up.

But then, all of a sudden, something happens that disrupts your momentum. Maybe an unexpected setback that messes with your mind. Or an international trip that screws up your routines. Shit happens. And now, you can't do anything right. You wake up tired. You don't feel like going to the gym. You don't want to work. And you feel sorry for yourself.

Also sounds familiar? Well, it happened to me recently after I returned from a two-week trip to Thailand. Here's how I got back on track.

1. Don't Resist

When everything is going right, you're going with the flow. When everything is *not* going right, you're trying to go against it. We all know that it's useless to swim upstream. So instead of feeling frustrated and being too hard on yourself, take it easy. It's a waste of time and energy if you try to go upstream. If you're unproductive for a while, it's not the end of the world. It happens to the most productive people I know.

So if you're feeling unproductive; make use of it! Have that ice cream. Sleep in. Don't work out. Relax a little. Before you know it, you'll *want* to get back to your productive routines. Being unproductive for too long sucks.

2. Recreate The Past

I've learned that looking back is only good for one reason: To learn. If you're off track, it's the perfect time to look back. Think of a moment you were in a powerful state of mind. A time when everything went well.

And try to be very specific. For example, I remember that I was sitting in our new office recently, talking with our accountants about finances. I had also just bought a new apartment, I worked out every day, felt very strong, and things were going well. I felt good. Look at your past, and try to remember something similar. It can be anything. The day your child was born, when you got your degree, a raise, a new car, or asked your spouse to marry you, etc.

Now, sit down, and picture that moment vividly. What were you wearing, what fragrance did you have on, what was your body language? Try to be as specific as you can. If you do that several times a day, you will notice that you start feeling that way again. Feeling good is all in our mind. Within an instant, and without a specific reason, you can go from sad to happy, and from timid to powerful. You have the power to control your mind. So why not use it?

3. Focus On Effort, Not Results

"Sometimes, things may not go your way, but the effort should be there every single night," said Michael Jordan about playing professional basketball.

The NBA is one of the longest competitions in the world. Their regular season takes six months and 82 games. That's excluding the playoffs. And in basketball, many different factors influence the outcome of a game. Your best player can get two quick fouls in the first few minutes, and not see any playing time until the late second quarter. The refs might miss certain calls. You name it. NBA teams, regardless of how good they are, will lose multiple games during a season. And it's easy to allow a loss to pull you into a negative spiral. That's why a lot of teams that lose, keep losing. Like the legendary football coach, Vince Lombardi said, "Winning is a habit. Unfortunately, so is losing."

I like that mindset. And you win by focusing on your effort, as Michael Jordan said. But when you're in a rut, it's easy to focus on your results. You might gain weight, lose money, and not get the results you want at work, but you must never forget one thing: You will get back. But that requires us to focus on our effort. That's the only thing that brings us back. The results will follow automatically.

4. Plan Your Days Meticulously

"What should I do next?" Is what you should never think to yourself. When you plan your days, you *know* what you have to do. And it's very easy:

1. Look at your goals (if you don't have goals, make them up)
2. Think about what *daily* activities you have to perform to achieve them
3. Schedule those activities on your calendar
4. Also schedule time for family, friends, relaxation, reading, etc.

If you think people will call you a control freak, don't worry. I've also met the people who claim they have empty calendars. They're full of shit. **Every happy and well-off person allocates time to their top priorities.** Whether they use their mind to do so or their calendar doesn't matter.

What matters is that we need to perform the activities that bring us closer to our goals. You can have all the plans and goals in the world, but if you don't know how you're going to make them happen, you're lost. Dwight Eisenhower said it perfectly:

"Plans are nothing; planning is everything."

It might take a little time to get our life in order, but once we do, we can start executing. That's why I recommend everyone to form a daily writing habit. Better writing means better thinking. And that ultimately leads to better planning.

Keep the tips we talked about in this chapter in mind. Because it's not a matter of "if" you experience a setback; it's a matter of "when." But that shouldn't scare you. You know what to do when it happens.

A DIFFERENT WAY OF LIVING

When you consciously quit bad habits and form good ones, you'll see your life changing every day. But when you look around you, things will likely stay the same. And that's hard to deal with at first. When you're hitting the gym every day and your partner is hitting the couch, it can be frustrating. Or when you're working hard on improving your skills while your friends are going out all the time.

To that, I say, focus on yourself. Just because *you're* living this way, it doesn't mean others should too. I've been too hard on people in the past. But I learned that it's not helpful. Every person is unique, and you should not try to change them. It's not a noble thing to do. When people decide to change by themselves, it's a different story. You can support each other.

But remember that the stuff we talked about in this book is not the conventional way of living. It's different. We can't say whether it's good or bad. It's merely different.

What matters is that it works for many of us.

I've seen it in my own life. And by now, after blogging for four years, I've seen thousands of people making the same changes. And the impact is enormous. I can't put it into words. When you change your habits, you change your life.

Just think about it. You change your LIFE.

THANKS FOR READING

Thank you for taking the time to read this until the end. I appreciate that you decided to spend your time on this book, and not on the millions of other things that you could do. My goal with every piece of content I create is to share something I wish someone else had told me earlier.

I've committed myself to lifelong learning. I read two books a week, reach out to mentors, and experiment with advice all the time. I share everything on my blog and with you.

But without a reader, you're not a writer. So thank you for making me a writer.

May I ask you for a favor?

My goal with this eBook is to reach as many people as possible. And I can only do that with your help.

I don't advertise my work and only rely on word of mouth. So if you enjoyed this book, and think someone you know will find it helpful too, please share this link with them: <http://dariusforoux.com/better-habits/>

They can download their own copy there.

Got feedback?

I'd love to hear your thoughts on this book! Or do you have questions? Or maybe tips about habits that you want to share? Etc.

I have created a page on my site where readers can comment/share thoughts on habits: <http://dariusforoux.com/better-habits-stories/>.

If it's your thing, feel free to join the conversation.

-Darius