

NEGATIVE HABITS AND THEIR DEVASTATING EFFECTS

How well did you do with the process of beginning a new, positive habit? Keep at it. There are few skills more valuable. Imagine the difference in your level of success if you could develop new habits whenever you wanted.

Negative habits can be devastating to your overall quality of life and your success. It's important to understand how negative habits can create serious challenges.

Consider now all the habitual behaviors you exhibit that eventually lead to unwanted, negative situations in your life. Negative habits can produce results that are completely contrary to what you desire.

You wouldn't consciously choose to keep yourself from what you truly want. But you keep repeating those habits anyway just because they are what they are: habits.

Honestly evaluate how what you're doing is affecting your life. Maybe you have not achieved your work goals or your health is not as good as it could be because of your habits. ***Although it might be a challenge, take a long look at where you are now in life and how your habits have gotten you here.***

Subconsciously or even consciously, you apparently experience some type of benefit from continuing to perform these negative habits. If you didn't, you wouldn't be doing the habits in the first place. ***Think about how you're getting reinforced to continue repeating your unsavory habits.***

CONSIDER THIS EXAMPLE:

Tom wants to play basketball with the men in his neighborhood who get together every Saturday at 10 a.m. He used to love shooting hoops in college and for a few years afterward when he first started working. Of course, he was in a lot better physical condition then even if he didn't have a six-pack.

Even though he talks all the time about wanting to get back into shape, the fact is that now, he can only dream about reaching that goal. Tom is 30 pounds

overweight and already fights his high cholesterol. After work during the week, Tom's just too tired to do anything. And he loves to sleep in on Saturdays.

Tom feels entitled to stay in bed on Saturday mornings after getting up at 7:00 a.m. to go to work all week. So, he sleeps late—until around 9:00 a.m. Then he has his favorite breakfast—sausage, gravy, and biscuits with 2 glasses of milk, a glass of orange juice, and a banana. By the time he prepares and eats his breakfast, he's in no condition to play basketball.

In this example, what are the benefits to Tom to keep repeating these behaviors, which are a negative habit, on Saturday mornings? How is he being reinforced to continue the behaviors that are actually keeping him from what he truly wants?

1. **He gets to lie in bed longer**, which he apparently longs to do.
2. **Tom loves the tastes of his breakfast.** It feels decadent to him to eat a breakfast so full of fat, calories, and flavors. Frankly, it just tastes good.
3. **There are no real demands on him during this time.** He doesn't have to get dressed, go out, and accomplish anything.
4. **Tom deserves it.** He's convinced himself he deserves to lie in bed as long as he pleases, eat his

unhealthy breakfast, and choose not to play basketball. Emotionally, he sends himself the message that after working all week, he can behave however he wants, regardless of the consequences long-term.

The fact is that Tom's Saturday morning habits of sleeping late, eating a breakfast loaded with calories and fats, and choosing to avoid playing basketball sets the tone for his entire week and maybe even his life!

Tom has consciously convinced himself he's doing what he wants. But is he really? After all, he's repeating a series of bad habits—he just keeps doing unhealthy behaviors every single Saturday of his life.

Which would he truly choose—being in good physical condition by playing basketball and hanging out with the guys on Saturday morning or continuing to stay in the shape he's in?

Take a minute or two to ponder the situations in your life you'd like to change. Are you like Tom—engaging in negative habits from which you consciously or unconsciously derive benefits? How are you negatively reinforcing your own unsavory habits?

What do you say to yourself that encourages you to continue repeating the unacceptable actions?

If you see a bit of Tom in yourself, you might want to begin consciously focusing on the things that are more important to you to obtain a different, more pleasing result. You'll benefit even more from establishing a positive habit than you derive from repeating a negative habit.

Creating good habits and eliminating bad habits are both highly effective. But, what if you could replace a negative habit with one that's positive? That would be even more powerful. Pay special attention to the next lesson.

GET STARTED ON THE TIPS FOR THIS LESSON:

Make a list of your habits that are counter to your long-term intentions. Consider everything. Even your tendency to watch TV when bored or stressed might be a negative habit. Examine your tendencies.