

Success Ingredient #7: Healthy Habits

Your life is an accumulation of all your habits. Your ability to become a great persuader hinges on your habits and choices. Let's take, for example, some common life situations. We gradually put on weight over the years, but then we want to lose it in a couple of days. Similarly, we spend years getting deeper and deeper into debt, but we want to become financially independent overnight. We decide we want to run that marathon—when it's only a month away. We want to ace that exam, but we only allow ourselves an hour to cram all the material. We start thinking about retirement when it looms only five years out on the horizon. There are many things in life we want to attain in the shortest amount of time and by exerting the least possible effort, but success rarely happens that way. Success is a process, not a quick fix. Progress comes in steps, and the groundwork has to be laid.

So, it is time to take a look at your habits, to acknowledge any bad habits you have, and to understand that over 90 percent of our normal behavior is based on routines and habits.⁴ You've picked up your habits somewhere—often without even thinking about it—and you're not even sure why. Great persuaders have spent the time and energy to analyze all their habits—good and bad. We talked earlier about beliefs. Beliefs influence habits. These beliefs are learned from society and from your parents. It often takes a while for the consequences of our habits to appear. Remember, overcoming debt, weight gain, and other addictions are all slowly evolving processes.

Three feet of ice does not result from one day of freezing weather.

—CHINESE PROVERB

Here is the key from great persuaders: Instead of trying to drop all of your bad habits at once, try replacing each of them with something else. Pick other activities that are enjoyable and fulfilling, but more productive.

Ask yourself the following questions:

- Where are your habits taking you?

- What habits are holding you back?
- (Pick one bad habit.) How long have you struggled with this habit?
- Why did you start this habit?
- What are the long-term consequences of this habit?
- How are you going to replace this habit?

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