# HEALTHY HABITS

**Make small and consistent changes in your routine if you want to develop healthy habits.**

Many of us have good intentions when it comes to breaking bad habits and improving our mental and physical health. We may reach a point where we decide to make dramatic, life-altering changes, vowing to ourselves and others that this time is going to be different. This time we'll go to the gym and work out every day, give up junk food forever, quit drinking or smoking, or go to bed early, and finally get enough sleep.

But more often than not, the momentum doesn't last. Building healthy habits is best done slowly and steadily over time. Just a few simple changes in your daily routine can add up to big results. First, identify a habit you'd like to change or a specific goal you want to achieve. Then write down three things you will commit to do for the next several weeks. For example, if you're out of shape or overweight and want to make healthier choices, start with these few small steps:

- Park your car farther away than you normally would. Take the stairs instead of the elevator. Take a ten-minute walk every day. Small blocks of physical activity over the course of the day can help reduce stress and increase your level of fitness.

- Plan at least one healthy meal or snack each day. Replace unhealthy foods with fruits or vegetables and substitute water for soda or juice.

- Go to bed 30 minutes earlier. Studies show that chronic sleep deprivation can lead to weight gain and other physical and emotional problems.

Small changes are not only easier to start and maintain, but can be very motivating when you start to see positive results. Every few weeks evaluate your progress and raise the bar a bit higher.

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