

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

BREAKING BAD HABITS

Most of us have at least one bad habit we'd like to break.

Maybe it's overeating, smoking, or being chronically late. While there is no single foolproof way to break bad habits, there are several approaches you can try. The first step is to become more aware of the emotions or circumstances that trigger the habit. The next step is to come up with a plan or strategy to counteract it.

Breaking a habit of worrying takes practice. Methods of self-help involve learning to stay calm and replacing negative thoughts with positive ones. Here are some tips:

- **Write down your goal.** Include the date you will start making the change and the specific steps you will take. Keep this paper visible as a daily reminder.
- **Avoid temptation by changing your routine.** If unhealthy food, cigarettes, or other items are a problem, remove them from your house and your shopping list. If you always stop for a donut on the way to work, pack a healthy snack and take a different route.
- **Replace the unhealthy habit with a healthy behavior.** Instead of going out for drinks after work or watching TV on the couch, plan to exercise instead. If possible, include a friend who will encourage you and hold you accountable.
- **Enlist the support of others.** Ask family and friends to support your efforts to change. Avoid the people and situations that are linked to the unhealthy habit. You may find that some people don't really want you to change and will sabotage your efforts.
- **Reward yourself for progress.** Decide in advance to reward yourself when you reach certain goals or milestones. Some people find that "penalties" are an incentive too. For example, you can promise to make a charitable contribution to a cause or a group you dislike should you fail to break the bad habit by a certain date.

Bad habits may be difficult to change. At times you might experience a setback, but don't give up. The more you persist with healthier habits, the more ingrained they'll become.

