



HOW TO CREATE HEALTHY HABITS

Question: I made a New Year's resolution to exercise more. I already feel my motivation flagging. How can I form a new habit that sticks?

Answer: Exercising is a terrific resolution and resolving to stick with it is even better! In this newsletter, we have referred to “healthy habits” for many years, from sleeping and eating to staying active. Let’s explore how to establish and maintain them.

Professor Wendy Wood, PhD, is a social psychologist at the University of Southern California who studies human behavior. She writes, “Habits persist even when we’re tired and don’t have the energy to exert self-control.” In other words, if you are thinking about exercise, it’s not yet a habit. A habit is something you do without thinking. She cites a study in which college students were observed during the stress of final exams and during the regular semester. Whatever habits the students had during non-stressful times were maintained during finals. The students who had healthy habits persisted in those, and the students who had unhealthy habits clung to theirs as well. The theory is that during finals, the students were distracted so they turned to habits that did not require thought.

Source: “Mindless Behavior Applies To Healthy Habits, Too: Study,” by Wendy Wood, PhD, *Huffington Post*, 05/28/13.

This study points to the need to have healthy habits as your mindless fallback. So how to make exercise one of those? The secret, says Wood, is to make it easy. If you are not a morning person, don’t force yourself to hit the gym at 5:00 a.m. If you feel energized midday, eat a quick lunch and then walk around your office building three times. Make it fun. Work out with friends or load your MP3 player with music you want to hear.

Along with being easy—even fun—your new habit should happen in small steps. Exercise 15 minutes twice a week. Add minutes, then days. Make your new habit about you. Tips in magazines are good inspiration, but tailor your habits to your unique likes and qualities. Surround yourself with supportive people and tell them your goal. They will want to hear about your progress. Eventually, your body will crave exercise and you will do it without thinking.

To read about Dr. Wood’s research and articles about how we develop good and bad habits, visit <http://dornsife.usc.edu/wendywood/research-articles>.

JOKE OF THE MONTH

“There was a man who entered a pun contest. He sent in ten different puns, in the hope that at least one of the puns would win. Unfortunately, no pun in ten did.”

—A *Prairie Home Companion* Pretty
Good Joke Book

Laughter is known to boost the immune system, lower blood pressure, burn calories and release pleasure-inducing chemicals in the brain.

Go Green!

Receive Social Services Corner by email.

Call (888) 994-3863, ext. 2370,

or email info@wrmail.org.

Do you or does someone you know need our assistance? Call toll-free (888) 994-3863 or visit www.wrpioneers.org to find out more about our assistance programs.



RECAP OF NEW LAWS IN EFFECT THIS YEAR



Last year the U.S. Congress passed the least amount of laws since 1947—just 58 were enacted. Meanwhile, the states' legislatures were busy passing some interesting new laws that we want to share.

Many of the laws are aimed at trying to keep people safe.

For example, California has added laws to protect cyclists. Motorists must maintain a three-foot distance while passing. Illinois raised the tanning-booth age to 18; other states already have this law on the books.

In Tennessee, if a youth athlete sustains a concussion or head injury, only a licensed healthcare professional can clear that player to return to the field.

Some laws are intent on trying to improve quality of life. In Washington, New Jersey and 11 other states, the rate of the minimum wage was increased.

The updated Litter Control Act makes it illegal to throw a cigarette butt on the sidewalk in Illinois, with fines of \$1,500.

Other laws are interesting because of their unique specifications. In Texas, for instance, mixed drinks will now be taxed at 8.25% if they are consumed in a restaurant.

Some states, including Nevada and Maryland, have new laws governing the way driver's licenses are issued and renewed. Check with your state department of motor vehicles.

Americans in all states will have to learn to live without most incandescent lightbulbs. The manufacture and import of these classics are extremely limited now, as we switch to cleaner energy.

It's always difficult to determine the exact rationale behind a new law. Some great ideas get watered down or changed from their original form and content. Some get challenged in court, others repealed. In any case, a law is just words unless someone enforces it. We hope the bartenders in Dallas got the memo!

Sources: Miscellaneous state newspapers contributed to this article. For a fun read, go to www.dumblaws.com. "On The Record: New Unique Laws Take Effect September 1, 2013," Rep. Roberto Alonzo, www.texasinsider.org/new-unique-laws-take-effect-sept-1-2013.

NEW ADDITIONS TO THE MPPAF'S NATIONAL RESOURCE DIRECTORY

Shape Up America!, www.shapeup.org

Shape Up America! is a national initiative to promote healthy weight and increased physical activity. Involving a broad-based coalition of industry, medical/health, nutrition, physical fitness, and related organizations and experts, Shape Up America! is committed to providing credible, science-based health messages in a distinctive new way so that people will understand the importance of healthy weight and increased physical activity.

Road Runners Club of America (RRCA), www.rrca.org, (703) 525-3890

Founded in 1958, the RRCA provides quality running programs that can be replicated by member clubs nationwide. The Club promotes running as a sport and a healthy exercise for all performance levels and all stages of life. The RRCA is dedicated to providing educational information and programs to keep the running community safe, healthy and informed.

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

“A man can fool you with his mind and his soul and his heart, but if you follow his feet you will pretty near find out where he is going.”

—Will Rogers



To view our entire National Resource Directory, please visit www.wrpioneers.org.