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## **About the Author**

Warren Davis put a lot of effort into his work and social activities.

He willingly accepted responsibility when it was offered to him, but he started to feel that he was not getting the results or rewards that he expected.

Warren felt that he had developed some negative habits, largely due to the increasing pressure in his work environment and personal life, which were causing him to lose motivation and become deeply dissatisfied with how his life was progressing.

Like many people, Warren found it very difficult to change these habits.

His stress increased when he tried to improve things.

It was a long time before he began to see some positive results.

Warren wrote his ebook to share what he has learned so that it can benefit other people who have strong desire to improve their own lives.

Warren says, "These tips and techniques which I have gathered and the details of my own experiences will help my readers in their search for ways to deal with their own problems."

"I want to help people with problems that are affecting their daily lives so that they can improve their interactions with other people, especially their family and close friends. As they start to see improvements, they should also feel better about themselves."

"There are some problems which are beyond the scope of this book where professional help is necessary. My aim is just to help those who have similar problems to the ones I had to deal with."

"I have found that the suggestions may even help many people that have tried several times unsuccessfully to change their habits, their lives and their results".

## Introduction

Almost everybody you know will admit that they have a bad habit or two, although of course they may not be willing to share with you exactly what those personal failings actually are – period!

Some of the most common in our society include:

Caffeine

Knuckle cracking

Gossips

Nail Biters

Nicotine lovers

Perfectionists

Procrastinators

Candy munchers

Fad dieters



Of course, there are many more serious habitual behaviors.

Some tips and techniques which I discuss in this book could help you with some of those problems> their value to you particularly will depend on a lot of factors.

I will try to point out some signs that might be an indication that some kind of professional help should be sought.

I don't claim to have the one size fits all habit changing life improving cure because everybody's situation and particular concerns are different.

This book is not intended to be any sort of substitute for professional advice. I am not qualified by experience or training to do that.

If you have serious habitual behavior which has a medical or psychological basis, you need to get qualified help from a professional in your own local area who can guide you while taking your personal circumstances, goals and history into consideration.

I will show and explain to you tips and techniques which I found that may be helpful when you tackle any habits that affect your personal or professional life in a negative way.

I've used some of these techniques to help improve my own situation and I tell you the results I got - (both good and bad).

You will also read about other people's experiences that I got from my research and information volunteered from friends and colleagues.

Not everything I discuss will be of value to every reader.

Our circumstances, values and life experience will all affect how well some ideas can help us.

Showing you what has been helpful to me and other people that I know, with our wide range of backgrounds, should give you plenty of ideas and inspiration for combating your own habits.

I expect that it will also save you a lot of time and effort.

I have tried to explain everything in simple terms. My main focus has been to make everything easy to understand so that you can choose what you want to try and decide for yourself what might not suit you personally.

## **Where do Habits come from?**

Habits are the result of us repeating actions several times.

This is an important part of our learning experiences. We repeat a series of actions to the point where we are able to do them well and that process creates a track in our brain which we can use at a subconscious level to perform that series of actions with minimal mental effort in the future.

That is positive effect of habitual behavior. Over time, we build up a large number of well practiced procedures which we can do quickly and to a good standard.

The time saved can be substantial.

They can also make it possible for us to do more than one task at a time comfortably. Imagine, for instance, if you had to think carefully about every action you had to do each time that you sat down at your computer or cooked a meal!

Unfortunately, this process can also result in the embedding of negative habits in our subconscious.

There are various kinds of habits, including actions, addictions and responses to outside stimuli.

I will give you as much help as I can to change whatever habits you have which you are willing to invest necessary time and effort to learn to control and, where possible, eliminate.



## **Recognizing a "Bad" Habit**

Many people accept their habitual behavior as minor and don't realize the negative effect it is having or the possible long-term harm which might result if they don't start to take action to modify it.

Some things which you need to consider are:

### **Are you able to limit how often or how long you do it?**

At that stage, you will become more likely to suffer negative consequences unless you act to reduce its influence on you and to remove its grip over time.

### **What happens when you try to stop?**

If you get severe negative feelings, it may be an indication that you need to put more effort into not starting and try harder to eliminate the habit.

### **How do you feel?**

When you feel the need to start doing the action, ask yourself if you are feeling upbeat about doing it or whether you are in a negative mood at the time.

If you are feeling negative, it shows you are doing it from habit rather than because you enjoy or benefit from it.

### **Are other areas of your life suffering?**

Could the habit be part of the reason for serious problems which have developed in your work or family life?

## **This Won't Work by Itself!**

I hope this ebook will be an enjoyable reading experience and helpful to you.

There is one essential ingredient which I cannot provide for you.

You need to read, consider and then act on that information which is most useful to you.

Until you take action, your situation cannot change - except perhaps to get worse.

Taking action is an obvious requirement when we want to make any sort of change in ourselves or our environment, but it's often delayed for what seem like good and even important reasons at the time.

The downside is that a habit becomes more entrenched every day whether we actually perform the associated activity or not. That means that every day we delay in starting to alter or remove it makes the target we set harder to reach. That means we will continue to suffer the bad effects we suffer from it.

### ***Recognize the Challenges***

It is also important that you understand what it might cost you if you hold to your firm resolve and stick to the task until you win.

If you make any sort of significant change in your lifestyle, you may find that it involves you losing some things you enjoyed.

Even when we recognize the potential damage which our bad habit may do to ourselves, our relationships or our work performance and career, the fight to change it can be stressful and damaging, especially if our first efforts are unsuccessful.

### ***Motivate Yourself***

Unless you accept that your life, self-confidence, relationships and even your health may be seriously affected by the habit(s), you probably won't

be focused enough to invest the effort and time which you need to make any meaningful improvements in the situation.

You can't begin a successful campaign until you have defined your goal; understand what you will gain by making the changes.

You may feel great stress and discomfort as you start to push those new tracks in your mind which will guide your improved behavior in the years to come.

Some habits, like smoking, are reinforced by chemicals in the cigarette or whatever you have been indulging in. These can be particularly difficult to deal with. You may need professional help. Your Doctor would be able to advise you about the most up to date types of support you could get. That might involve medicines, counseling or lifestyle changes.

### ***Balance the Benefits of Change.***

Draw up a sheet listing what you will gain from changing against the attractions of keeping your current habit.

It probably won't be hard to find plenty of benefits for change.

One major one, whatever sort of change you are planning, is the boost to your self-confidence that you will get by achieving it. The smallest victory will give you a boost which will help you with future challenges of all kinds.

### ***The Best Time?***

When is the best time to start implanting a new, more positive habit or weed out a negative one?

There will never be a better time than tomorrow!

Of course, I really mean your tomorrow when you are reading this and not some fantasy day far in the future.

When you decide that you will start your campaign to remove the habit which is hobbling you, set aside a little time today planning your moves.

## **No Magic Bullet**

Even when we recognize the potential damage which our bad habit may do to ourselves, our relationships or our work performance and career, the fight to change it can be stressful and damaging, especially if our first efforts are unsuccessful.

One thing which causes many people to stumble and ultimately give up trying to remove the habit is that they think it will be easy and that it is because of some personal failing in them if they aren't completely successful the first time they try to do it.

That's why I have been careful to show that there usually a number of steps needed to change our behavior permanently, even in small and fairly unimportant respects.

I don't ever tell you that it will be easy, only that whatever it takes will be a price worth paying for the better life you will have afterwards.

And, of course, I share with you a number of ways that you can help yourself and gain support from others to make it easier than it would be if you had to rely solely on your own efforts.

You may sometimes find that reducing or removing a particular habit from your routine is fairly easy. That may be because it was something you felt very strongly about fixing or that your determination and preparation were stronger than the hold which the habit had on you. That should give you great satisfaction and improved motivation for dealing with any other habits you want to modify or quit!

## **Cold Turkey?**

Many people have been told by their parents, teachers and other people that had a significant input in their early years that they should be self-reliant, toughen up and deal with whatever life throws at them.

When they realize that some habit is seriously affecting their quality of life, they may believe that they should be able to deal with it in a short burst of action.

Stopping some habits has been accomplished by a relatively small number of people. They have stopped smoking, over-eating or indulging in some other behavior.

I congratulate anyone that can do that but I found that was too hard for me.

I suggest that you try it, even if you just reduce your habitual behavior and its effect on you by, say, fifty percent, that is helpful in building your confidence.

The traditional method involves these steps.

### ***Select the Action which You Need to Modify***

You may want to change more than one behavior. It's important to divide and conquer them. This way, you can focus your maximum resources on one goal at a time which will give you the best chance of success.

### ***Focus on the Benefits you will Achieve***

You could make a list of the benefits which you get from your current behavior. Don't be surprised if it's very short.

Make a list of the potential benefits that will be available when you reach your objective. Whether you think of a lot of benefits or just a few is not important. The main thing you need to do is discover some which will help you to keep working toward your goal and resist the desire to relapse into the behavior.

Sort through the list and focus your mind on the most important benefit.

Get a clear picture in your mind of yourself when the improvement becomes part of your everyday life. It will help a lot more if you put yourself in the picture and start to “feel” the effects” of your transformation.

### ***Decide how You will Replace the Habit?***

What will replace the bad habit when you remove it?

This might be a healthier or more enjoyable action or it might be an increase in your ability to do something which will be a benefit to you in the future.

### ***What Support is Available for Your Campaign?***

Changing your behavior is more like a campaign than a single action, even when you are intending to do it “cold turkey” because you will inevitably feel like resuming your old habit or just find yourself slipping back into it at times in the future.

You need to think about what you can do when the temptation occurs, decide what you will do instead that will be of greater benefit to you.

Think carefully about what support you can call on at those times? That might be:

- ✓ People close to you that will help you resist backsliding
- ✓ Friends that have or have overcome similar problems and really understand the battle you are having
- ✓ Professional advice.

### ***What to Do if You Cannot Resist?***

Sometimes, despite your best efforts, you might find yourself resuming the habit.

You may tell yourself that it’s no big deal and you can stop any time.

From my own experience, I know that is not true. It’s an excuse which we use when we are not ready to put in enough effort to make the changes we know will improve our situation.

If we accept that excuse, we are likely to keep on with the habit and drag out that same convenient story each time.

The best thing to do if you indulge is to say, "I'm human, I am not perfect but I will take this as a sign the battle will be harder than perhaps I thought. I will think about how I can be more effective in this battle so that I do not do it again."

You may have to watch yourself more closely and be better prepared to resist on future occasions. You may need support from others.

But, don't let one slip convince you that the goal is impossible.

### **If at First You Don't Succeed**

Don't stress if you don't get perfect results this way.

If you also find that too difficult, there are plenty of other tactics which you can choose to use against the problem.

Don't start to think you don't have enough willpower (or perhaps won't), compared to these people.

Their success may be a result of their inner strength or it may be that their reason for changing that behavior was a much stronger influence on them than the factors which you used to motivate yourself.

### ***Finding a Strong Reason***

My cousin gave up smoking overnight.

It took me four attempts and some professional counseling. I knew of the risks, but only got serious about quitting when I started to realize that it was affecting my appearance, social interactions and my health.

All my cousin needed was to find out that she was pregnant with the child that she and her husband had been wanting for three years.

## Don't Blame Yourself!

You may think that you have let the habits which blight your life develop because of some fault in your character or other personal failings, but that is not usually the cause.

If that was the basic reason, you would not be trying so hard to find and eliminate the problems.



Don't beat yourself up because that will cause more damaging stress and sabotage your efforts to improve things.

There are many reasons outside of ourselves which cause us to develop these bad habits and worse, continue

with them until they seem to be out of our control.

This is a very important principle. Many people are consciously trying to improve some aspect of their life while, at the same time, they subconsciously sabotage their own efforts with negative self-talk.

And they reinforce that when they offer unquestioning acceptance of critical comments which other people make about them.

The best way to stop this negativity from destroying or delaying your efforts to improve is to put in place one or more actions which can help you to recognize, reinforce and increase your own view of your self worth.

Your diary can be a practical help in this area if you write up your successes, however small, and anything else which boosts your confidence.

When you are feeling less confident, go to your diary and review these highpoints. Take inspiration from them and you will find your current problem easier to deal with.

Don't forget to also write that up when you succeed in dealing with it.



I can understand that taking the decision to seek help can be very hard for many people. Sometimes, we see it as an admission that we cannot find the resources within ourselves to deal with our most personal problems.

When you realize that everyone needs help from others at various times in their lives, it makes it a little easier.

That step can however, be the first one which you take to turning your whole life around and bringing enjoyment and inspiration to you and also for everyone you care about.

I found it hard but I can say that, after resisting the urge to drop back into my increasingly uncomfortable, but familiar rut and continue to try to do everything for myself by myself. I have never regretted that big step just a few years ago.

I think that the cost which seemed so great then, was worth it just for the many happier and more fulfilling experiences which I have had since then.

I wrote this book to help you and all my other readers have the same opportunity to burst through to the better life that you truly deserve.

## Why is it so Hard?

Many habits are difficult to break. That's because there are a number of



factors that will resist your efforts to improve your situation.

Changing a habit is not often like switching off a light.

You should look at the reasons why you indulge in the habit.

It is not always because you get enjoyment from it. You may do it because some of the

people whom you regularly associate with.

Maybe you are spending more than you should on lunches or after-work drinks because you go with a group of colleagues regularly. A first step might be to reduce your participation in those sessions.

### *Avoid Negative People*

Sometimes, these off-site sessions can become very negative. If this happens, you can find your morale and work performance being damaged as well as your wallet.

The old saying, "misery loves company" is true. If you spend time with people that focus on negativity, you will find your own attitude affected despite your best efforts.

Try to associate as often as possible with people that have a positive outlook and you will find your own attitude and results improve.

### *Subtle Influencers*

Peer pressure can be a powerful influence. Some marketing companies actually pay attractive men and women to circulate in bars and other social venues; talking up their company's products to people they meet.

This type of subtle promotional activity has been successfully used in various countries.

If your indulgence in some kind of harmful habit is being constantly reinforced when you are with certain other people, you may consider reducing the frequency of your meetings with them or the amount of time you have in their company.

There is also the possibility that someone you admire does it and you consciously or not feel that you will be more like them if you do it too. This is why so many branded products appear in movies and other entertainment.

The suppliers benefit from association with the stars and the movie companies get substantial fees in return.

If you want to change, you need to recognize that the habit is actually having negative effects on you and shake off the powerful influence of other people.

Look for alternative patterns of behavior which you can replace the bad habit with.

It is important to give the new routine time to establish its own track in your subconscious. You will probably feel a strong desire to slip back into your old pattern for a while.

You are not only establishing a healthier pattern, you are testing your own feeling of self-worth. Looking at it that way helped me to persevere and success. It actually took less time than I thought it would after I realized how important winning the battle was to me and my family.

## Be Accountable

This can be a powerful help when you start to deal with a habit, large or small, which is negatively affecting your life.

Are you willing to make a commitment to someone else that you will change your behavior?

This might be your spouse, a close friend or members of an organized group who have the same sort of problem which you are dealing with.

The biggest hurdle for some people about taking this step is the possible reaction of the other people if you do not successfully fulfill your commitment.

That is likely to be much less serious in reality than we might assume it will. In our stressed state when we are starting to deal with the problem behavior, we are likely to imagine the effects of falling short of our target as much greater than they could actually turn out to be.



Most people, especially those in a group who are not individually closely associated with you and the effects of your problem, aren't likely to be very negative toward you.

The two main factors which limit their reaction are that they are much more focused on what directly affects them and they are likely to have some sympathy for you if you make a genuine effort but don't reach your goal the first time.

I found that having someone or a group to be accountable to gave me greater incentive to make the necessary changes.

But, I was also surprised at the beneficial effect on my efforts which came from the support and encouragement which I got from those other people.

It’s a big step, but one I encourage you to do because it will help you change the habit and also strengthen the bonds you have with the people you trust enough to share your goals.

## **Money Matters**

One of the most important areas where many people develop damaging habits is with their finances.

Most of these problems are caused by one or more of the following factors:

- x Overspending
- x Poor money management
- x Impulse buying
- x Debt burden
- x Gambling
- x Low income

### ***Overspending***

If you find that you cannot keep any money in your pocket or resist putting some un-necessary purchase on your credit card whenever you go shopping, trouble will occur sooner rather than later.

Some people feel that they must buy what their friends buy or recommend. Their income and needs may, however, be quite different to yours. Your friend won't think less of you because you don't have that item or accessory!

Sometimes, the store's advertising or statements by the staff may persuade us that we must get a particular item because it will improve our life or because it is an un-missable bargain.

We know that few items are unique or essential to our well-being but clever advertising can make us forget that temporarily. Just ask yourself if your life will really be worse if you walk out of the store with your money still in your pocket instead of the item in a colorful bag and a matching hole in your purse or wallet?

People that tend to overspend are focused on their feelings right now. They love the buzz they get from taking possession of some new thing and have trained themselves to avoid thinking about the consequences of their buying habit until the account for their credit card arrives!

Even a few minutes thought will help us to resist most advertising. The retailers have to sell a certain amount of product every day to cover their overhead and make a profit.

We actually can do better for ourselves if we give ourselves even just 24 hours to think about any significant purchase.

### ***Poor Money Management***

This is a very common problem and often has serious consequences if the person doesn't realize the danger and take steps to deal with it.

That can be a stressful experience in itself and many people delay taking action until it is obviously critical because they fear the temporary stress they will get when they start to examine how serious their problem already is.

These sorts of problems only get worse unless you take firm action. Although some discomfort is likely, starting your campaign to take back control of your situation will help reduce the stress to come!

That's because we often build up the level of stress we are suffering from much more when we don't really have a clear idea of the true extent of our situation.

This not only makes it much harder for us to gather the resolve to start dealing with our problems, it can affect our health and relationships so badly that we are much less able to deal with the real problems.

The first step is to write down on paper or in your computer a full list of your assets, income and expenses.

This is not enjoyable and will take some time to do properly, but it is the only way you can start to reclaim your situation.

If you have a spouse or partner, it is essential that you do this together and that you do it in a cooperative and supportive way, without any anger between you. The level of cooperation will often determine how successful the whole exercise is.

You may find that some expenses are for things which you do not need or even feel any great attachment to. This may only be a small start, but it is something.

You may find that the amount you spend seems to be much less than your income. Apart from allowing for any automatic deductions, there may be a significant level of incidental or impulse purchases which are draining money from your pocket in small amounts every day.

To check this, you should each keep a spending diary for two pay periods where you record everything which you buy. When I did this a few years ago, I was shocked at the total amount I spent in a couple of weeks on snacks, magazines and other impulse items. I had to see the list in front of me before I understood that what I spent on candy bars and other items could, over a couple of months, give us a night on the town instead!

Simple changes like preparing my lunch at home and getting my coffee after I got to work made a noticeable difference over a few months.

If your checklists show that you have serious shortfall between your income and expenses, seriously consider getting professional advice. This may be available through your employer’s Human Resources section, a community-based organization or private, fee-based financial services.

You might ask your friends or close relatives for recommendations of accountants and other professionals in this area.

Be careful about organizations which advertise themselves as debt reduction or consolidation services. Check their reputation with the Better Business Bureaus and the authorities. Many people have found that some services cause more stress and some even leave their clients with larger debts than they had before.



The vital second step is to develop a new habit of depositing a set amount of money from all your income on a regular basis to start building a rainy day fund only to be used for unexpected and serious debts and then only as a last resort.

The common wisdom is that the amount should be at least ten percent of all income. That may seem undoable because of the current level of your debt and expenses.

If so, try about six percent for a start, but raise the amount to ten percent as soon as you can. If you are able to have this money deposited in your special account before you even receive it, this may be easier to deal with. If you don't see it, you may not miss it as much.

The best general advice I have is to get a copy of “The Richest Man in Babylon,” by George S. Clason. Mr. Clason dispensed invaluable advice in the form of parables (stories) set in ancient Babylon, but told in English.

This advice has helped millions of people and made the book an enduring best seller. It could help you and it is a very easy and fairly quick read.

### ***Impulse Buying***

Few of us are able to always resist something which we desire when it's offered at a bargain price.

Many people will buy even if they are not sure that the price is so good or when they don't really have a need of what is offered.

Our buying patterns are studied in great detail by companies and then they use that information to encourage us to buy more and do it more often.

When you visit the supermarket, you find that some of the products you buy most often are positioned at the far end of the store. That means you have to walk past many other items attractively displayed to attract your eye and your dollars.

When you finally get back to the checkout, there are racks of candy and other small items which you might feel the urge to add to your purchase and increase the total of your bill.

The extra items you buy may not seem significant on one visit but they significantly add to the store's profits and to the amount which you spend there over a month.

Consider these tips if you want to regain control of your spending and have more money at the end of your month:

Make a list of what you will buy and stick to it.

Take a small calculator with you and check the prices and total amount spent as you go. Supermarket checkout machines are not perfect and many are found to have been overcharging every day.

Don't feel embarrassed about holding up the line by asking for your bill to be checked. If you are right, you are helping every other shopper that follows you through that line. You might be surprised how many errors are made by supermarket registers. They often just add to the store's profits. I've yet to hear of any where the customer was undercharged.

Many less well-known or store branded products are of equal quality to the heavily promoted brands which the store puts at the most convenient height on the shelves. Looking at the top and bottom shelves before deciding what product to buy, and comparing the contents of various products on their labels can save you money.

If you have children with you, tell them that you won't buy anything which they grab off the shelves. You might buy them something which you choose while in the store or reward their good behavior with a small treat when you get them home.

Think carefully about each purchase. We all still have some degree of that impulsive behavior which makes children grab stuff off store shelves!

Check the quantity you get for each dollar and not just the total price of competing brands. We usually think that a larger packet will be more

economical than buying smaller packs and making more trips to the supermarket. But, suppliers have recognized this trait and sometimes the larger pack contains less product per dollar than the smaller packs!

Use coupons if they are available in you area and you check that there are real savings available from them. Some people think that coupons are not "cool", but recent research (November 2010) suggests that the biggest users of coupons are well educated women in some areas of the U.S.A.!

### ***Debt Burden***

Some people let their debt increase to a dangerous level. This can be for various reasons including the false belief that plastic money is not real debt, they will get a raise or promotion which will enable them to quickly pay off their card(s) or they will be able to manage despite the burden of increasing charges and interest.

The listing of all our income and outgoings which I suggested at the beginning of this chapter may be the first time you have seen the impact which your use of credit cards is having on your general financial position.

Many cards have very high interest rates. The only legal higher rates are probably those of the "payday lenders" which some people try to use to get over an immediate problem and then end up with higher debt than before!

Credit cards should be used only for amounts which can be paid off before the due date. If you have an ongoing level of plastic debt, it is very important to try to reduce and eliminate it as soon as possible. That means removing the temptation to use your card as frequently and for as much as you have been doing.

To help you maintain your decision to reduce your plastic debt, make it a little harder to use your cards. Leave them at home when you go to the shop or put them in a hard to reach part of your wallet or purse.

Many people find that the only sure way to do this is to cut up their cards! You may be able to avoid that if you focus strongly on the benefits you will get from avoiding further increases in the amount owed.

If the amount is large, you should consider getting professional help from a financial counselor. Many communities have these services available at low cost or even free from government assisted organizations.

Be very careful about any company which offers debt-consolidation or similar services. Get independent references before contacting them.

### ***Gambling***

Most people are aware that gambling can become a problem but very few recognize their own gambling as anything but an entertaining diversion with the chance of winning something for almost nothing.

It is very easy to ignore the changes in our life which gambling causes when it starts to become a serious problem.

It's important to recognize that a gambling problem does not have to involve betting large amounts. If you are regularly buying lottery tickets or other low-cost tickets, you might be surprised how much money you are donating to the organizers.

It's ironic that we carefully compare the cost of two similar appliances with the hope of saving about \$20, but we'll happily spend that \$20 for a ticket which gives us one chance in two million of winning some sort of prize.

I buy the occasional ticket but I know that the money is almost certainly never going to return to me in any form.

So, I limit myself to getting tickets which are sold to raise funds for charities which I know are genuinely providing services to people in real need.

Then, I at least have some satisfaction that I am indirectly helping someone who probably has more problems than me.

## **When to get Help**

### **Have you tried to stop or reduce the habit without success?**

This is a common occurrence for most people. It can be very hard to break through the entrenched habit.

If you don't make the change on your first attempt, it can seriously affect your self-confidence to tackle any other task.

### **Is your family unwilling or unable to help you?**

Your family and your close friends probably don't have training in this area and it can be very hard to offer support to someone close who may regard the intended help as unwelcome interference.

They may hold back because:

- They don't know that you want help
- They lack confidence that they can be any real help
- They have been turned off by your attitude towards them due to the problems you have from your habitual behavior
- They fear that their involvement may have a long-term negative effect on your relationship.

### **Do you want to avoid involving close family or friends in your problem?**

Some problems may happen that you don't want to involve your family or close friends in because of possible consequences for your relationship.

### **Is the habit seriously affecting you or those close to you?**

This is usually the factor which gives us the push we need to step up our attempts to change our behavior to the next level.

That may be to increase our own efforts, unaided, to improve the situation or to seek professional help.

One thing which many people don’t realize is that the negative effects on those we care about or work closely with may develop to a large degree without us even noticing!

We can become focused inward on our challenges and the efforts we are making to find a solution that we may not realize how badly strained our connections to the most important people in our lives have already become.

You need to look at your current situation from other people’s viewpoint so that you make sure you take any necessary action before it is too late.

### ***What a Counselor Can Help with***

A trained counselor or other professional can help us to get a better perspective on the problems we have, the alternative methods which we might use to deal with them and the opportunities and challenges which would come with the changes we want to make.



They also have access to the latest research and their own practical experience with other clients that have similar problem behaviors.

They can help you by providing contact information for other professional and community resources.

They are also a means of discussing our problems with some certainty that the discussion will remain private.

Consulting a professional advisor may not cost you much, if anything at all, if you are able to locate community or government funded programs in your area.

If you have medical insurance, you should check the terms carefully to see what, if any, coverage is included. This may be:

- Full cost
- A percentage of the cost per consultation

- A limit on the amount available
- A limit on the number of consultations per year
- Coverage is only available for visits to specified practitioners.

Even when you have medical coverage, you may want to check the cost of paying for this type of consultation yourself, if you have funds available. It may be cheaper in the long run to pay for one or two consultations yourself and keep your medical coverage topped up for possible use in more urgent and unplanned circumstances.

Some consultants offer special rates for some patients who cannot pay their usual rates. Medical colleges and other research institutions may also have low-cost consultations available as part of the training of their students.



There are also many community and commercial organizations which are set up and managed by people that have either had similar problems themselves or have been affected by similar problems in their families.

There are groups for people fighting almost every sort of habitual problem, including gambling, over-eating and legal or illegal drug use.

This can sometimes lead to almost instant breakthroughs in our own thinking when we are able to lay out all the details of our circumstances. Sometimes, this can help us to see where we could improve the way we have been trying to deal with the problem. This new perspective can show us everything more clearly than it had ever been while all our thinking about it had been inside our own skull.

Consulting a professional always has a cost but you should weigh that against the time, effort and stress that a good professional can save you.

Because of their experience and training, they know how to connect with you. Discussing your problem and possible ways forward in a supportive atmosphere can help you focus more quickly and accurately on the real basis of the problems you have. That can shorten the time needed to deal with the problem and get you moving forward to a better life.



## Dealing with Your Habits

The following sections are about specific areas where most people have problems.



I'm not pointing the finger at anyone. I have done some of those things at some time myself and I probably still indulge myself with more chocolate, for instance, than I should.

I'll give you suggestions which helped me, people I have discussed the problems with and also what I found by research for this book.

Remember that there are no guarantees of first time success even if you apply yourself to the best of your ability.

No-one gets everything right the first time.

Those who have the greatest success are those that treat failure as stepping stones or, like Thomas Edison, lessons which show them what doesn't work. Don't let a setback put you on the ground.

Try to learn from each experience. What worked for me or someone I know may just need some tweaking to fit your particular circumstances. Or, you may do better with a quite different approach.

These suggestions are a brief overview of some very complex areas of activity.

Always consult your doctor or other health professional before making any significant changes to your diet, type or level of exercise or other significant parts of your regular routine.

## The Power of Words

An important part of changing our behavior involves maintaining a clear focus on what we want from our efforts and how we will do it.

I found that the words I used when I was talking to the people I was around each day and also when I was thinking about what I had to do, always had a strong effect on the results I got.

I removed some words from my vocabulary.

**TRY:** I followed the advice of Yoda, from the "Star Wars" movies and stopped "trying".

He said, "There is no Try!" – 100% right.

When we say that we will try to do something, we are building into our promise the possibility of not completing the task.

No athlete *tries* to win a competition. They focus on winning.

As far as I know, there are no prizes anywhere awarded for trying.

Whoever comes second usually gets much less than the winner even when there is only a very small margin between their results.

You might feel more distress if you focus on winning every battle if some don't work out for you, but I'm sure you will also taste victory more often than if you just "*try*".

**DON'T:** This is something I read and found it worked when I had to encourage someone else to improve their performance.

Most people use the word "don't" when they tell their employees or their children to change what they have been doing.

We also use it when we write affirmations or other statements about our own intentions or desires.

But, the effect can often turn out to be the exact opposite of what we want to happen!

Apparently, our brains are wired from birth to ignore a negative statement.

If we tell our son, "Don't forget to take out the garbage before you go to your friend's house after school!", the desire to get to their friend's home as soon as possible combines with their mind's predisposition to drop negatives out of instructions makes it very likely that they will, "Don't forget to take out the garbage before you go to your friend's house after school!", and you will see the garbage still there the next day.

That's why we write affirmations with the focus entirely positive. If we include words like "try" or "don't", we're reducing the impact that our words can have on our behavior and the results we get.

### *A Quick Word about Affirmations*



Some people cannot believe that writing down and reviewing short positive and future-focused statements can have any benefit for them.

They tell me, "It is mumbo-jumbo! You get somewhere by working hard and not just by saying that you will get there!"

My experience is that success always involves W.O.R.K

I have used affirmations successfully. I know many people that say that they improved the results they got in behavior modification and other areas has been helped by using affirmations. These suggestions may help you use them successfully.

**They must be credible:** If you cannot believe what you tell yourself, that will block you from achieving the goal. That does not mean you must give up; just improve your self-image by tackling and overcoming small targets, focusing on the positives in you personally and avoiding thinking about past disappointments.

Zig Ziglar calls it "Stinking Thinking". It is a very powerful force which you must change before you try to change any other major factor in your life.

## **Food for Thought**

Many of our bad habits are connected with the food and other stuff which we consume, especially the "other stuff" which we think is food!

Many of us are fortunate enough to live in countries which produce great quantities of food which can keep us happy and well through our longer lives.

But, a lot of us avoid real food in favor of substitutes which have been interfered with chemically or by other means and which may have effects which we don't expect.

We may substitute these concoctions for the food our body really needs. That can often lead to serious complications to our health.

We are bombarded with messages promoting various things which, if we only consume them regularly, are almost guaranteed to make us more attractive, happier - everything but well-nourished and healthier. Usually, the processed foods cost us a lot more than the fresh ones would too.

Many people also adopt habits which interfere with the ability of our bodies to get sufficient nutrients from what we eat or we eat more than is good for us!

### ***Too much Food***

Many people eat more food than they need to maintain their current level of activity.

Many people, including a lot in the previous group, eat more junk than real food and cause problems because of the additives and changes caused during the processing of the food into products for consumption.

Some people eat too much processed food and suffer because their diet doesn't provide enough real nourishment to maintain their health. They are also likely to do less exercise than they need, partly because their diet doesn't provide them with the required energy.

These people sometimes get a sudden desire or incentive to improve their level of fitness. They might become interested in starting a new relationship, improving their current relationship or been told by their doctor the possible consequences of continuing to ignore their poor state of health.

But, they can cause themselves more problems by leaping into some exercise program without first getting a medical checkup and professional advice about what type and amount of exercise might be comfortable and safe for them.

### ***Moderation in all Things***

That's a good motto to follow. I've improved my diet with advice from a doctor and also the people that sell their own produce at the local market.

I haven't given up chocolate or coffee but I'm a lot healthier and enjoy the smaller amounts I still have much more when I consume them. That's partly because I think my sense of taste is not blocked by the strong flavors of some of the packaged foods I stopped eating.

**Caffeine** in its various forms is not easy to avoid. Few people realize the effects it can have on our health. The most common sources of caffeine are coffee and tea.

**Guarana** is a relative of caffeine which you will find in some energy drinks. It's claimed to have less side effects than caffeine.

I used to drink a lot of coffee at home and socially. I reduced my intake by using a small cup instead of the large and colorfully decorated mug my daughter gave me for Christmas. I started taking the cup back to the kitchen after my drink instead of leaving it next to my computer desk where I could still smell the aroma afterwards. That had encouraged me to drink more, of course.

**Chocolate** is another thing which I decided to eat less. That was probably harder than dealing with the coffee habit.

### ***Less is Better***

One thing I learned from my reading was that we don't have to eat the amounts of chocolate and other treats we do to enjoy them. Our taste buds are quickly loaded with the chocolate after one or two small pieces. The rest does not improve our enjoyment, just tends to increase our waistline or other areas and produce waste which our body eliminates.



The next time you have some chocolate or whatever treat you like, treat yourself to just a small amount and put the other out of reach. You will probably find that you will get as powerful a "hit" from the smaller quantity, your waistline will not increase but your wallet won't shrink as quickly either.

### ***Better Choices***

Many of our eating problems and the negative impact on our health could be reduced if we changed the form we took the various foods which are so abundantly available to us.

Many people favor fruit juice or vegetable juice as a source of the nutrients which originated in the actual fruit or vegetables.

These products do have some benefits but my doctor and everything I read suggests that we might be much better off if we went, where possible, to the source. After all, the processed juices usually have other substances apart from the juice and these may have effects which you are unaware of and may not want.

Their production involves a cost from the various stages of the commercial process which you have to pay and there is also a cost to the environment for the packaging and transport.

I suggest that you check the labels of the processed foods you buy for your family and make your choices with that information in mind.

***Simple Ways to Avoid Temptation.***

If you are battling against a compulsion to eat too much chocolate, drink too much coffee or whatever else, these ideas can help. They won't cost you anything except a little time and can be very effective if you use them regularly.

Though this Chapter is focused on food, you may find that some of these tips may be adapted to help you reduce your indulgence in other habitual behavior.

Many people have a cup of coffee or glass of soda near their computer at work and maybe a packet of biscuits as well.

The coffee or soda can be a serious problem if you spill any onto the machine. Most companies ban the practise.

But, you can reduce the risk and also the amount which you consume by taking your cup or glass back to the kitchen or amenities area after you have your drink. While you are there, eat your biscuit (just one will give you the taste and should satisfy your craving –two or three will just add calories).

Resist the temptation to prepare another drink and take it back with you.

Those few steps will also help to reduce the risk of your developing poor circulation.

Have you considered just having half a cup of your favorite beverage?

Many people have large mugs decorated with their name. There's nothing wrong with that, but they usually feel a need to fill their cup every time they make a drink and drink all of it.

If you buy your favorite biscuits or other treats in large packets, you probably save some money but then feel compelled to eat them before they deteriorate.

Putting a picture of something you desire, like a new outfit, on your refrigerator door is a well-proven tactic.



If there is a growers' market in your area, I suggest that you start taking the family there on a regular basis.

If you don't have access to that source of fresh produce and meat, look for a store which offers direct from the grower produce.

The price you pay for your eggs and vegetables may be a little higher (not always the case!), but you are getting real food which has suffered less modification and will usually be much better for you.

You may, like me, be encouraged to try growing some of your own vegetables. This is possible to a limited degree, even if you live in an apartment.

You may think it's too much trouble, until you see the expressions on your family's faces and taste the difference between store-bought produce and your own herbs and vegetables!



## Where There's Smoke There's Ire



Smoking is possibly one of the most difficult habits to face and defeat, but we are beginning to realize that the risks associated with continuing to smoke are much worse than we imagined.

For me, the information which I got about the damage that my smoking might cause to people around me, especially my children and wife, made this battle one I must not lose.

The chemicals in cigarettes and the effect which some of them have on parts of our brain and nervous system makes it a particularly hard battle.

You need to discuss the best options for your particular circumstances with your doctor as a first step.

Rally as much support among your family and friends as you can. It will be a tremendous help.

They need to realize that you may become a bit hard to get along with as you reduce your smoking, but it will be worthwhile in the longer term.

And, it's a battle you need to win for everybody's benefit.

Don't be put off if you slip back at times.

But, equally, don't use the level of difficulty as an excuse to reduce your effort or give up.

## Quick Tips

Here are some more suggestions which might help you in a variety of circumstances.

### *The Curse of Comfort Foods*

Habitual behavior such as eating food or treats or smoking and other things may be a mechanism to relieve tension in a tense situation or when we are feeling depressed.

We can cut down on our bad habit when we realize that we are indulging in it for emotional rather than reasons such as enjoyment or nourishment.

It may still take some effort to overcome the temptation – you'll get used to that.

It will become easier as you start to see improvements in various areas of your life. The small successes will improve your confidence in your own ability to handle the bigger challenges you face and not just with changing the habit you are focused on.

### *Healthy Snacks*

We often buy a snack with little if any nutritional value because it is appealing to our eyes and it's readily available. The impact on our waistline and wallet become secondary if we think of them at all.

A friend said that she would put some nuts and other healthy nibbles in a small container and slip it in her bag to bring out whenever she felt the need. Since she also knew that a little is better than a lot, a small quantity got her through the period between meals enjoyably and at almost zero cost.

### *Eat when You Need to*

We are used to eating three meals a day. But, there's no law which says that we have to stick to that routine.

Some people I know have breakfast and then four smaller meals through their long and busy days.

I found that a large lunch with colleagues sometimes made me less capable of handling my work through the afternoon. So, I would eat with them but get smaller portions so that I was able to complete my work and then have a larger evening meal if I wanted to.

Some people also have a large supper before they go to bed. I don't think our body is able to fully digest food that is consumed that late, so it may affect your ability to get adequate rest as well as the full benefit of the food you ate.

## Afterword

Thank you for reading my first ebook.

I know all too well how difficult it can be to change a habit that has become established over years in a reasonably short time.

I hope that my book has given you some helpful information and some inspiration which will help when it feels really hard.

I was not successful with my first attempt at changing a particular behavior and I haven't succeeded at every attempt since.

But, I have got enough benefits from these efforts to know it has all been worthwhile.

I hope that you will also achieve the results you desire in less time and without the stress that comes from not knowing what is the next step you need to take.

Good Luck and all the Success you deserve,

***Warren Davis***

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