

Well Being

Stillpoint Rehabilitation & Wellness, LLC

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Using Awareness to Change Habits

This is the time of year when many people abandon their good habits as the stress and temptations of the holiday season become overwhelming. Typically, this will be followed by New Year's resolutions to eat less, exercise more, quit smoking, stop procrastinating, control anger, etc. For some people this is a yearly ritual, followed by disappointment and resignation in March.

According to author Leo Babauta, the hardest habits to change, are the ones people can't seem to control. They want to change, but can't seem to find the "willpower".

One of the secrets to changing an undesirable habit is awareness. Once you are aware of the ways in which your subconscious mind affects your behavior, you will have a better chance at achieving your goals.

As an example, let's say that you have decided to cut down on your sugar intake after reading all of the research that links the consumption of

sugar to multiple health problems. Next thing you know, you are at a holiday party and there is cake.

You have consciously decided not to indulge this time, but in the background there may be a subtle voice that says, "just eat it already... it's a party... why put yourself through all the torture... just live... just one more time... you deserve it." Usually we are not even aware of this dialogue and all we know is that we are reaching for the sweets. This can happen not just with eating, but with anything we try to do and seem to sabotage ourselves. But, you can change it.

1. Start by becoming aware. Become an observer. Start listening to your self-talk, observe what your mind does. Pay attention. It's happening all the time. Meditation helps with making you more aware of your self-talk.

2. Don't act. Your mind will urge you to eat that cake ("Just a bite!") or smoke that

cigarette or stop exercising or procrastinate. Listen to what your mind is saying, but don't act on those instructions. Just watch and listen.

3. Let it pass. The urge to smoke, eat, procrastinate, or avoid exercise ... it will pass. It's temporary. Breathe, and let it pass.

Challenge the rationalizations. You can actively argue with your mind. When it says, "One little bite won't hurt!", you can point to your belly or other part and say, "Yeah, that's what you said all those other times, and now I have gained weight!" When it says, "Why are you putting yourself through this pain? Why bother?", you can say, "It's painful to be unhealthy and it can be a joy to embrace healthy and delicious foods, and fitness!"

Having a **vision board** with pictures, words and images that represent your goals can be a powerful motivator too if you look at it daily.

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Life shrinks or expands according to one's courage.

Anais Nin

Newsworthy Medical News

A study in a cardiology journal found a statistically significant association between **chocolate consumption and a reduced risk of stroke.**

Chocolate consumption has been found to reduce blood pressure, improve endothelial and platelet function and improve insulin resistance. The flavanoids in chocolate possess strong antioxidant activity and can suppress the oxidation of low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol (the “bad” type).

You should choose dark chocolate with greater than 70% cocoa for the most flavanoids or use pure cocoa powder for hot chocolate or smoothies. Avoid the mixes which have loads of added sugar.

There is evidence that 30 minutes per day of exercise can have substantial health benefits. Most people do not get this much exercise. A recent study published in the medical journal Lancet aimed to identify the **minimum** amount of exercise needed to reap health benefits. Over 400,000 people were included and their level of physical activity (including work duties) were categorized into inactive, light, moderate, medium vigorous and high vigorous levels.

Even those in the low activity group who exercised an average of **15 minutes per day** had a reduced risk of illness and an increase in life expectancy— 2.55 years longer for men and 3.1 years longer for women.

Loren Fishman, MD a New York professor of Rehabilitation Medicine and yoga enthusiast alleviated his shoulder rotator cuff injury by doing headstands. He designed a study and taught 49 patients to do a modified headstand in his office once for 30 seconds. For most of them, range-of-motion improved significantly more than what is typically seen with physical therapy or surgery, and pain decreased by an average of 82%.

It seems that the inverted posture activates muscles that support the shoulder in its socket.

You can get a similar sensation by placing your forearms on the wall and leaning the top of your head gently into the wall.

Shopping Locally = Better Energy

There is a great deal in the media about shopping locally this year to support communities and local businesses.

If, like most people, you will be bestowing gifts on friends and family this month, consider supporting our local businesses and artisans.

We have some really great local shops and restaurants right in downtown Bangor these days. A gift certificate is a way to help others discover these establishments.

You can also consider gift certificates for practical services or for things

they consider luxuries. Try concert or theatre tickets, babysitting, massage, spa treatments, gasoline or car wash/detailing, driveway plowing or housekeeping.

Shop local craft fairs or stores for locally made jewelry, beadwork, pottery, etc.

Make a basket with locally purchased wines, cheeses, bread, or homemade granola. Don't forget our local health food stores. A gift certificate or basket can make a huge difference in someone's plan to start a healthy new year.

The energetic imprint of something made with love and positive intent is far different from that of things made on assembly lines overseas in sweatshop conditions. Consider what it means to own and give objects that are lovingly crafted.

Classes are great gifts too. Yoga, tai chi, pilates, dance, painting, drawing, music classes are all available in town.

If you want to feel more gratitude and abundance, volunteer some time at a soup kitchen, food bank or donate to those in need or those whose lives could be uplifted in any