



Keeping up the good work

Just like when you start trying to change any behaviour, keeping up these changes also takes effort and dedication. Here are some helpful strategies and ideas that can help you maintain the changes you've made.

Building your new habits into your daily routines

You're more likely to keep up any changes you have made in the long term if it becomes a habit, something you do almost automatically.

If you link your new behaviour to 'cues' (or triggers) in your environment around you, you're more likely to maintain them over time. A 'cue' can be:

- Other people
- An object such as a note on your fridge door
- The time of day
- Other behaviours or events, such as Friday evenings
- How you feel, such as stressed or happy

There are cues wherever you go. This could be in your car, at work, at home, etc. It's important to create positive cues which trigger you to keep doing your new behaviour as often as possible.

How to create healthy habits using cues

New behaviours can become habits when you repeat them in the same place, or situation in response to a cue.

For example, if you're trying to eat more healthily, eating a piece of fruit when you finish work for the day or after completing a daily task.

Over time, this cue (finishing work) will trigger the healthy habit (having a piece of fruit) without you being aware of it.

Brushing your teeth is a good example of a habit. It's an activity you probably do without even thinking about it.

Some of the time you may choose to do an unhealthy, unwanted behaviour without even thinking about it. For example, if you're trying to cut back on your drinking, but you always have a glass of wine with your dinner.

You could build a healthy habit by replacing the red wine with a healthier option. This could be swapping red wine out for a non-alcoholic drink instead.

Repeat this every time you get the cue (having dinner) until you grab your healthier alternative without thinking about it.

You can break unhealthy habits which may stop you from keeping to your new behaviour, by removing what psychologists call 'negative cues'. These are cues which may encourage us to do an unwanted behaviour more than we'd like.

For example, if you're trying to get more smoke less, having cigarettes around the house. To break this habit, you could move the cigarettes out sight so you're less likely to grab them and smoke them.

In this section we present two main ways to break unhealthy habits. Have a think about which would work best for you:

1. You could consider changing the cue or trigger. For example, the cue is going to the pub with friends, meaning you automatically have some drinks. You could meet your friends somewhere else that doesn't serve alcohol instead.
2. You could change the way you respond to a cue. For example, meeting a friend at the pub (the cue) but choosing to drive and drinking soft drinks.

Take a moment to think about the cues in your environment. Think about positive cues as well as negative cues you could change to help you maintain your new behaviour. You might want to note these down:

1. Replacing or changing the cue (or trigger)

- Current cues I already have in my environment are:

- New cues which could trigger me to keep to my new behaviour which I could add to my environment are:

- Cues that trigger me not to keep to my new behaviour, that I could remove from my environment are:

2. Change the way you respond to a cue (or trigger)

- Replacement activities I could do after experiencing a trigger (which normally makes me not keep to my new behaviour) are:

- Something positive I could remind or tell myself after experiencing a trigger (which I did not give in to) is:

Using your environment and social support to stay on track

The people and things around you can keep you motivated and positive and help you to keep to your new behaviour. This can be when you are at home, work, or with friends. A supportive environment could be a home or workplace that provides resources to help you keep doing your new behaviour.

For example, a workplace having organised team sports at lunchtimes to help you stay physically active.

Good social support could be having a family member who knows about your goal to change your behaviour and does this with you to support you.

Make sure that your environment and social support are as supportive as possible. Think about those places or events that may get in the way of keeping to your new behaviour. For example, if a friend or colleague brings alcoholic drinks around to your house when you're trying to cut down.

These may happen regularly and be difficult to avoid. If this is the case, think about what makes it difficult (barriers or obstacles) and what will make it easier (solution) for you. Try making an If-then plan which can help you plan for difficult situations.

[See plan for potential problems in changing your behaviour for more information.](#)

Keeping an eye on changes to your routine

Another important way to keep up the changes you're made is by continuing to monitor and manage your emotions and any unhelpful thoughts or behaviours. This is so they don't get in the way of the changes you've made.

For example, if you're stressed and feeling negative, this could trigger you to do more of an unhelpful, unhealthy behaviour than you'd like. Monitoring anything that gets in the way of you keeping up your changes can help tell you what you need to problem solve and overcome these challenges.

Learn more about [managing emotions](#). To discover more ways to monitor your behaviour, see [Keep track of your progress as you change your behaviour](#).

Managing changes in routine

It can be quite normal to experience setbacks when you're trying to keep doing a new behaviour, when something unexpected happens in your life. This could be having a stressful life event or an impromptu social event with friends where something you're trying to stop or cut down on, such as smoking or drinking, is involved.

The important thing is to notice when these things happen and throw you off course. If you're aware of what's happening around you and realise why, use it as an opportunity to review your goals and action plans.

For example, you may need to be kind to yourself and not set many goals for a week you know will be challenging as you focus on other things. But you could plan to revisit your goals a week later and accept that things will have slipped a bit.

Planning how you might respond to challenges ahead of time means you're prepared for them. One type of plan that can help you stay on track with your goals in these situations is an If-then plan.

To give an example:

- If I'm planning on going away to visit family for a few days...
- Then I won't be able to walk my usual route on those days, but I'll speak to a family member and see if they would walk with me when we are away

Find out more about making an If-then plan with [Plan for potential problems in changing your behaviour](#).

Staying motivated

Often the things that motivate you to start making changes, are not the same things you need to keep up your new behaviour. It's also important to think about what motivates you to continue making any changes to your new behaviour. It's easier to maintain changes if you have at least one thing that motivates you.

Some examples of motivators:

- Being satisfied and happy with what you have achieved with your new behaviour so far.
- Enjoying finding doing that new behaviour.
- This new behaviour is more in line with who you are and what you believe in.
- It may be useful to think about these motivators and how they are relevant to you.

To do this, try completing the below statements.

- The thing I am most satisfied about with my new behaviour is:

- The thing I am most enjoy about my new behaviour is:

- My identity, beliefs and values match with my new behaviour of:

Having the right resources to keep you on track

One final strategy is to make sure you have a range of resources at hand whenever you need them.

By working through the articles and activities on this website, you'll already have several resources and tools to use. Types of resources that can help you keep on track can include:

- Practical tools, such as an app which records and tracks your drinking
- Emotional support, from a family member, friend or colleague
- For more information to help you keep on track, see the following resources:

Managing emotions - manage unhelpful cravings and emotions that might get in the way of you achieving your goal

Get support to help you change your behaviour - learn how social support can help you achieve your goals.

Keep track of your progress as you change your behaviour - monitor what you do towards your new behaviour each day to stay on track with your goals.