



Just like a matchstick’s fire needs fuel to keep burning, motivation provides the initial spark, but habits sustain long-term change. Begin with small, actionable habits to keep the flame alive.




If you have ever felt fully motivated to start something but noticed that motivation vanished after a while and energy lost its spark, you are not alone. As a coach, one of the questions I get asked the most is, “Why is motivation so temporary?” I always compare it to a lit matchstick, bright at first but quickly fading without fuel. That initial spark is crucial and can ignite something lasting—your habits.

Recognize that motivation isn’t a constant source of energy but only a momentary burst that, if used immediately, can set the stage for lasting change, so when you feel that surge of motivation, act without delay. For example, if you’re motivated to learn a new language, immediately capture that initial spark of motivation by downloading a related new language app and setting up daily practice sessions. Or if you feel motivated to wake up earlier, act quickly before that motivation fades and turn it into a habit. Set a reminder to go to bed by 10 p.m. or download an app that limits social media use after 9:30 p.m. Set your alarm for 5 a.m. and decide what your first task will be in the morning. These small, actionable tasks lock in your intention and make it easier to follow through, eventually transforming that initial burst of motivation into a sustainable habit.

What steps will you take to build a daily reading habit and complete this book?



When attempting to change habits, the initial push is all about willpower, like a rocket escaping Earth's immense gravity. But once in orbit, it's smooth sailing!



Changing habits can be incredibly tough at first, like how a rocket needs immense energy to break free of Earth's tenacious gravitational pull. At the start, you'll rely greatly on willpower to resist old habits and start new ones. This phase requires a strong 'why,' the reason behind the intended change, along with effort, determination, and an unwavering focus on your goal.

There will be irresistible cravings to abandon new resolutions and a powerful pull of old habits, leading you to wonder how you will resist the temptation to stick to the old. But the great news is that, given the indomitable ability of the human mind to adapt to change, after just a few days of holding out, your mind will begin to adapt to the new. It's like reaching a new orbit, where the old habits start to loosen their grip on you.

For instance, if you wish to boost your productivity, you know that you have to avoid distractions like social media and cut down on excessive socializing. However, all of these tasks are tremendously challenging. They will require a consciously exerted focus, the setting of strict boundaries, and using tools like timers to stay on track and task. Initially, it will be literally 'painful,' but as you continue, the new behaviors will become second nature. You'll eventually find yourself naturally gravitating towards more productive activities with less effort.

What strategies will you use to overcome initial resistance?



Establish new habits by linking them to a set time and location. Consistent timing and place help cue behavior instinctively.



Tying a new habit to a specific time and place makes it easier to stick to it consistently with less effort. By designating a regular time and place for your new task or activity, you eliminate the need to decide when and where to do it every day. Instead, the designated environment automatically cues the behavior, helping you reach peak performance.

For instance, if you want to start a routine like reading industry-related material every morning, choose 5 a.m. in your home office as the dedicated time and place for the new habit. When 5 a.m. rolls around, and you're in your home office, your environment will nudge you to read without great effort. This consistency in timing and location helps a new habit become a natural part of your daily routine, supporting your professional growth.

Linking your habit to a specific time and place helps reduce common obstacles, such as forgetfulness and distractions. The routine makes it easier to remember your habits, while the familiar environment helps boost energy and drive. By leveraging the power of environmental cues, you set yourself up for sustained peak performance.

What specific time and location will you dedicate to starting your new habit?



Habits form through Repetitive Mental Programming (RMP). The human brain works on two levels: conscious and subconscious. RMP is about programming the subconscious by consistently choosing positive actions at the conscious level.



Consider how you learned to drive. Changing gears felt challenging at first because you had to consciously consider each step. But as you repeated the action innumerable, your mind became programmed to carry out commands subconsciously. Over time, you start changing gears without a second thought. This is the power of Repetitive Mental Programming (RMP).

Similarly, habits are also created by repeating actions over time. When you consistently choose positive behaviors, they gradually turn into habits. Clients often ask me how long it takes to build a habit. My answer is always the same: it's not about the amount of time but the frequency with which you repeat that action in the same situation.

For instance, if you want to build a habit of being polite at home, it will start with deciding to choose kind words each time you get into an argument with your spouse. The more you continue making that choice, the stronger the habit will become. Think of habits as seeds, with regular care, like choosing positive actions, they will grow into strong trees that stand tall in your life's garden, representing growth and positive change.

What new habit will you program into your subconscious through consistent repetition?



Choose to be with people who believe in your capacity to change. Positive energy is contagious.



Choosing to be with people who believe in your ability to change can significantly impact your personal growth. Their positive energy, encouragement, and faith in your potential are empowering and can inspire you to continually strive for improvement and persist through challenges.

It is also crucial to distance yourself from skeptical and pessimistic people who pass negative comments and undermine your confidence. By doing so, you create a nurturing environment that fosters growth and motivation.

If you want to strengthen your public speaking skills, join a group like Toastmasters, where members are dedicated to helping each other evolve constructively. Being part of a vibrant and supportive community, where everyone believes in each other's potential, boosts self-confidence and encourages you to zone in on positive self-reflection and change. The inspiring energy, positive feedback, and uplifting shared experiences make the process of learning, improving, and adopting better habits more engaging and rewarding.

Make a list of people who believe in your ability to change?



Preparing your reactions to specific triggers ahead of time ensures that when faced with a familiar cue, you can respond constructively. This makes habit formation more effective and less reliant on in-the-moment willpower.



By identifying potential triggers and deciding how you'll respond ahead of time, you equip yourself to act mindfully rather than impulsively when these moments occur. This is a proactive strategy, not reactive, preparing for the storm before it hits and ensuring you have a clear plan to stick to your habits, even under pressure. For instance, I have decided that whenever I get stuck in traffic, I will multitask and listen to educational podcasts or audiobooks. Hence, instead of feeling frustrated, I turn the situation into a productive learning experience, enhancing my knowledge and skills even during potentially vexing rides.

By prepping in this manner, you'll see that you are not constantly battling with willpower or making snap decisions. I have also decided that whenever I face any negative comments or deal with defeatist attitudes, I will use that negative energy as fuel to enhance my own self-growth. Hence, when I encounter rejection or criticism, I strive to perform at my peak in the criticized area instead of feeling dejected and losing spirit. By adopting a growth mindset, you not only respond to your environment but actively shape it to support your goals and sustain peak performance.

What specific triggers frequently challenge your ability to stick to a new habit, and how will you respond positively next time?
