

HABITS

K of C Council 12749

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We have all seen in sports the golfer who is on a roll and can't seem to miss a shot – even the very tough ones. Or the baseball player who just seems to be on a high and makes hit after hit. Or the basketball player who easily dribbles past opponents as if they were standing still and then makes shot after impossible shot as if he were in a different world. We have a phrase for that – we call it Being In The Zone.

When in the zone athletes state that they almost feel as if things are going in slow motion. Their athletic performance is effortless, smooth, consistent, exceptional and automatic. Ah; clear focus and yet automatic.

If we could only be able to distill that magic of being in the zone, imagine how we could use The Zone. We could set a goal in mind and our whole being would go after it. We could reach heights that we only dreamed about. Perhaps we could touch the face of God.

But how can we facilitate this state of mind? I believe one of the keys is in the word “automatic.”

As I was growing up, my mother frequently used sayings or aphorisms she wanted me to remember:

A place for everything and everything in its place.

An hour of sleep before midnight is worth two after midnight.

Never lie; but especially not to your parents. Then we'll REALLY get mad.

It's easier to form a good habit than to break a bad one.

Habits. Sort of an automatic pilot. Habits are things we don't have to think about – we are just used to doing them. Hence, our minds are freed up for other pursuits.

It's similar to the autonomic nervous system in the body. We don't WANT to think about how much gastric juice we need our stomach to produce in order to digest. We want the stomach to do it automatically.

We don't WANT to have to pay attention to how fast our heart beat should be – we want it happen automatically.

If we had to pay attention to everything that was going on in our body we really couldn't do much in life – our thinking would be totally consumed just to keep going.

In a similar manner, if our minds had to pay attention to everything we do during the day there really would be no time for higher goals – like increasing our spirituality.

That's where habits come in -- we put as much as possible on automatic in our life in order to focus on important things. Sort of like self-programming. The more our daily life that is automatic, the more we can focus our concentration on specific goals.

But, to paraphrase my Mother, there are good habits and bad habits. The former gets us there; the latter messes us up.

The formation of a new good habit really entails only one rule: do it daily for 21 days and it tends to become a new habit: exercise daily, practice piano every evening, say morning and evening prayers—do it every day and it will become a habit; you won't even have to remind yourself after 21 days.

Breaking a bad habit may be a bit more difficult, although the key again seems to be that leverage point of around 21 days. Here are some hints:

- 1) Write the down habits that you want to break on a piece of paper. Concretize them.
- 2) Take only one habit at a time to change. Don't get overwhelmed.

- 3) Take one day at a time. Concentrate on not permitting the habit just today.
- 4) Treat yourself like an experimental rat: instead of performing the bad habit give yourself a treat -- choose any treat you would like – as long as it's not illegal or immoral.
- 5) Don't get discouraged. The THOUGHT to do the bad habit may occur after 21 days, but the PHYSICAL PULL to perform the action will have dissipated.

So now we have a plan to allow us to get into the zone: break as many bad habits as possible, create as many good habits as possible. And when we are freed up as much as possible and on auto pilot, let our minds concentrate on achieving exceptional goals.

My Mother also said, "If you sleep with pigs you'll get dirty." I'll have to think on that one a little longer.