

## A Guide to Changing Habits

### What is a habit?

A habit is a behavior that starts as a choice, and then becomes a nearly unconscious pattern. It often takes place in a loop, known as a habit loop. Once you understand the loop, you can change habits.

### 3 Basic Steps of Habit Loop (Duhigg, 2012)

*When I see my CUE, I will do my ROUTINE in order to get a REWARD*

#### Cue

The cue is a trigger that tells your brain to go into automatic mode. The cue can be internal, such as a feeling or thought, or external, such as a time of day, person, action, or the company of certain people.

#### Routine

The routine can be physical, cognitive, or emotional.

#### Reward

The reward determines if a particular habit loop is worth remembering. The behavioral pattern will become automatic when your brain **craves** the reward.

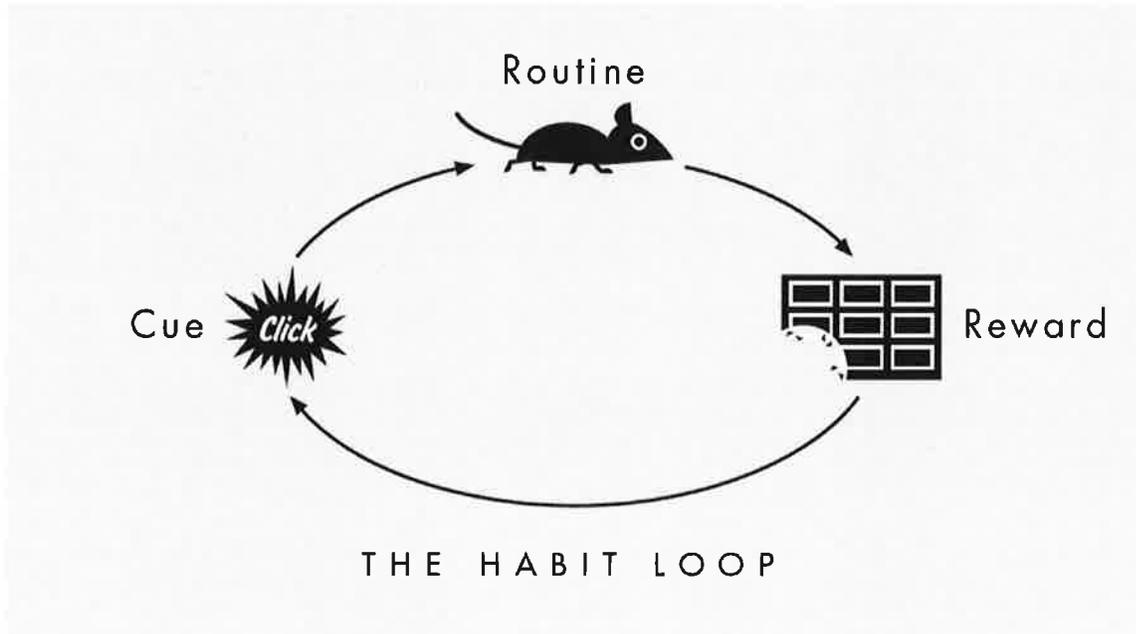


Illustration: Birkett, M. & Dickson, K. (2012). *The Power of Habit Study Guide*. Random House.

## Examples of a Habit Loop

### Habit of grabbing coffee on the go

- Cue - Pass by Starbucks on the way to class. You did not have time to make coffee or breakfast before leaving
- Routine - Grab a quick breakfast and coffee
- Reward - Caffeine/sustenance and ease of getting it even if it is outside of your budget and may cause you to be late to work/school

### Habit of eating donuts

- Cue - I see a box of donuts in the break room at work
- Routine - Eat a donut just because it is there
- Reward - Easy sugar and dopamine hit even if I am not hungry at the time

### Habit of too much Social Media

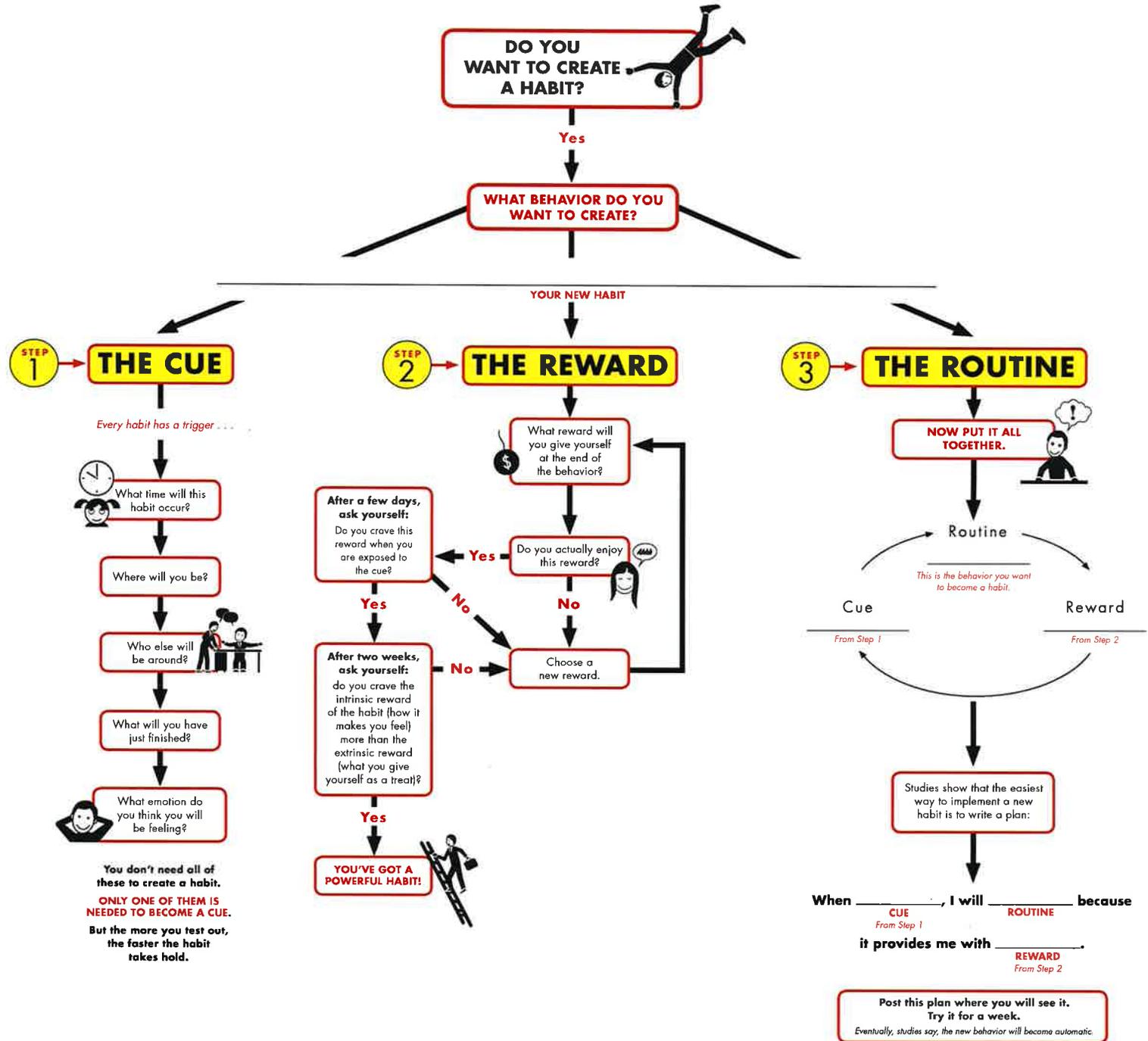
- Cue - End of a long day of work/school
- Routine - Watch social media mindlessly for hours and delaying bedtime
- Reward - Relaxation and entertainment even if it means sacrificing sleep

Now that you are aware of what a habit loop is, you can work on creating a habit and changing a habit. Attached on the next pages are 2 flow charts with steps on *how to change a habit* or *how to create a habit*.

## References

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- Birkett, M. & Dickson, K. (2012). *The Power of Habit Study Guide*. Random House.
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# HOW TO CREATE A HABIT



Duhigg, 2012

# HOW TO CHANGE A HABIT



THE HABIT YOU WANT TO CHANGE

**DIAGNOSE THE THREE PARTS OF THE HABIT**

**STEP 1 THE CUE**

*When you feel the urge for your habit, ask yourself...*

What time is it?

Where are you?

Who else is around?

What did you just do?

What emotion are you feeling?

**ONE OF THESE 5 THINGS IS THE CUE.**

Look for which one stays the same every time you feel the urge.

**STEP 2 THE REWARD**

What craving do you think your habit is satisfying?

**TEST THAT THEORY:**

Substitute another reward (i.e., instead of eating a cookie, have a cup of coffee.) Is the craving gone?

**THAT'S WHAT YOU'RE REALLY CRAVING.**

**No**

Substitute the opposite reward (i.e., instead of eating a cookie, take a walk.) Is the craving gone?

**No**

Keep experimenting until you find something new that satisfies the urge.

**STEP 3 THE ROUTINE**

Now that you have identified the cue and reward, **INSERT A NEW ROUTINE.**

Routine

Cue

Reward

*From Step 1*

*From Step 2*

Studies show that the easiest way to implement a new habit is to write a plan:

When **CUE** (From Step 1), I will **ROUTINE** because it provides me with **REWARD** (From Step 2).

**Post this plan where you will see it. Try it for a week.**

*Eventually, studies say, the new behavior will become automatic.*

Duhigg, 2012