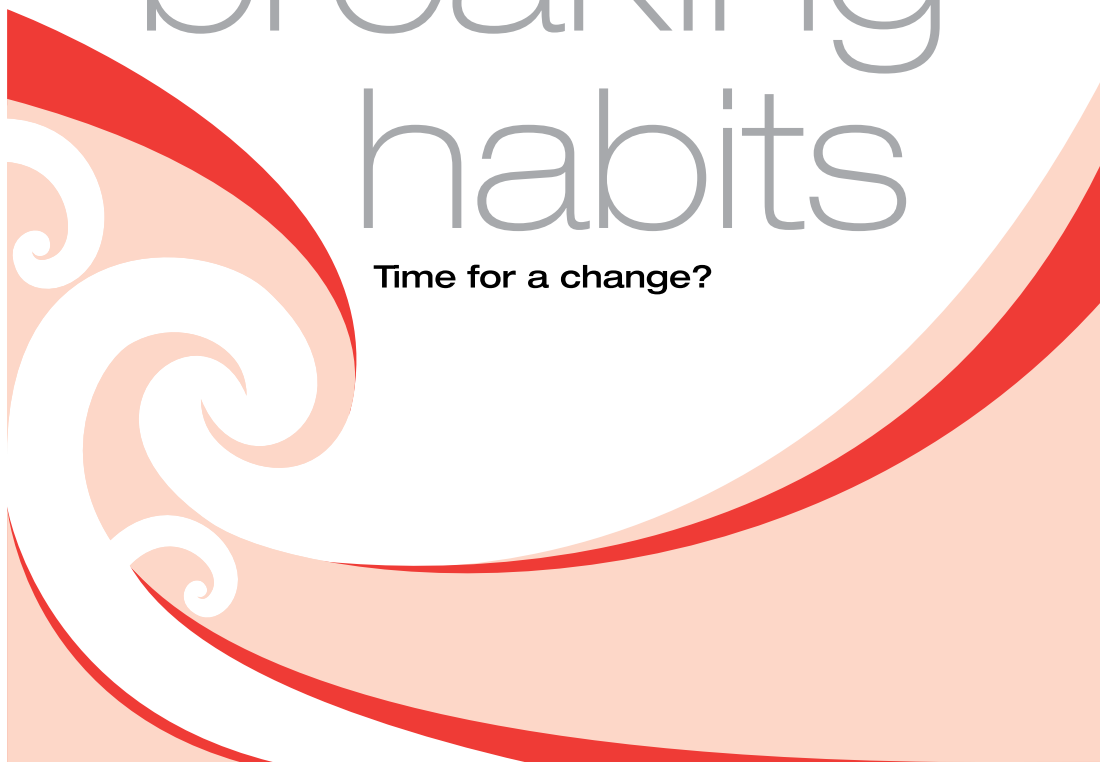




breaking habits

Time for a change?



This material was produced as part of the Ultra-brief intervention study (Stress in Primary Care).

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Ultra-brief intervention patient materials: Breaking Habits.

Breaking Habits

How to use this booklet:

Make a quiet space for yourself.

Have a pen handy.

This is not a reading book. It's a work book, so write in the spaces.
Ask yourself 'How does this apply to me?'

Remember, it is your life. Nobody can make you change if you don't want to.
It is up to you. It is your responsibility and your right.

If you get stuck, ask your GP or other support people to help you.



Is my behaviour harmful?

Less harmful

Drinking	You drink 2-3 drinks a week	Women: 4-14 drinks a week, no more than 4 at one time. Men: 4-21 drinks per week, no more than 6 at one time
Taking risks	You see occasional risks as fun	You take small risks regularly
Self harm	Criticising yourself when things go wrong	Minor scratching or hurting
Spending too much	Buying some things you want but don't need	Sometimes spending more than you can afford
Substance use	Occasional light use	Using more often with no bad effects
Comfort eating	You eat chocolate etc occasionally	You sometimes use food to deal with feelings
Shoplifting	Friends shoplift and you don't tell them it's wrong	Occasional shoplifting
Gambling	Occasionally buying a lotto ticket, playing pokies	You often spend small amounts on gambling
Gaming/internet	You sometimes stay up later than planned	You often spend time gaming/on the net
Sexual behaviour/ pornography	Occasional pornography use, frequent sexual thoughts	Regular pornography use/ some risky sexual behaviour

→ **More Harmful**

<p>You exceed drinking guidelines; some impact on health relationships or work</p>	<p>Your drinking affects your health, relationships or work</p>
<p>You take risks most people would not take</p>	<p>Doing things that could be fatal for you and others</p>
<p>You cause injury to your body</p>	<p>Causing permanent damage to your body</p>
<p>You often spending more than you can afford</p>	<p>You run out of credit; stuck in debt</p>
<p>You use regularly. People may express concern</p>	<p>Frequent heavy use, affecting work, health or relationships</p>
<p>You often use food to deal with feelings</p>	<p>Bingeing and making yourself sick when upset</p>
<p>Regular shoplifting</p>	<p>Shoplifting continues and you start to steal in other ways too</p>
<p>You often risk larger amounts when gambling</p>	<p>Risking major assets & relationships, major debt from gambling</p>
<p>You spend a lot of your leisure time gaming/on the net</p>	<p>You do this so much that work, sleep, or relationships suffer</p>
<p>Pornography use/ sexual behaviour having some impact on relationships</p>	<p>Frequent pornography use, obsessed with sex/ risky sex/ damage to relationships</p>

So there's something you might want to work on?

First, don't beat yourself up. The fact that you've identified something to work on means you're on the way to fixing it. You are probably already doing some things to deal with the problem.

Step 1: Decide whether to change

Choose the behaviour that is causing you the most problems at the moment.

How well does this behaviour fit with my goals in life?

How well does it fit with the sort of person I want to be?

What are the likely effects of this behaviour in the long term?

You probably started doing it for good reasons. You can get clear about whether you really want to change by balancing these against the not so good things about the behaviour.



Tina wondered whether it might be time to cut down on her drinking.

Tina's list:

Good things: *I like the taste of a nice wine
I enjoy having a drink with my friends on a Friday night
I find the alcohol relaxing*

Not so good things: *I feel down the next day
I felt embarrassed after getting drunk at the work party
Alcohol adds to my weight problem
I have no time for my children when I've been drinking
I'm spending a lot of money on alcohol*

Tina decided that, on balance, she wanted to change. She wrote down the reasons for change on a card and kept it in her wallet.

Now write your own list:

Good things



Not so good things

(personal, emotional, financial, health, work/study, social life, legal, & effect on relationships & family/whānau)

If you decide that on balance, you want to change, **write your 'reasons for change' down on a small card** and keep it with you, to remind you.

Step 2: Identify your triggers

Knowing what your triggers are can help you prepare to deal with situations that trigger you.

Try keeping a record for a while until you have the information you need.

Tina's Trigger Record

<i>Date</i>	<i>Situation where I drank (place, activity, or feeling)</i>	<i>Behaviour</i>
<i>2/6/09</i>	<i>At home on own, feeling angry after argument with husband.</i>	<i>6 wines</i>
<i>3/6/09</i>	<i>Work drinks with workmates, feeling stressed after busy day.</i>	<i>8 wines</i>

Tina continued this record for three weeks until she was clear about her triggers.

My Triggers:

(places, activities, situations such as arguments, feelings such as stressed, lonely, bored, money or time being available).

Step 3: Use alternative behaviours

What could I do instead when I am faced with a trigger?

Think of activities that you could do instead:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|
| Call my sister | Watch a movie |
| Go for a walk/surf | Help someone else |
| Play an instrument | Ride my bike |
| Read my children a story | Gardening |
| Talk about how I am feeling | Cooking |
| Listen to music | Writing |
| Drawing | Getting a job done |



Step 4: Think of strategies to help in stopping the habit

What Now?

Changing harmful behaviour is not about 'willpower'. It's about wanting to change plus having some practical strategies.

Break the problem into pieces (because it's hard to stop doing something all at once).

e.g. just stop drinking on Mondays, or start on your overspending by cutting out shopping on the internet. You are more likely to succeed at things when you do them a bit at a time.

Brainstorm ways to do the first piece: write down all the things you could do to work on the first bit of the problem e.g. to cut out shopping on the internet, you could:

- Block some websites e.g. Amazon or Trademe using the parental controls
- Write a note on the computer to remind yourself not to go onto them
- Do something different than going on the internet at high risk times
- Write a reminder on your credit card

Write down all possibilities, even the wacky ones. There's likely to be a good idea in there somewhere. Then think about the pros and cons of each option.

Make sure that the steps are small, straightforward and seem like things you could really do.

Make sure the plan is specific. e.g. rather than 'Don't drink too much when I go out', 'Drink slowly, alternate with water and go home by 11.30'.

Habit is habit and is not to be flung out the window, but to be coaxed downstairs, a step at a time – Mark Twain

MY PLAN:

When I am going to start the plan: _____

What if something gets in the way?

Once you've written your plan, think about what might go wrong.

What might trip you up?

Could someone else be unhelpful?

Now make a plan to overcome this. What positive steps could you take?

If _____ happens, I will _____

Your plan can take as long as you like as long as you stick to it, step by step.

He toka tū moana, arā he toa rongonui.

Your strength is like a rock that stands in raging waters.

Step 5: Get support

Don't try and do this alone: Get support wherever you can find it.

Think like a sportsperson

Top sportspeople know they can't win alone

They look for a good coach and get all the support they can. Tell all the people you trust about your plans and strategies for change and ask for their support. This can be by phone or email, as well as face to face.

My support people:

A good coach would say:

You can do this

Don't give up just because you had a bad day

Think about the changes you have already made

You will need to be honest and open with support people if you really want their support.

Step 6: Keep yourself on track

Give yourself some good advice

Think about what you would say to a good friend who was in the same situation. How would you remind your friend that things will get better when they have followed through on their change plan? How will you gently encourage them to stay on track?

Coping with cravings

When you have a craving to do the behaviour, you might think you have no control over it. But it is likely that you do. Are there times when you have been in a social situation that makes it difficult to engage in the behaviour? Are there times when practical things, like someone visiting, have made it more difficult and you have not engaged in the behaviour? Have you controlled your behaviour around children or at work?

Example:

Evidence that I have some control:

- **Delay & distraction:** Often we think that cravings will stay strong or even get stronger if we don't give in to them. However, lots of people find that if they focus on something else for a bit, the craving will pass within a few minutes and not come back as soon as they think it might.
- **Surf it out:** Cravings are like waves. You can 'urge surf'. They pass.
- **Keep reminding yourself of the reasons for change:** These tend to fade over time. Remind yourself by putting post-it notes on the fridge/ bathroom mirror/TV/PC, with reasons for change and how good you will feel when you have changed, or look at your card with your 'reasons for change' on it.

- **Avoid likely trigger situations, where possible:** At least for a while.
- **Positive imagery:** Think about how you'd like to be in the future.

Pete had a problem with binge drinking. It was causing tension with his wife and his GP had told him his liver function was not so good. He identified his triggers as when he was stressed after work and going to the rugby with his mates.

His plan was to play touch with his young sons after work and to go to the rugby with a different mate who did not drink much, and limit himself to three drinks. He had a positive image of having a yarn with his sons as teenagers by the barbeque, having a beer with them and feeling like a good role model. He wrote this down on a card in his wallet, along with his reasons for cutting down his drinking, so that he could always have this with him to look at when the cravings got strong.

- **Catch permission-giving thoughts:** Often when we have an craving we'll let ourselves off the hook with thoughts like:

*'Everyone else is doing it' (helpful thought: *Some people may be, but that doesn't mean it's a good idea for me to do it*).*

'Just once is no big deal' (It may not be a big deal, but it could lead to me slipping back).

'I deserve it, I've had a hard day' (I have had a hard day, but there are other nice things I can do).

Likely permission-giving thoughts for me / Helpful thoughts I could use

Review your plan regularly

Is it working? Does it need to be changed slightly or do you need to try a different plan?

Reclaim your life

Problem behaviours often take up a lot of your life. Brainstorm some activities you could start so as to make the most of your life now, or people you could spend time with who are not involved in this behaviour? You could ask a support person to help you brainstorm. (e.g. contribute to your community, get involved in a new leisure activity, attend a night class, get more exercise). It might help to plan a timetable for your leisure time.

Find new ways to handle stress

Have a look at the 'Stress' booklet for ideas.

Improve your relationships

Have a look at the 'Getting on Better' booklet for ideas.

Expect slip-ups

We often need to have a few tries at changing before we manage to change for good. If you slip up, remember that's all it is. Don't use a slip-up as an excuse to go back to the old behaviour. Instead, learn from it. Work out why you slipped up and how you can prevent it next time. Then you can get back on track.

Remember, change is like climbing a hill. Step by step is the key to change.
If you've made mistakes, it means you are giving it a go.

Make a list of your successes

Reward yourself for progress

Congratulate yourself or do something nice. Treats are often simple and cheap: your favourite fruit, a magazine...



It is not the mountain we conquer but ourselves – Sir Edmund Hillary

Useful Websites and phone lines:

Gambling Problem Helpline 0800 654655
gamblingproblem.co.nz

Smoking Quitline 0800 778 778
quitline.co.nz

Alcohol Advisory Council/ Kaunihera Whakatupato Waipiro O Aotearoa
alac.org.nz

The Alcohol and Drug Association of New Zealand
adanz.org.nz

Cannabis Resources: ncpic.org.au/workforce/cannabisinfo/resources/

Self-harm: headspace.org.nz/schools/self-harming.htm

Alcohol & Drug Helpline 0800 787797

Budget Advice: familybudgeting.org.nz Phone: 0508BUDGETLINE



Books:

Many of these are available through the public library.

The Beck Diet Solution. (or Beck Weight Loss Workbook) both by Judith Beck, (2007)

The Addiction Workbook: A step-by-step guide to quitting alcohol and drugs. Fanning & O'Neill (1996)

Managing your Mind: The mental fitness guide. Gillian Butler & Tony Hope (1995). Oxford University press.

E tuai tuai, ta te ma'ona ai

It is very long coming, but will be satisfyng.

This material was produced as part of the Ultra Brief Intervention Study (Stress in Primary Care).

