

Become the master of your habits.

I'm sure you have heard the old nun joke -- the one where the guy comes up to the convent, and asks the sisters if they have any dirty habits (that they want to get cleaned).

Well, we're not talking about that kind of habit.

We're talking about the plain, garden-variety, good or bad habit -- the tendency most of us have to do things in similar ways, over and over and over again...habitually, if you will.

I don't know why it is, but most of the time when we talk about habits, we start talking about bad habits -- various vices that we would like to get rid of -- and not talking about the good habits that help us become better.

This morning as I sat in my car before I walked into the office, I noticed the same people arrive at the same time they always do, and do the same things they do each day. One guy goes to his car, opens the car (I assume he's putting his workout clothes in there), and then opens the trunk, where he takes out his briefcase and heads into the building. Why he keeps his workout clothes inside the car, and his briefcase in the trunk, I don't know -- but it's his habit, and he sticks to it.

Other people go to work at the same time each day (I usually do), or take the same route to work, or eat the same things, or watch the same shows, or read the same authors, or say the same things, or -- well, you get my drift. People become slaves to their habits, and few of us actually find a way out of them. I imagine if I came back to the same spot, five years from now, at the same time of day, that same guy would be pulling the same briefcase out of his trunk, and putting the same workout clothes in the car.

And I'd probably be habitually still watching him -- if it didn't drive me crazy (admittedly, a pretty short trip).

So, should we get rid of all habits? The bad ones, certainly -- we should try and make ourselves better, each day. But the good habits? Well, we should add to

those -- all the while remembering that we are the masters, and our habits are the slaves -- not the other way around.

Habit can be a powerful thing -- so let's develop some excellent habits, including the "lucky 13" on this list:

1. Habitually think the best of the people you care about.
2. Habitually find the positive side of any equation.
3. Habitually set up a time to read more, grow more, learn more -- every day or several times a week.
4. Habitually treat people better -- make it a personal standard.
5. Habitually look for the beauty in the world around you.
6. Habitually clean up your language.
7. Habitually do things to take care of your physical self (a challenge for most of us, if there ever was one).
8. Habitually save money.
9. Habitually start looking for new opportunities around you.
10. Habitually make the most of every day.
11. Habitually plan your day or your week, and follow the plan.
12. Habitually take stock of your successes and your needs.
13. Habitually love your family -- and spend time with them.

Habits take a few days to get established, but once they are established, they become your slaves, as long as you become the master.

Here's a hint -- the easiest way to eliminate a bad habit, is to replace it with a good one. And the easiest way to eliminate a good habit is to pick up a bad one.

Habit can be a powerful aid in your progression and success -- your mind is a powerful thing, and the parts of your mind that are dedicated to habit can be easily trained.

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