

Mindful Work

Changing habits

Habits are simply strong neural pathways; nothing more. What we do today is most likely what we did yesterday, in great detail! That goes for how we brush our teeth, how we squeeze the tea bag, and how we behave with our colleagues.

What's exciting is that habits can change, depending on the complexity of the action, in 30-90 days (averaging the length of a typical mindfulness course).

Establishing new behaviours, (such as bringing down your stress response to the way your boss behaves!) is actually possible (and *will* happen if you practice!). So to start with, and to gain confidence in the process, start with one, simple thing that will have a positive effect.

Choose your first habit breaker. For example, in the way you get to work – maybe you could cycle instead of driving, park in a different car park so you get two minutes mindful walking time, go through or beside a park and notice the seasons changing – anything which challenges the habitual, and maybe makes space for some mindful grounding 'you time'. Here are some ground rules:

- *have a clear vision of the positive effect the change will make*
- *write down the thing you're going to do, which describes what you'll do differently and why the change is a good idea*
- *note any obstacles and what you can do about them*
- *note down what positive effects the change will have*
- *tell someone else, and ask them to check how it's going*
- *plan a reward for yourself after every 10 days*
- *stay mindful of the urge to go back to the old habit, accepting the discomfort and being aware of its presence (but don't give it importance)*
- *do this for at least 30 days – with clear start and finish dates*
- *now review – what effect has this change made?*
- *do you feel that the new habit is established?*
- *decide if you will continue and for how long*

'Your net worth to the world is usually determined by what remains after your bad habits are subtracted from your good ones.'

Benjamin Franklin