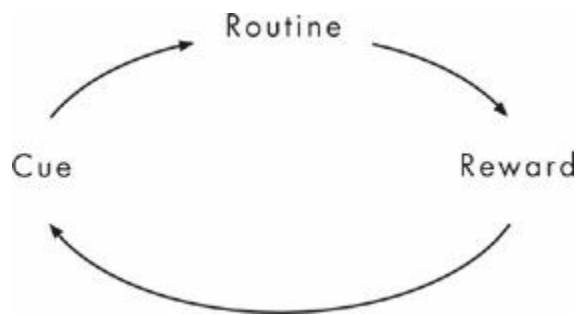




## Let's Talk About Your Habits

To understand your own habits, you need to identify the components of your loops. Once you have diagnosed the habit loop of a particular behavior, you can look for ways to supplant old vices with new routines.

Individuals and habits are all different, and so the specifics of diagnosing and changing the patterns in our lives differ from person to person and behavior to behavior. Giving up cigarettes is different from curbing overeating, which is different from changing how you communicate with your spouse, which is different from how you prioritize tasks at work. What's more, each person's habits are driven by different cravings.



- Identify the routine
- Experiment with rewards
- Isolate the cue
- Have a plan

Almost all habitual cues fit into one of five categories:

- Location
- Time
- Emotional state
- Other people
- Immediately preceding action

### Three Bad Habits You Would Like to Change

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

As an example, let's say you have a bad habit, of going to the cafeteria and buying a chocolate chip cookie every afternoon. Let's say this habit has caused you to gain a few pounds. In fact, let's say this habit has caused you to gain exactly eight pounds, and that your spouse had made a few pointed comments. You've tried to force yourself to stop—you even went so far as to put a Post-it on your computer that reads no more cookies.

Where are you? (conference room)

What time is it? (3:41 P.M.)

What's your emotional state? (tired, excited about the project I'm working on)

Who else is around? (editors who are coming to this meeting)

What action preceded the urge? (I sat down because the meeting is about to start)

And what's the reward? The cookie itself? The change of scenery? The temporary distraction? Socializing with colleagues? Or the burst of energy that comes from that blast of sugar?

HABIT: \_\_\_\_\_

Cue: \_\_\_\_\_

Routine: \_\_\_\_\_

Reward: \_\_\_\_\_