

# Improving Behaviors

## Applying Operant Conditioning

By applying operant conditioning principles, it is possible to change or manage your own behavior.

### 1. Choose a Target Behavior

Identify the activity you want to change.

Study More

### 2. Record a Baseline

Record how much time you currently spend performing the target activity or count the number of desired or undesired responses you make each day.

Hours Spent Studying Per Day

### 3. Establish Goals

Remember the principle of shaping, and set realistic goals for gradual improvement on each successive week. Also, set daily goals that add up to the weekly goal.

Increase Study Time By 50%

### 4. Choose Reinforcers

Establish daily and weekly rewards for your accomplishments.

For Every Hour Spent Studying You Get To Have One Cookie

### 5. Record Your Progress

Keep accurate records of the amount of time spend each day on the desired activity or the number of times you make the desired response.

How Many Hours Spent Studying

### 6. Reward Successes

If you meet your daily goal, collect your reward. If you fall short, be honest with yourself and skip the reward. Do the same for weekly goals.

Have Your Cookies

### 7. Adjust Your Plan as You Learn More About Your Behavior

Overall progress will reinforce your attempts at self-management.

Re-assess: Perhaps Require More Study Time Per Cookie

# Breaking Bad Habits

## Breaking Bad Habits

Here are additional strategies that can help break bad habits.

Quit Smoking

### **Reinforce Alternative Responses**

Try to get the same reinforcement with a new response.

Nicotine Patch Or  
Drink Coffee For  
Stimulant Effects

Stimulation From Nicotine

### **Promote Extinction**

Try to discover what is reinforcing an unwanted response and remove, avoid, or delay the reinforcement.

Increase Time  
Between Cigarettes

Take Only A Few Hits  
From Each Cigarette

Switch To Unpleasant  
Or Expensive Brand

### **Break Response Chains**

Break up response chains that precede an undesired behavior. Scramble the chain of events that leads to an undesired response.

Avoid Places Where  
You Usually Go To  
Smoke

Don't Smoke In The  
Car Or Bathroom

Go On Vacation

### **Avoid Antecedent Cues**

Try to avoid, narrow down, or remove stimuli that elicit the bad habit.

Hide Your Ashtrays

Stop Carrying A  
Lighter

### **Try Behavioral Contracting**

If all else fails, try behavioral contracting.

- First, state the specific problem behavior you want to control, or a goal you want to achieve.
- Second, state the rewards you will receive, privileges you will forfeit, or punishments you must accept.
- Third, sign the contract and have a person you trust also sign.
- Follow through.

Have Someone  
Monitor You

They Buy Lunch On  
Days You Don't Smoke

You Buy Lunch On  
Days You Do Smoke

They Always Get To  
Pick The Restuarant