

# Rewire your brain to feel your best

Resolved to get healthier in 2020? Duke University research reveals our brains are hardwired to resist—but thankfully, these strategies can help us make a change for the good

## To change any habit: Say it out loud

When you want to make a change, state a single goal out loud. “The more dialed-in, the better,” advises Kendall Ritz, M.D. “Instead of ‘I want to go to bed earlier,’ say ‘I will be in bed by 10 P.M.’ The specificity creates momentum.” British research shows that when adults explicitly state their intention to exercise at a specific time, 91% met their goal. In contrast, only 35% of those who read a pamphlet extolling the health benefits of exercise met their goal.

## To break a bad habit: Get curious

Our natural curiosity helps us step out of habit patterns,



says Brown University psychiatrist Jud Brewer, M.D. “When patients are hit with a craving, we ask them to turn toward it,” he shares. Think about what you’re feeling when the craving hits and consider why you’re experiencing it now—maybe you’re stressed or bored, for example. Sounds too good to be true, but Dr. Brewer says realizing that a craving has a reason and is temporary helps patients naturally turn away from bad habits, leading to a 40% reduction in craving behavior. Tip: Try “Unwinding Anxiety,” one of the free apps developed in Dr. Brewer’s lab.

## To embrace a new habit: Stack it with others

The brain naturally eliminates connections between brain

**Before turning in**  
Write down three things that made you smile that day. Researchers in the Netherlands report that the joy created by simple pleasures boosts willpower.

cells that aren’t used frequently and builds up those that are. We can take advantage of this system by piggybacking new habits onto existing ones. “By bundling two activities, you’re reinforcing, creating and sustaining new habits,” explains Janice Asher, M.D., co-author of *The Permanent Weight Loss Plan*. “Each time you do this, the connection strengthens.” For example, you might try doing 10 squats while your

## Don’t sweat the small stuff!

Couldn’t resist an office cupcake? Don’t worry about it! Studies show that a slip actually improves your chances of success by spurring you to recommit to your goal. And on the flip side, frequent self-blame is a key predictor of who will give up altogether.

coffee is brewing or balancing on one leg while brushing your teeth. Before you know it, your new habits have become second nature. —Katie Alberts

## Stay Young with WW



## Fast relief for dry, cracked hands

Genius ways to outsmart the most common offenders of parched, winter-worn hands

### Moisturize while washing

Washing dishes with scorching water exacerbates dryness, but not if you apply hand cream, then slip on rubber gloves before sudsing up. The heat helps the lotion’s moisturizing ingredients penetrate skin, and the gloves create a protective barrier.

### Swap your soap

Detergent-based soaps and hot water deplete already-dry skin of any natural oils. Instead, “wash” (no water needed!) with liquefied coconut oil. The oil’s antimicrobial properties remove impurities while depositing nourishing lipids back into skin.

### Sanitize with aloe

Harsh, bacteria-nixing alcohol in many hand sanitizers can cause skin to crack. The fix: One infused with aloe counteracts the drying effects by hydrating skin while killing germs. Try: Touchland Power Mist Aloe Vera (Revolve.com)