



# Promoting positive behaviour change

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## Introduction

- Life work researching behaviour change (neuroscience) and the role of the environment (epigenetics).
- Steady decline in both mental and physical health of our population because of outdated and inaccurate information.
- Believe Children: Understanding and Help for Children with Disordered Behaviour.
- There are techniques and tips that can help but this information is not being used to help people.
- As fitness instructors you are creating the optimal environment for helping your participants achieve success.

## Overview of the Current System

- 25.8% of adults (2015 – 15%) and almost 51% of children are considered overweight/obese.
- 97% of Canadians do not follow regular exercise and moderate eating.

The plan to tackle this problem includes:

- New development in communication to understand food labelling
- Mass media campaigns
- School based interventions
- Primary care interventions
- Broader regulator and fiscal policies.

And I was part of the problem!

May 2, 2015 – the before picture –the commitment.



## Why this does not work

People fail to adopt healthy lifestyles in the face of proven facts because of the way our brains work.

1. Our brains work on autopilot which causes extreme difficulties when trying to change a bad habit.
2. We humans tend to mold the facts to fit our world view.
3. Increase stress with less ability to cope results in fewer dopamine receptors, called D2s in the brain's reward circuit. People are far less sensitive to rewards, are less motivated and find the world dull.
4. Now more prone to seek other rewards like food, social media and negative distractions.

## Neuroscience & Behaviour & Epigenetics

- Diets are temporary fixes that train the brain to binge.
- Willpower is limited and does not ensure success. Success is based on how you view yourself.
- Behaviour is triggered by emotions
- Behaviour change happens in an instant
- 30 days to autopilot is overwhelming and sets people up for failure.
- Consistency is key
- Lack of education and application knowledge – the skills necessary to change behaviour.
- The importance of multisensory inputs
- Vernacular & Identity change
- There is always a price to pay.

## Behaviour

- 2 main reasons we do what we do – to avoid pain and to gain pleasure.
- Breaking a bad habit is harder than building a good one. The pathway of behaviour is constructed from neuron to neuron to neuron. Existing behaviour etches a neural circuitry that makes unlearning the association between an action & reward extremely difficult.
- Approach it from the emotional angle as it is the emotion that triggers the behaviour.

## Retrain the Brain

- RTB's
- Do at the end of a class.
- Teach about Behaviour change.
- Changing a bad habit requires a change in identity. Important to change how you view yourself. Use "I don't" instead of I can't
- Breaking a bad habit eliminate one thing forever – has to be easy enough to do this.
- Write down what you no longer eat and the date as this shifts the brain from a 'can't" to a permanent "don't". (more than one sensory input)
- Wait and watch for triggers and psychological blockers.

## Tips & Techniques

- Our choices become what we do because of who we are and it starts with the language we use:
  - Eliminate shoulda, woulda, coulda are 3 words that focus on failure:
    - I should have – implies something failed – it didn't go the way you wanted – get angry and beat yourself up.
    - I could have – missed opportunity – sadness
    - I would have done this if only I had known – stupidity – stupid and embarrassed.
    - Replace with a gratitude word (emotion) and: Next time I will....
    - Pre-performance ritual
    - Gratitude journaling.

### RTB's – more examples

Talk and teach about handling failure –to look at it as an experiment and learning experience.

Sleep deprivation – electronics by the bed or 60 min. before sleep. The blue light signals the brain to stay awake.

The importance of the ki-up.

The importance of laughter – one min. of anger weakens your immune system for 5 hrs. One min. of laughter strengthens you immune system for 24 hours. Can you think of a joke?

The Psychology of Human Misjudgment - Charles Munger's 1994 speech at Harvard University

We all have them and they stop us from doing what we want and need. They are run by our emotions and over time we adapt to the barrier and lose our power and control.

### Psychological blockers that need RTB

1. Denial – pain avoidance
2. Underestimate the power of a reward system or the right incentive. Rewards have superpowers and immediate is best. -*Appeal to interest not reason* (Ben Franklin)
3. Incentive caused bias. We rationalize bad behaviour to get immediate results – deterioration of behaviour. Use the “Granny Rule” – eat your carrots b-4 dessert.
4. Tend to channel hatred and dislike into patterns which causes people to: Ignore virtues in the object of dislike and dislike anything that is associated with the disliked object. We also distort facts to facilitate the dislike.
5. 3% club – assuming a new identity will intensify a person's devotion to that new identity.
6. The power of mere association of a reward. What do you get from exercise? How do you **FEEL** now compared to when we first started?
7. Zombie down under stress and pressure.
8. Dominance Hierarchy – we are follow the leader people and we suffer if the leader is wrong.\
9. Compliance tendency (Social Proofing) – an automatic tendency to act and think as we see and think others around us act and think. Find what works for you.