

# BEING PREPARED THROUGH PLANNING

Being successful often requires goal setting and achievement. However, in order to be successful in your career as well as your personal life, you have to do more than simply create goals. You have to have a plan that drives you from one goal to the next, and challenges you to continuously improve your skill set.



There are two ways to plan for success. First are the long-term plans which look at what you want to accomplish every quarter and over the course of the full year. And second are the short-term plans which cover what you expect to accomplish from one week to the next and month to month.

## LONG-TERM PLANS

### Create Goals

What do you want to accomplish? Before you can make a plan of action, you need to look internally and identify what it is you want to make happen for yourself. This should be something of high priority and something you have a passion to achieve.

### What Do You Need for Success?

You can't achieve your goals if you don't have the tools and resources in place to support your efforts. These resources include additional help, emotional support, schooling, transportation and other elements. Be sure you think this through and have the proper support systems in place before you begin.

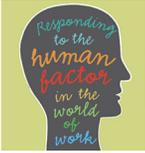
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## LONG-TERM PLANS

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### Assign Responsibilities

If you have others helping you reach your goals, what are their responsibilities? Who's going to be doing what? Take the time to clearly define everyone's roles so they know what's expected of them and how you want them to support you.

### Action Steps

What needs to happen to put your plan into action? Outline a process for each step and decide which steps should be part of your short-term plans.



### Create a Schedule

When you know what it will take to accomplish your goals, you need to set up a schedule so those action steps are taken care of on-time. Look at yearly, monthly, and weekly calendars.

### Select Start Dates

Create a timeline that gives you control over your goals and puts your project into perspective. Be sure to be realistic and leave yourself some flexibility in case something interrupts your plan. Life events can often get in the way of our ideal process, however, if you leave some time to account for these interruptions you will be more likely to stick with it.

## SHORT-TERM PLANS

### Weekly Goals

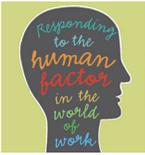
A weekly plan is developed to help you recognize what you need to do from one day to the next. A weekly plan should support your monthly goals and should be developed all at once for each month.

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### Daily Plans

In order to meet your weekly goals, you have to consider what it's going to take from one day to the next to stay on track. Your daily responsibilities are your "to do" list. They should be prioritized so that you're focused on taking care of the most important action items first. However, you should also look for flexibility in your daily schedule, as some needs might suddenly arise that require you to reorganize your priorities.

*Written by Life Advantages - Author Delvina Miremedi ©2014*



# 10 STEPS TO BREAKING A BAD HABIT

You have to finish an important project in two hours, so you reflexively head to the snack machine for a high-calorie treat. You're stuck in traffic with an important meeting on tap, and you start biting your nails to the bone. You know you should get to bed and get some sleep, but you can't seem to pull yourself away from the television.

If any of this sounds familiar, you may be among the many Americans mired in a stress-producing bad habit.

A habit is a recurrent, often unconscious pattern of behavior. All people have habits, says Jim McGee, Ph.D., a psychologist who is an expert on habitual behavior.

"If we didn't have the natural tendency toward habit, our behavior would be chaotic and random," he says.

But even though habits are natural, bad habits can be self-destructive, experts say. Good habits such as exercising or talking with a friend can relieve stress in your life. Bad habits can create everything from bad relationships to health problems.

So why do we have bad habits?

They're unhealthy coping mechanisms that have an immediate payoff, says Dr. McGee.

"Biting nails has the short-term effect of reducing nervousness and anxiety, but the long-term effect is that it makes your nails look crummy."

If a habit begins to interfere with your enjoyment of life, it's an indication that something must be changed. He also warns that using substances like nicotine or alcohol may result in a health-threatening addiction. In that case, professional help may be warranted.

If you're just dealing with an annoying habit, however, your impetus to change may be simple frustration: One day you wake up and are sick and tired of doing things the way you've been doing them. At that point, you're ready to move forward.

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## Step-by-step action plan

Well, if you're tired of your nubby nails or the headaches that come from too much coffee, you may be ready to adopt a step-by-step action plan that includes the following:

**Step 1** Define the habit. Before you can change, you must identify the reason for the habit. Bad habits, from lateness to laziness, often serve a hidden purpose we don't recognize, such as avoiding hurt or disappointment or establishing control, experts say.

**Step 2** Make a full commitment. That's the advice of Neal L. Benowitz, M.D., a national expert on the effects of nicotine at the University of California at San Francisco. "One of the main predictors of success in changing any behavior is motivation," Dr. Benowitz says. "And it must come from within yourself."

**Step 3** Set short- and long-term goals. Do you want to finally lose that 25 pounds? Dr. McGee says you need to decide exactly what your ultimate goal is, and then break it down into small increments you can actually accomplish. "You're not going to lose 25 pounds the first week," he says, "maybe only 8 ounces."

**Step 4** Define and eliminate your triggers. Do business calls make you reach for a cigarette? Experts say that when quitting a bad habit, you need to set up situations in which the habit would be prohibited. Examples: Make calls from a smokeless environment; clear your pantry of junk food.

**Step 5** Get support. "Change is more fun and more likely to be successful if you have a partner," says Dr. McGee. Support can come in the form of an established group, like Weight Watchers, or from an understanding friend or mate. Telling someone about your commitment, says Dr. McGee, helps to make it stick.

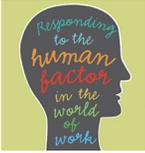
**Step 6** Replace a bad habit with a good one. A good habit, like exercising or using relaxation techniques, can help you manage stress in a healthy way. If you want to cut back on a nighttime television habit, for instance, you might find it helpful to check out a gym instead, even if all you do is hang out the first few times.

**Step 7** Use reinforcements. Some people may need to create artificial roadblocks to keep themselves on target. The national group Action on Smoking and Health advises you to wrap your pack of cigarettes in cellophane and then put five rubber bands around it. The pack may be so tough to get into that you'll forgo some cigarettes rather than wrestle with the rubber bands and plastic.

**Step 8** Give yourself rewards. A weekend away? You'll certainly deserve one if you keep to your goals. But don't overdo it: Rewarding yourself with six chocolate bars for losing weight is counterproductive. Instead, reward yourself with new clothes.

**Step 9** Accept plateaus. According to Dr. McGee, behavior change follows a predictable curve, rising quickly at first, reaching a plateau, and then rising more slowly with still more plateaus. "You're going to get discouraged and want to quit because you're not making much progress," says Dr. McGee. "If you know to expect this, you'll be more prepared to stay with your goal."

**Step 10** Be kind to yourself. Having a bad habit doesn't make you a bad person. The more you tell yourself you are bad, the more likely you'll indulge your bad habit to relieve your stress.



Your mind and body are intimately connected, and your overall health depends on both of them working well.

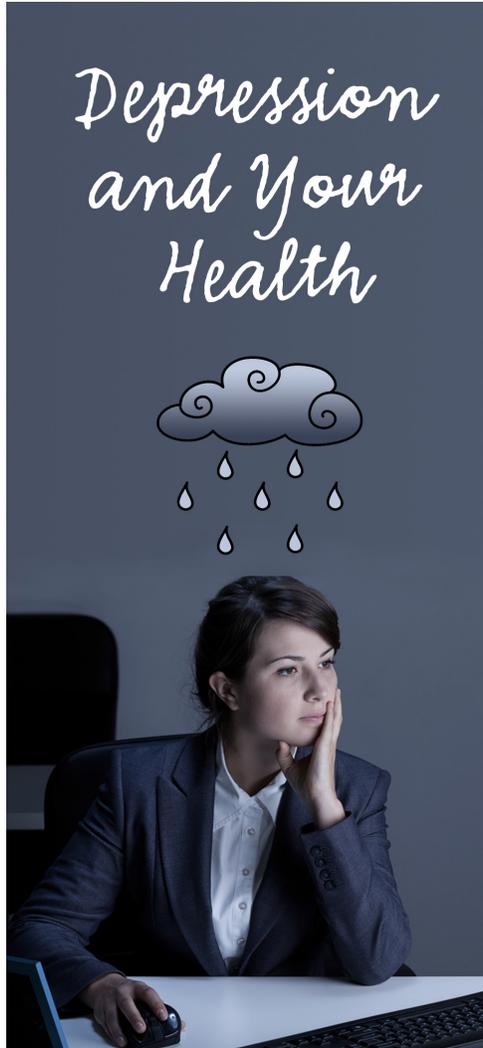
This is most evident in depression: Research shows that people who suffer from clinical depression face a higher risk for contracting certain illnesses, according to the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH).

One reason for this, the NIMH says, is that depression can lead to poor physical and mental functioning; a person with depression is less likely to follow a healthy lifestyle that prevents some diseases. Also, if a person with depression has a chronic medical condition that requires a certain diet or medication, the depression may make it harder for him or her to follow the treatment plan.

Sometimes, developing a chronic condition or having a serious health problem can lead to depression. Having diabetes, for example, doubles the risk for depression, and the chances of becoming depressed increase as diabetes complications worsen, the NIMH says. People with heart disease also are more likely to suffer from depression, and people with depression are at greater risk for developing heart disease. In addition, people with heart disease who are depressed have an increased risk for death after a heart attack. Drugs used to treat chronic conditions, such as high blood pressure, can worsen or even trigger depression and other mood disorders, the NIMH says.

People who are depressed also frequently suffer from headaches and stomach problems.

### These are the warning signs of clinical depression, according to the NIMH:



- Frequent thoughts of suicide or a suicide attempt.
- Persistent feelings of sadness, hopelessness and pessimism.
- An unexplained loss of appetite, with accompanying weight loss, or compulsive overeating.
- Marked, continuing restlessness and irritability.
- A gradual loss of interest in activities that used to provide enjoyment, including sex.
- Increasing difficulty in concentrating, remembering and decision-making.

Not everyone with depression has all of these symptoms. The symptoms also can vary in severity. If you have any of these symptoms, call Claremont EAP at 800-834-3773 to talk to a Master's-level intake counselor and access your counseling benefit.

*Krames Staywell*

## Getting help

How do you know if you have depression? Depression is more than a temporary attack of the blues. It is an illness that affects how you feel about yourself and how you think. Without treatment, the symptoms of depression can last for weeks or months, or even years, the NIMH says. Fortunately, depression can be treated and managed, often with a combination of antidepressant medications and therapy.

**Claremont EAP**  
can help with  
all of these choices!  
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