

Module 19 Resources

The Complexities of Motivation & Habit

I promised in this module to reveal some of my personal, favorite small habits. As I have worked on my mental fitness over the years, these are small things that have made a big difference. Take a look at this list and see if any of these small habits speak to you, then choose one or two of mine or your own to get started.

Nutrition:

- If I am making a smoothie, I make sure to add in a serving of greens.
- Whenever I crave a snack I grab some raw, unsalted nuts.
- Whenever I am feeling like I want something sweet I reach for dark chocolate.
- I make sure to eat anchovies or sardines once a week.

Movement:

- Walk around the block every day after lunch.
- Whenever possible I take the stairs instead of the elevator.
- Living in New York City I would walk or bike to work at least 2 or 3 times per week.
- I like to stretch for 3 to 5 minutes every night before bed.

Sleep:

- Wash your sheets once a week.
- Wind down with chamomile tea before bed.
- Let go. I find the best way to do this is making a simple gratitude list. I aim for about 3 things.
- Wear an eye mask every night.

Stress:

- Once in bed take 3 deep belly breaths. (Try my belly breath audio recording for this.)
- Do a quick body scan for areas of tension.
- Get perspective. Often when I am stressed, I call a friend or colleague.
- Chew my food. Sounds silly, but it forces me to slow down my anxious gobbling.

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Microbiome:

- Swap a sugary drink or alcoholic beverage for a low-sugar, kombucha.
- Make a kefir smoothie 3 times each week.
- Eat at least 15 different plants a day. (This is easier than it sounds.)
- Hands in the dirt. Every spring and summer I garden without gloves.

Community:

- Make it a habit to call at least 2 friends every week. If they don't pick up, I leave an old-school voicemail and share my hope to connect.
- Pick-up Game - Every place I've moved in my life I try to find a regular, good basketball game.
- I ask when I don't know someone's name. It can be embarrassing when we don't remember someone's name. (I try to do this by looking them in the eye and saying their name immediately.) I find it really hard to concentrate on a conversation when I can't remember someone's name, .so unless I am sure, I am in the habit of quickly asking. We start to build community by knowing the names.

Motivation and habit continued:

- Make a list of your goals and then split them into long term and short term. Long term goals are those that you want to achieve in more than 6 months (like getting a degree). Short term goals take place anywhere from within a few weeks to a few months. Make sure you classify your goals into these categories so you don't create disappointment for yourself or get discouraged.
- Choose 1 or 2 goals to start. Break down these goals into actionable steps. Let's say you want to start eating more brain food - small actionable steps might be taking a cooking class or buying a recipe book, following a new blogger, or trying a new recipe. It's easy to get fixated on a goal, but the goal is just the result of lots of smaller steps.
- If you're struggling with motivation, ask yourself how important this change is for you on a scale of 1 to 10. Look at the number you chose and ask yourself why the number wasn't lower? What would need to happen for the number to be higher? Self inquiry is a great way to increase motivation and identify blocks.
- As you identify habits you want to build, write down why they are important to you and why you want to develop them. If you're not clear about these things, it's much harder to achieve your goals.

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- If you're having trouble weighing the pros and cons of starting a new habit, try a weighted pro-con list. It's similar to a regular pros and cons list, but once you list the pros and cons of each item, you assign each pro and con a number from 1 to 10 based on how important it is to you. Once you've done that, tally up the points on each side.
- Remember change is gradual, so take time to reflect on and celebrate small victories.