
Habits: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

By "B"

Getting into the routine of establishing a new habit is invaluable for productivity, whether it be for the sake of work or simply personal interests. However, there is also plenty of bad habits, that are easy to fall into and hard to break. This is especially true for those of us on the autism spectrum, as our preference for repetitive behaviour and familiar patterns can empower both good and bad habits. While this can be a boon when habits are established to help focus on work and personal projects, it can be devastating when bad habits are fostered – intentionally or more often, unintentionally.

The best way to establish any habit is obviously through a routine. As an example, for years I have been going out for jogs twice a day, no matter how cold or hot it is outside. The only thing that is ever deterred me from jogging is when the worst types of storms are happening. It is reached a point where if I cannot go for a jog, I get upset for a while, as I have become so locked into it as a habit. Of course, jogging is a healthy habit that helps me get exercise, but I have bad habits as well. Oftentimes I will get distracted when trying to focus on work, especially when I am using my laptop. Having my social media tabs right next to my professional tabs has caused me plenty of procrastination nightmares in the past.

Since I have become so used to checking my social media, the only way I can focus on working on my laptop or doing something productive like writing is when I close all my miscellaneous tabs, having only what I am trying to focus on right in front of me. I have been told by my friends that this is a common problem, with so much of our lives and work tied to digital platforms, but it never stops feeling like a difficult obstacle to overcome. This is because of how ingrained my habit of checking social media, online videos, and other fun distractions has become. The ease of accessibility that comes with new digital mediums and platforms, while mostly a good thing, has also increased the chance of getting locked into certain bad routines.

Ultimately, the only way to deal with bad routines such as getting into distracting habits is to develop the most positive routines and stick to them for as long as possible. This can be difficult to achieve, especially when falling out of an attempted routine in the early stages, but it is rewarding and there is nothing lost by trying to get back on it. Developing a schedule, moderating bad habits, and positively reinforcing good routines will help anyone become productive, and especially be helpful for those of us on the spectrum who often get locked in repetition. Autism might seem to be burdensome at times like these, but it can just as effectively be transformed into a boon.

About the author

"B" is one of Autism Canada's newest Autism Ambassadors and Newsletter Contributors. We would like to take this opportunity to welcome B to our team and we look forward to sharing B's perspectives with our community.