

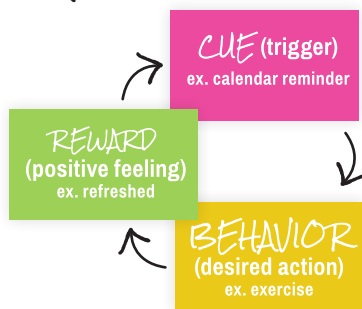
Are You a "HABITER" or an "UNHABITER?" Habit Formation and Lifelong Self-Care Success



When it comes to making thoughtful lifestyle changes in how we take care of ourselves, **Michelle Segar**, a University of Michigan researcher and long-time health coach, shares how helpful it is to understand why habits might not really play a leading role in our long-term success.

A **habit** is “performing an action **reflexively** without the need to think or exert self-control.” It has a foundation built on **atomicity** allowing us to save our brain power and energy for more complex activities. It seems to work well for small actions: think flossing or taking daily meds consistently. Habits also work well for “habiters.”

HABIT LOOP



“Habiter” vs. “Unhabiter”

Key characteristics of a “**habiter**” - naturals at sustaining new actions until they become habit - at all costs, include disciplined

personality, low internal conflict about the activity, stable daily structure and few chances of unexpected interruptions. “**Unhabiters**” – everyone else.

The characteristic of atomicity might sound enticing then, for making complex lifestyle changes like eating healthier and exercising – make the action reflexive so we never fall victim to the internal debate of the action; make it a win without thinking about it!

But atomicity is deeply dependent on a controlled, unchanging environment or **stable context**. And life is rarely such. “Real life easily upsets the program,” Segar says it best. “Change is the enemy of reflexive habits.”

“Consider the almost daily schedule upheavals that require us to drop what we are doing or had planned to do and choose the best response right now.”

So, most often, autopilot mode won’t help us here – “we need **conscious awareness** to optimally solve the challenges we and our eating and exercise plans face...to pivot, problem-solve, and be sufficiently flexible to change course in the moment.”

Segar shares there is little research supporting the notion that habits can power lasting change in lifestyle behaviors specifically like eating or exercise.

Not everyone can form habits. Even in a study of highly motivated college participants (with fewer life demands/responsibilities than most working adults), roughly half still “did not perform the behavior consistently enough to achieve habit status.”

Internal conflicts about attempting to change eating or exercise behavior pits us against our very core selves and leads us to “sabotage rather than support sustainable behavior change.” Even when we are the ones who initiate a change, the **reactance theory** highlights how feeling pressured to make changes motivates our deeper selves to rebel and do the very opposite of our intended action! Just the feeling that “we should be doing something” makes us likely to derail our very own progress.

These are some of the leading reasons why Segar and her research support that “habiters” and “unhabiters” might benefit from different behavior change solutions. Check back in the coming months for more insights from her findings!

“The Joy Choice,” Michelle Segar, published 2022.

Celebrate

THE 4TH OF JULY SAFELY

Celebrate America's birthday the smart and safe way this year with these tips from the National Safety Council:

- Never allow young children to handle fireworks.
- Older children should use them only under close adult supervision.
- Never use fireworks while impaired by drugs or alcohol.
- Anyone using fireworks or standing nearby should wear protective eyewear.
- Never hold lighted fireworks in your hands.
- Never light fireworks indoors.
- Only use fireworks away from people, houses and flammable material.
- Never point or throw fireworks at another person.
- Only light one device at a time and maintain a safe distance after lighting.
- Never ignite devices in a container.
- Do not try to relight or handle malfunctioning fireworks.
- Soak both spent and unused fireworks in water for a few hours before discarding.
- Keep a bucket of water nearby to fully extinguish fireworks that don't go off or in case of fire.
- Never use illegal fireworks.
- Consider these alternatives to sparklers: glow sticks, confetti poppers or colored streamers.

Alternatively, head to your local fireworks show and let the professionals handle the fireworks.

"Leave Fireworks to the Experts," National Safety Council, nsc.org, June 9, 2022.



Snackable Creamy Edamame and Pea Hummus

Serves: 7-8 picnic guests (2 1/2 cups total) • Total Time: 15 minutes

Ingredients

- 1 cup frozen shelled edamame
 - 1 cup frozen peas
 - 1/3 cup tahini
 - 3 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
 - 2 cloves garlic, chopped
 - 1 teaspoon cumin
 - 3 tablespoons water
 - 3/4 tablespoon salt
 - 2 tablespoons olive oil
- Additional salt and pepper, to taste
- Flat-leaf parsley, chopped for garnish
- Choice of assorted crackers or veggies, for serving

Recommended Cookware

- Medium pot
- Colander
- Food processor
- Serving spoon

Nutrition Information

Estimated Amount Per Serving:
Calories: 527
Total Fat: 40g
Sodium: 898mg
Total Carbohydrates: 30g
Total Sugar: 6g
Protein: 20g
Fiber: 10g

Instructions

1. Salt water in a medium pot and bring to a boil. Cook the edamame in the pot until tender, or 3 to 5 minutes. Place edamame in colander.
2. Once water has returned to boil, cook peas until tender, or about 1 minute. Add peas to colander with edamame to drain.
3. Add edamame, peas, tahini, lemon juice, garlic, cumin, water and salt to food processor. Pulse together until smooth.
4. While the food processor is running, drizzle olive oil and process until the mixture is a smooth purée. Add salt and pepper to taste.
5. Transfer hummus to a bowl and top with chopped parsley.
6. Serve immediately and enjoy with crackers or veggies for dipping.

Recipe adapted from justataste.com