

# Developing A Habit & Replacing An Old Habit With A New One

The information that follows applies whether you are developing a new habit or replacing an old one with a new one. It applies whether the behavior you are learning and mastering is emotional, physical, or mental.

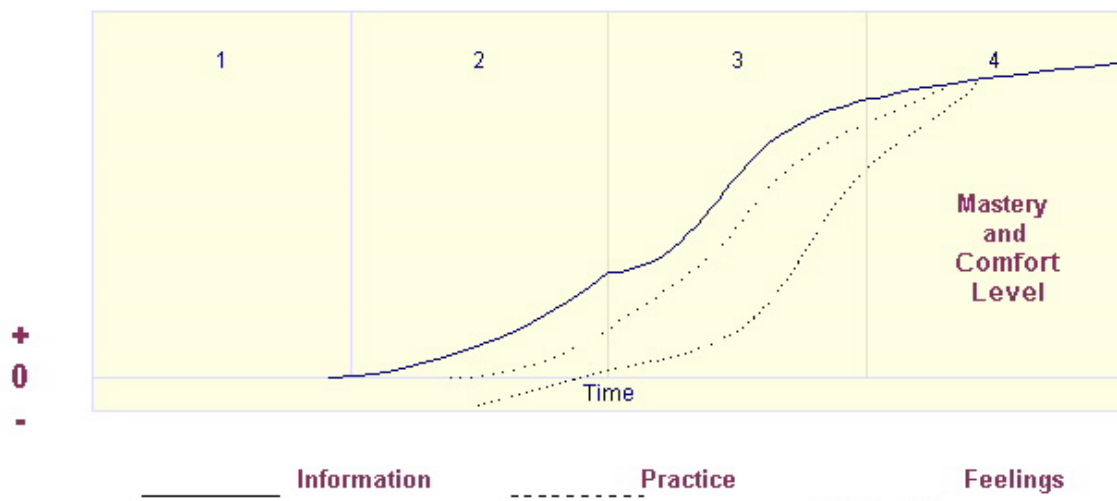
## Learning a New Behavior – Forming A New Habit

**Habit:** an automatic response or reaction to a specific stimulus or input. Once you experience the input, you do the habit without thinking. Consider that we form a new habit because it will serve us in some way. In other words, initially every habit has a positive intention, whether or not we are conscious of it. Here are the steps in forming a new habit.

- 1) **Map of the Behavior** – The first step for learning a new behavior (or anything else for that matter) is to have a mental map of it, to understand what you are learning and why.
- 2) **Practice** – Once you have a mental understanding of the behavior, you need to practice the action over and over again in order for it to become a habit.
- 3) **Positive Feelings Catch Up** – Initially, as you practice the new behavior you will probably feel uncomfortable, awkward, and phony. As you continue to practice, you feel more and more comfortable. Feelings lag behind thinking. The reason you practice over and over again is so that you can become more and more comfortable during the behavior.
- 4) **Behavior Becomes Automatic** – With consistent practice, emotional comfort increases. Eventually, the new action becomes automatic; it becomes a habit.

## Stages in Learning

- 1) **Unconscious Incompetence** – you don't know that you don't know "it" (information, behavior, etc.)
- 2) **Conscious Incompetence** – you know that you don't know – you're still uncomfortable about "it"
- 3) **Conscious Competence** – you know that you know yet you still have to think about "it"
- 4) **Unconscious Competence** – you know what you know so well that you no longer think about it – "it" is a habit



## Steps in Accepting a New Idea

- ▶ Total rejection
- ▶ Partial rejection
- ▶ Partial acceptance
- ▶ Total acceptance
- ▶ Partial assimilation
- ▶ Total assimilation

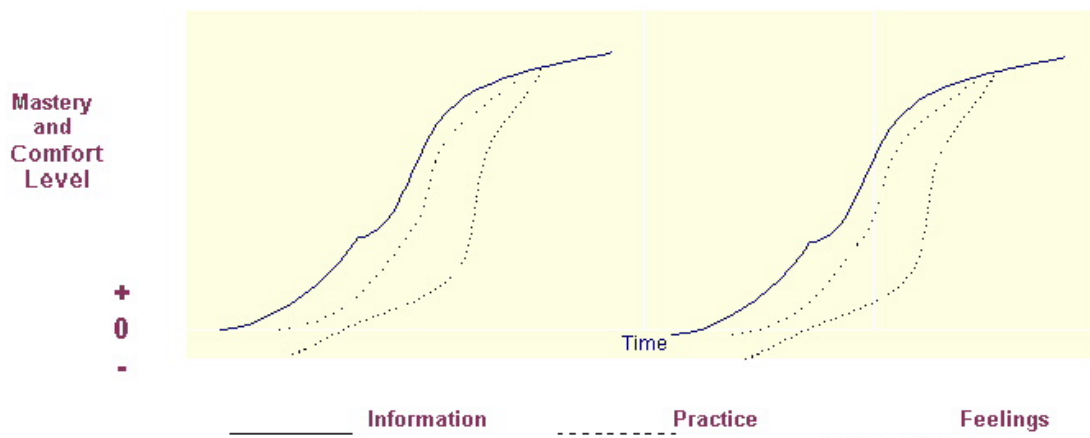
## Replacing an Old Habit With a New Old

- 1) **Map of the New Behavior**—The first step of replacing an old habit with a new one is to have a mental map of the new behavior and clear understanding of the reason(s) you are going to replace the old, familiar habit with the new one.
- 2) **Practice**—Once you have a mental understanding of the new behavior, you need to practice the new action over and over again so it eventually becomes the new habit.
- 3) **The Transition: Making a Conscious Choice**—The third stage of replacing any habit with a new one is unavoidable and the most challenging. Your old behavior is now a habit. You feel comfortable doing it and you do it automatically. You are unconsciously competent, but the old habit no longer serves you. You now have good reasons for replacing the old habit with a new behavior, and you've got a mental map of how to do it, but when you do, you feel uncomfortable. The desired behavior actually feels like the incorrect one while the old habit feels "just right."

The old habit doesn't just roll over and die. Instead, it actively competes with the new behavior you are attempting to master. That makes you feel uncomfortable and confused.

For some undetermined period of time, you must consciously choose to interrupt the old behavior, while consciously choosing to do the new behavior. The only way to work through this step is to mindfully practice, practice, practice, even though it may seem easier to just go back to the old habit.

- 4) **Feeling Good While Doing New Behavior**—As you continue to practice, you feel more and more comfortable doing the new behavior.
- 5) **Mastery of a New Behavior**—Eventually, with consistent practice, you will become so comfortable with the new behavior that it becomes automatic; it becomes the new habit.



## Stages We Go Through To Make A Change

- ▶ Precontemplation
- ▶ Contemplation
- ▶ Preparation
- ▶ Action
- ▶ Maintenance
- ▶ Termination

## Negative Response To Change

- ▶ Immobilization
- ▶ Denial
- ▶ Anger
- ▶ Bargaining
- ▶ Depression
- ▶ Testing
- ▶ Acceptance

## Positive Response to Change

- ▶ Uninformed optimism
- ▶ Informed pessimism
- ▶ Hopeful realism
- ▶ Informed optimism
- ▶ Completion

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