



# Workbook

Cracking the Habit Code

**21 Day Mini-Course**

**EXERCISE**



[christineCARTER.com](http://christineCARTER.com)



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## Why Exercise?

“Things start as hopes and end up as habits.” — Lillian Hellman

(1) **Which benefits of exercise are most meaningful to you?** Which do you need or want the most? Circle or highlight the most relevant benefits.

- Physical health and weight control
- Reduced stress and anxiety
- Improved sleep
- More energy
- Greater happiness and emotional well-being
- Improved ability to focus, resist temptations, and make good decisions
- Improved memory and learning
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

(2) **Which benefits do you find the most *immediately rewarding*, e.g., which do you tend to experience the same day that you exercise?** Reflect on how you feel throughout the day when you do something physical that feels fun, playful, or relaxing (e.g., when you walk your dog or take a dance class you love).

(3) **Which SINGLE benefit is the most rewarding to you in the *short term*?**



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## Why Exercise? (cont.)

Now, let's look at the ways that you've tended to exercise in the past, and how those physical activities tend to make you feel:

Past Experience	How does it make you feel in the SHORT term?
Example: Training for a half marathon	-I feel dread before I run, winded and out-of-shape while running, back and hip pain after
Example: Walking or hiking with the dog	-happy, calm, less pressed for time, less stressed + anxious, connected, energized
Example: Skiing	-thrilled, cold, happy, lucky, daring, athletic, tired (in a good way - improved sleep)



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### Decide How You Want to Feel

“The ultimate lesson of regret, the one that will help guide you into a rich and satisfying future, is this: Every time life brings you to a crossroads, from the tiniest to the most immense, go toward love, not away from fear. Think of every choice in terms of ‘What would thrill and delight me?’ rather than ‘What will keep my fear—or the events, people, and things I fear—at bay?’”

—Martha Beck

<b>How do you want to feel?</b>	<b>Activities that make you feel that way</b>
<i>What emotions or sensations do you yearn for?</i>	<i>Name specific physical activities that ALREADY reliably make you feel the way that you feel. NOTE: They need only be ways to move your body. They might not actually be things you think of as “exercise” or “working out”.</i>
example: calm, blissed out	-walking the dog and looking at the trees
example: relaxed but energized	-walking on the treadmill while watching TV
example: connected, happy, outgoing	-hiking or walking with friends, stopping to talk to neighbors



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## Throw Ambition Out the Window

“All our life, so far as it has definite form, is but a mass of habits.”  
—William James

**(1) How can you strip your exercise routine down to something that is so ridiculously easy you could do it every day with barely a thought?** Think about doing one push-up instead of 15, walking for less than 5 minutes, jogging for only 30 seconds and then walking for a minute or so. Remember, this is about initiating the neural pathway in a way that doesn't create resistance—you'll be able to expand your habit later. Write out your better-than-nothing routine below.

**(2) Now evaluate what you've outlined for yourself.** Is it ridiculously easy? Will it take no time at all to accomplish? If not, try cutting your routine in half again.











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Expand (Really, Really) Slowly

"Wisely, and slow. They stumble that run fast."  
—William Shakespeare

(1) **What is one tiny way you can expand the habit you've been working on?**  
(e.g., walk 3 more minutes or one more block).

(2) **List several situations where once you've expanded your routine, you might need to fall back on your baseline or "better than nothing" habit.**  
(e.g., If you don't feel well or if an unexpected project keeps you at work late).

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_



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Make Plans for Obstacles

**What obstacles can you imagine you'll face?** List them here.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

**What will you do in the face of these obstacles?** Frame your plan using an IF/THEN sentence, e.g., IF it rains, THEN I will still walk, and I will use the umbrella that is in the front hall.

1. If \_\_\_\_\_, then \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. If \_\_\_\_\_, then \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. If \_\_\_\_\_, then \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Please use another sheet of paper** to go through this exercise with every obstacle you can imagine. If the obstacles are *preventable*, please also plan a way to prevent it in the future.



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Plan for the People Challenges

“But that's the challenge—to change the system more than it changes you.”

—Michael Pollan

**1. Who do you need to talk to? How can they support you specifically?**

**2. What are the positive benefits of your exercise plan for *them*?**

**3. What IF/THEN plan do you need to make with these people?** (e.g., If I'm out for a hike when a kid needs dinner, THEN they reheat leftovers or a frozen burrito for themselves.)



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What are your "Keystone" Mini-habits?

**What KEYSTONE mini-habits are critical for your success?** Make a list of all the ways—large and small—that you can prepare to complete your resolution. What equipment or clothing do you need to get ready the night before? What decisions do you need to make? Are there ways to have automatic shut-offs, helping equipment, etc. that can eliminate decision-making for you?

**Once you've identified key habits-behind-the-habit, go ahead and designate anchors and intrinsic rewards for doing them:**



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Gather Your Cabinet

“The glory of friendship is not the outstretched hand, nor the kindly smile nor the joy of companionship; it is the spiritual inspiration that comes to one when he discovers that someone else believes in him and is willing to trust him.”

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

**Who will best support you in sticking with your exercise habit?** Who can you add to your cabinet for advice and expertise? Who inspires you? Who is already doing what you want to be doing? Is there an online community or group of like-minded goal-seekers you can join?

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

**To Do Today:** The people you've listed above are good candidates for your "cabinet." Make a plan to contact them and enlist their support.



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## Fight Self-sabotage

“Be the flame, not the moth.”  
— Giacomo Casanova

**Avoid the licensing effect by reflecting on your goals and values rather than your accomplishments.**

- (1) Why are you choosing to exercise? What does that say about your goals and values?**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- (2) What larger mission are you fulfilling?** Remember to avoid using moral terms (e.g. becoming a better, higher-achieving person) in favor of morally neutral ones (e.g. reduce stress and increase happiness).
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- (3) How will you and others benefit from the habit you are working on?**



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## Comfort Yourself

"I have so much to accomplish today that  
I must meditate for two hours instead of one."  
— Mahatma Gandhi

- (1) **What "reward" does your brain direct you towards when you are stressed?**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- (2) **What is a more constructive reward or treat that you can direct yourself towards? What are some healthy ways to comfort yourself?**

**Extra Credit:** What low-level stressor can you prevent or eliminate?



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Take a Nap

“When the going gets rough, the tough take a nap.”  
—Tom Hodgkinson

(1) **Consider tracking your sleep so that you can see if this is an area for improvement for you.** (I like Sleep Cycle. What do you like? Post suggestions on Facebook.)

(2) **List three things you can do to improve your sleep.**

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

(3) **Which of these things are mini-habits you can start getting into right now?** Make a plan to start implementing.





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Expect at Least Minor (Sometimes Major) Failure

"We all understand that when we first attempt to drive a car or ride a bike, we'll make mistakes. Behavior change is no different; it's a process of slipping, learning from the mistake, and trying again."

—John C. Norcross, *Changeology*

(1) **If you've slipped, ask yourself why. What can you learn from your mistakes?** Is your obstacle prevention plan specific enough? What temptation or situation can you avoid in the future?

(2) **Make a plan for the next time you will face a similar challenge.** What will you do differently? How will you avoid the temptation in the future? What have you learned from your slip?



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Beware the “What the Hell” Effect

“There is only one corner of the universe you can be certain of improving, and that's your own self.”  
–Aldous Huxley

**Don't let a slip spiral out of control. Forgive yourself.** Remind yourself that lapses are a part of the process, and that feeling guilty or bad about your behavior will not increase your future success. (Research shows that self-criticism actually decreases future success.)

**Rededicate yourself to your new habit.** Why do you want to exercise today? How do you want to feel? Do a little deep breathing and calm contemplation of your goals.



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Regroup, Revise, and Double Down

“The greater the obstacle, the more glory there is in overcoming it.”  
—Moliere

**What obstacle have you failed to see or plan for?**

How does your routine need tweaking?

Is your trigger consistent?

Does your reward need bolstering?

Did you take on too much too soon?

Can you prevent this obstacle in the future?

**Make a specific plan for what to do if you find yourself in a similar situation again:**



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## See Relapse as an Opportunity to Begin Again, Stronger

“A person who never made a mistake never tried anything new.”  
— Albert Einstein

**Have you relapsed?** If so, begin this program again with a less ambitious goal and expand more slowly. Download a [new blank workbook](#), and take yourself through the course online one day at a time.

**What is your new, ridiculously unambitious goal?**

**Reach out to your cabinet ASAP.** Ask them to support you in getting back on track.

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“Our greatest glory is not in never failing,  
but in rising up every time we fail.”  
— Ralph Waldo Emerson

“A small daily task, if it be really daily,  
will beat the labors of a spasmodic Hercules.”  
—Anthony Trollope

“Don't judge each day by the harvest you reap  
but by the seeds that you plant.”  
— Robert Louis Stevenson

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