

By Lacy Wolff, ERS Health Promotion Administrator



It's January and time to stop making resolutions. This year, focus on changing your habits, because - that's where real change happens. New research is showing that behavior change is more about our habits than will power.

About those habits

Do you have some behaviors that you know keep you from being your healthiest? If you have ever started an exercise program and quit within the month or wanted to stop eating fast food, but couldn't seem pass up the burger and fries, you are not alone. Changing behavior can be difficult because most of what we do is rooted deeply in our habits.

Let's consider our food habits, for example.

People eat for many reasons and some have nothing to do with being hungry. Think about the times you have eaten because you were:

- bored
- lonely
- celebrating
- at a party
- sad
- driving

Driving? Well, yes. It's clear from our list of descriptors that emotion can trigger our brain to seek pleasure. Advertisements do that, too. If you saw a billboard ad for a cheesy sausage biscuit and have stopped a couple of times on your way to work, you've trained your brain to want that breakfast sandwich when you get behind the wheel.

We eat food we know is not good for us because it gives the brain a temporary pleasure response. In order to stick to a good nutrition plan, we have to understand what is driving us to eat (pun intended).

Before eating, pause and ask yourself:

- What triggered my decision to eat?
- Am I really hungry?

Changing habits

It's not easy to change our behavior, which is one reason why there is an obesity crisis in this country. However, everyone has the capacity to change, at any age. No matter the bad habit you want to break—such as texting and driving, drinking coffee, tobacco use, road rage, and so on—changing behavior requires being curious about why you do what you do and discovering what triggers the behavior.

Identifying the old habits and their root causes can help you successfully exchange a bad habit for a good habit. For example, if you know you get hungry at 3:30 p.m. every workday, pack some snacks that will get you past your craving for a soda and candy bar. Try trail mix, sliced apples, whole grain crackers or raw carrots and other veggies. You're one step closer to victory!

Learn more about swapping your bad habits for good ones. Join ERS for the free webinar 1° of Difference during the month of January. We'll dig deeper into the science of habits and share some tips and tricks that can make a big difference in your health over time. Follow this link to register: [ERS Wellness Events Calendar](#).

You have help

Learn about the healthy lifestyle and weight management programs available to at no cost to you through your health plan:

- [HealthSelect of Texas and Consumer Directed HealthSelect Participants](#)
- [Scott & White Health Plan Participants](#)
- [Community First Health Plans Participants](#)



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