

## Healthy Habit Building

A **habit** is defined as “a learned behavior pattern regularly followed until it has become almost involuntary.” In “*The Power of Habit*,” the author, Peter Duhigg, describes a 3-step process to forming habits:

Cue → Routine → Reward = Habit



The **cue** is used as a prompt for your brain that tells you what habit to use. The **routine** is how a habit influences what you do, think or feel. The **reward** helps you place a value on the habit and determine whether it is worth remembering or not.

Since habits are simply how we respond to cues, they are neither bad nor good – instead, how we see a habit is based on the reward that comes from it. **The good news is that we can change a habit if we do not like the reward or the side effects that we receive.**

### How do we Develop or Change Habits?



The answer lies with **cravings**! Once our habits become well practiced, our brains begin to *expect* the reward. Cravings can be powerful tools that we can use to build (and keep) healthy habits or change unhealthy ones. For example, if we notice that we crave sugary treats throughout the workday, this may give us an idea that we have practiced a habit of eating unhealthy foods at the workplace and can work to change this habit!

Now, let's say you want to create an exercise-focused habit of going to the gym in the morning. You might try this 3 step-process to forming healthy habits:

**CUE:** Keep your gym clothes by the door.

**ROUTINE:** This is the response you want to develop by seeing your cue, such as grabbing your gym clothes and heading straight to the gym.

**REWARD:** Feel a boost in your mood or treat yourself to a green smoothie after each workout.

Once this habit becomes well-practiced, you will begin to crave exercise (and/or the reward after), which will help keep you on track with your exercise goals! To help you practice habits that lead to better health, be sure to choose a healthy reward that you really want. This will keep you motivated.

