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Nail-biting to smoking, breaking bad habits can be a daunting task. It can be overwhelming to figure out where to start. Follow these tips to help jump-start the process of breaking a bad habit.

What is a “bad habit”?

A “bad habit” is a pattern of negative behaviors, linked to a lack of self-control that affects your physical and/or mental health.



Examples of “bad habits”:

- ❖ Nail biting
- ❖ Excessive drinking
- ❖ Tobacco use (ex. cigars, smoking, chewing tobacco, etc.)
- ❖ Overeating
- ❖ Compulsive activities (ex. Excessive gambling, “partying”, excessive shopping, etc.)

How to begin breaking bad habits:

1. **Pin point the bad habit-** Identify the bad habit you are trying to break. Try to recognize what causes you to do the behavior.
2. **Set small goals-** Trying to achieve too much in a short amount of time can leave you feeling defeated. Instead of one big goal, try to create smaller, more manageable goals. (ex. Stop nail-biting for one day, don't have a cigarette after dinner, etc.)
3. **See into the future-** After you have recognized your bad habit and what causes you to do it, set reminders for yourself to not participate in the behavior (ex. Leave notes in the areas you most frequently do the bad habit, set alarms on your phone during the times you most commonly participate, etc.). That way, you will have some encouragement when you feel tempted to give in.
4. **Fine yourself-** For each time you do **not** participate in the behavior, put a designated amount of money in the “reward jar” (ex. \$.25, \$1, etc.). At the end of the week, add up the money and see how many times you succeeded. Then, go out and treat yourself!
5. **Don't give up!-** It is okay if you slip up, but don't let one little mess up prevent you from freeing yourself of the bad habit. Progress can still be made even if a slip-up occurs every now and then.

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