

Insights from *Better Than Before* by Gretchen Rubin

“In the chaos of everyday life, it’s easy to lose sight of what really matters, and I can use my habits to make sure that my life reflects my values.” - Gretchen Rubin

If you develop the right habits, you can get incredible results:

- Daily reading habit = incredibly knowledgeable
- Regular exercising habit = incredibly fit
- Healthy eating habit = incredibly energetic
- Daily practice habit (drawing or writing) = incredibly talented

Well-developed habits are powerful productivity tools because they allow you to produce results effortlessly. **“With habits, we don’t make decisions, we don’t use self-control, we just do the thing we want ourselves to do.” - Gretchen Rubin**

4 reasons you’ve failed to develop a productive habit in the past:

Confused

“The more specific I am about what action to take, the more likely I am to form a habit.” – Gretchen Rubin

When trying to develop a new habit, the slightest amount of confusion leads to procrastination. If you don’t have a clear action plan (i.e. when, where, and how you’ll take action), you’ll avoid adopting the new habit and continue executing an older, more familiar habit.

Solution: Connect the new habit to an existing habit (create a trigger) and write down an explicit action sequence.

Example: “When I finish making a tea in the morning [EXISTING HABIT], I will sit down at my desk, open a new Microsoft Word document, and start journaling until I reach 1,000 words [SPECIFIC ACTION SEQUENCE].”

Inconsistent

“Habits grow strongest and fastest when they’re repeated in predictable ways.” – Gretchen Rubin

If a new behavior isn’t executed in a predictable manner, you’ll require decision making power to initiate the behavior, which leads to failure in the long-run. Until a new behavior seems familiar and regular, your brain will resist doing it.

Solution: Increase your familiarity with the new habit by executing the habit on a daily basis. The more familiar a habit becomes, the less resistance you’ll have to initiate the habit (the habit seems natural – something you ‘just do’). Aim to execute a new habit in the same place and time each day. Adopt the Andy Warhol philosophy: **“Either once only, or every day.”**

Weak value

“The clearer I am about what I value, and what action I expect from myself – not what other people value, or expect from me – the more likely I am to stick to my habits.” – Gretchen Rubin

Many habits we attempt to develop are red herrings: people insist we do them, but we don’t really want to. Unless the willingness to build a habit comes from within, you won’t have the drive and dedication required to develop a habit.

Solution: Ensure a habit is deeply meaningful to you before attempting to develop it. Ask yourself, “What will this habit ultimately lead to?” Then ask, “On a scale of 1-10, how much does this excite me?”. If your answer is anything less than a 10, don’t bother adopting the habit because you won’t stick with it. Only develop habits you know will have a tremendous impact on your life. It’s helpful to find people who have developed your desired habit (ex: daily exercise) and see if their results are something you’d rank on as a 10 on your excitement scale.

Wrong strategy

Before attempting to develop a new habit, consider your personality type:

Upholder

“They are overly concerned with following the rules.” - Gretchen Rubin

You’re an Upholder if you:

1. Respond to external expectations (If you tell someone you’re going to do something, you do it. No matter what).
2. Respond to internal expectations (if you tell yourself you’re going to do something, you do it. No matter what).

Recommended Habit Development Strategy:

Write down your habit on a piece of paper and keep it in your pocket. Schedule times to execute your habit in your calendar.

Obliger

“They go to great lengths to meet their responsibilities.” - Gretchen Rubin

You’re an Obliger if you:

1. Respond to external expectations (If you tell someone you’re going to do something, you do it. No matter what).
2. Resist internal expectations (you routinely abandon commitments you make with yourself).

Recommended Habit Development Strategy:

Publicly state your goal. Write your goal on social media, or explicitly tell a friend what you intend to do.

Questioner

“They resist doing anything that seems to lack sound purpose” - G. Rubin

You’re a Questioner if you:

1. Resist external expectations (you hate being told what to do).
2. Respond to internal expectations (if you tell yourself you’re going to do something, you do it. No matter what).

Recommended Habit Development Strategy:

Frequently remind yourself why you’re building the habit and how it will help you achieve your greater goal.

Rebel

“They resist control, even self-control.” – Gretchen Rubin

You’re a Rebel if you:

1. Resist external expectations (you hate being told what to do).
2. Resist internal expectations (you routinely abandon commitments you make with yourself).

Recommended Habit Development Strategy:

Commit to a short trial period (~2 weeks) with the ‘freedom’ to quit after the trial period is over.