

## Invitation to Discover Your Habits and Patterns

I want to offer and invite you to explore an exercise to discover your habits and patterns.

You may already recall a few patterns or habits that you currently are aware of. In addition, you may not necessarily have a direct awareness around many other patterns or habits that occur without you even noticing it or recognizing the action/behavior as a pattern or habit.

### Example:

You may be aware that when you wake up in the morning you prefer to get up and make yourself or have some form of a drink. I.e., Tea, coffee, or water.

On the other hand, you may not recognize that the habit of making yourself a tea or coffee can also play the role of a "trigger" which notifies your brain that the next step is about to take place - WORK.

For you, work is not something you are excited about. Matter of fact, you'd prefer to retire early. Each morning it feels agonizing going through the motions to get ready and get out the door.

Your "behavior" transforms. The thought of work gets your stomach gurgling, your mind racing, and your heartbeat pumping faster. You may tend to feel anxious and/or maybe even nauseous anticipating the idea of going to work.

What happens next? The "results" may lead you to delay getting ready for work, find distractions that send you off track, prepare the evening's meal before you even get out the door for the morning, maybe even create a small argument with your partner to focus your attention away from work, etc. Eventually, all or some of that leads you to be late, stressed, and exhausted before you even get to your desk.

The "reward" in that behavior is that you become distracted and delay the inevitable idea of going to work.

Yes, something simple as the "trigger" to make coffee can signal your "behavior" to shift and the "results" of what you are doing can impact what you actually should be doing. As odd as it may sound, there is a "reward" in all of that activity for you.

I've included a reference to a Ted Talk by Judson Brewer who illustrates how this pattern plays out. Link: [Ted Talk w/ Judson Brewer](#)

### Exercise:

The example above is both exaggerated as well as true for many. One healthy habit or pattern can trigger subsequent health and unhealthy habits and patterns.

- First step is to **identify your opportunities**. What are the unhealthy habits and patterns that you experience?
- The Second step is to **identify the reward** in those opportunities. Healthy or unhealthy there is a reward that your brain prioritizes over other options.
- The Third step involves identifying **how you would prefer to show up** differently. Identify what to work for.
- The Fourth step is about documenting the sequence:
  - The "trigger" is...
  - My "behavior" is...
  - The "results" are...
- The Fifth step involves brainstorming **what you can do to test/learn** how to disrupt the current sequence and shift your brain to a more rewarding pattern of behavior.
- Finally, **BE PATIENT**. Changing behavior takes time. Test and learn what works and what doesn't. **BE OPEN** to trying different approaches. **BE COMPASSIONATE** to yourself. There is no silver bullet that fixes or changes behavior instantly.

Remind yourself each opportunity to shift your behavior is an opportunity to practice. The more practice the more likely you'll impact the behavior you're focused on changing.