

Lesson 1: Associate bad habits with pain and good ones with pleasure.

A very simple framework to look at the world is this: All of our actions are aimed at either avoiding pain or getting pleasure. Going to the job you don't like is something you do to avoid the pain of not being able to pay rent. Listening to your favorite song should lift your mood. And so on.

You can use this framework to successfully break bad habits and establish good ones. You simply have to pair bad habits with pain and good habits with pleasure.

For example, if you want to quit eating chocolate, Tony says you should force yourself to sing a song you hate out loud every time you eat some. After having to sing a terrible song loudly at a packed restaurant even once, just because you ordered molten chocolate lava cake for dessert, chances are you'll easily avoid the cocoa-packed candy from then on.

Eventually, you'll have to replace your bad habit with a new, better, more positive one, in order to fill the void. This is a crucial part of habit change. A technique called temptation bundling can help you with it. The creator, Kathy Milkman, loved the Hunger Games audiobooks, but allowed herself to listen only while working out in the gym. As a result, she worked out six times a week, just to find out what happens!

Lesson 2: Use different words to end up in a different state of mind.

If you've ever seen Tony Robbins in action, you know he's a powerful guy in every sense of the word. He's tall, big, loud, and has a very positive aura. Something you might have not picked up on is his vocabulary. Tony always uses expressive and unusual language to reinforce positive emotions and play down negative ones.

He calls this transformational vocabulary and says it's very important to watch your language, because the way you describe how you experience the world is a big and defining part of that experience. In the English language, there are over 3,000 words to describe emotions. Sadly, 66% of them are for negative emotions – twice as many as for positive ones!

So how can you use words to your advantage?

Reinforce good feelings with powerful words and play down bad emotions with less intense language.

For example, instead of saying that lying in the sun makes you feel happy, you could say: "I'm in complete bliss." And instead of yelling "This piece of junk is annoying the crap out of me!" at your car that just broke down, you could say "Well, that's a bit unfortunate."

Pro tip: Use unusual words to make yourself laugh at tough situations. For example say: "I do feel a little irked at this." when you're really frustrated.

Just hearing yourself talk out loud using such old-fashioned words will instantly put you in a better mood.

Lesson 3: Make up your own rules and tell other people about them to increase your happiness.

"I'm having a long day at work today, but I know I'll feel great once I sit down on my couch after I come home."

Have you ever thought something like this? I'm pretty sure you have. We all have our own little rules that determine what does and doesn't make us happy. However, all too often we make up rules where we give away control. For example, "I'll be so happy if my boss tells me I did a great job with this presentation." is not a good rule to have, because you hand over your happiness to your boss – whom you can't control.

So first, make up better rules. “I’ll be happy if I spend at least one hour of focused work on this event plan.” is a lot better than the rule above, because this is something you can influence.

Secondly, communicate your rules as much as you can, because you can’t possibly expect other people to have the same rules as you do. When you think your best friend is not a good friend, because she only calls you once a month, then that’s just your rule about thinking best friends call each other every few days. Tell her that that’s what you believe and she’ll tell you her rule, which then lets the two of you find a better solution that works for both of you.