

Research about Bad Habits

Bad habits plague many people in one form or another. We want to know what causes us to fall into bad habits. Questions arise about how are the best ways to quit. New research gives new answers and confirms some of the old ones.

Some research has been done to find out what motivates people to quit bad habits. It turns out that the emotional reasons seem to be the most telling of all. If a person does not have the desire to change, then that person is likely not to have any success with quitting.

Knowledge is only helpful if you use it to influence your emotional well-being. For example, if you work to set up a social network to help you when you quit smoking, you have used your mind to influence your emotions. Penalties help drive people to quit bad habits by playing on their emotions and their intelligence together.

Other research inquires into the effects of habitual activities on the brain. Researchers studied the brain responses in rats. The rats were sent through mazes at the end of which was chocolate. Their basal ganglia (where habitual behavior is learned in the brain) responded to all the information in the maze when they were learning the maze.

After awhile, this area of the brain only responded to the beginning and end of the maze. This would be like the response you have when you have developed bad habits. You are focused on the reward.

Then, the chocolate was removed. At that point, the basal ganglia again began to respond to every part of the maze again. When this happens, it is like quitting bad habits and living moment to moment.

When the chocolate was reintroduced, the area in the brain came alive during the beginning and the end, as before. Finally, the brain is cued to become alert to your addiction again when the desired object or bad habits resurface.

Another study evaluated the ability of people to replace old habits with new ones. This was done by testing using memorization and word tests. The researchers tried to see if subjects could learn new associations after learning similar ones first.

The conclusions of the test were interesting. First of all, the habits learned first were more automatic and below the conscious level. Second, stress caused people to revert to old habits.

Third, aging that affected the memory seemed to leave the subjects with more susceptibility to older habits. All this information can be used by people who struggle against bad habits.

One study took a look at the way people think about risky behavior. Surveys

were given out in two different parts of Canada to find out what these people thought were the most dangerous. In the majority of cases, people thought that bad habits like smoking, overeating, and other health habits were more risky than non-habitual behaviors.

It is important to study how we think and feel about, and react to bad habits. The more we know, the better chance people have of learning how to overcome them. With good research being done, bad habits may be easier to break in the long run.