

7 tips TO KICK START HEALTHY HABITS



A lack of daily routine can impact how we think and feel. Routines help us make time for the things that are important – like relationships, exercise, eating well, work, self time, and sleep.

Routines and habits are closely linked. When we work to create a habit, it becomes second-nature and we do it without having to think too much. Habits are a good way for us to establish healthy routines.

What does a good habit look like?

You decide that when your alarm wakes you in the morning, the first things you will do are:

- get out of bed,
- get dressed, and
- do some exercise.

Repeat this often enough and it becomes habit – something you do every morning without too much thought (some mornings it will still be hard, but habits can be more powerful than how you feel in the moment).

Creating a new habit can take about two months, however this varies greatly depending on the habit and context. Every person and every habit is different.

These 7 tips can help you form healthy routines and habits:

1 Focus on your WHY.

- Write down WHY you want to create a new habit, and keep reminding yourself of this.
- Our WHY will help us stay focused on the long term goal, rather than how we feel in the moment.

2 Keep it simple.

- It's harder to change lots of things at once.
- Work on a realistic number of goals at one time, and once these things have become habits, you can add extra goals.

3 Reward yourself.

- Dopamine is the body's natural reward system that strengthens the habit and creates cravings to do it again.
- Each time you do a new habit, choose something enjoyable to reward yourself.
- Rewards don't have to be expensive or fancy. Even crossing off a to-do list releases dopamine and can make you feel good.

4 Use cues.

- We can help our mind skip the 'thinking' part by linking an environmental cue with the desired behaviour. An environmental cue could be:
 - a time (IF the time is 10pm, I will THEN go to bed), or
 - a day of the week (IF it's Saturday morning, I will THEN ring my family), or
 - a place (IF I open the fridge in between mealtimes, I will THEN choose to eat a healthy snack).

5 Tell a mate.

- Tell someone about your new habit, and ask them to check in with you to see how you're going.
- Accountability can help keep us on track.

6 Be patient.

- Have a realistic expectation of how long it will take to create a new habit.

7 Stick with it.

- Don't give up if you miss a day or a week. It's better to start again than give up completely.

Would you like more tips and tools to help you take care of your mental health and wellbeing? Call or text **0417 703 729** to chat with the Outback Futures team.