

Upgrade Program Behavioral Plan

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Introduction

This document is part of a series of upgrade plans for every [area](#) of your life. It's broadly designed for a single, middle-class, 30-something living in a major city in a developed country.

Behavior change is hard. Incredibly hard for some, moderately hard for others. Learning how to do this well may take you years, but it's an incredibly important skill to learn. The simplest formulation we know of is, "Plan->Experiment->Learn." Then repeat until you've figured out what actually works for you.

There are dozens of behavior change strategies and tactics—so many that it's hard to know where to begin. A deep understanding of behavior change can help you identify those strategies and tactics that are most appropriate for your situation and goals. It's easy to miss important considerations in behavior change efforts, which often leads to failure. By using a systematic approach, you'll be much more likely to succeed.

Please go to "File" > "Make a copy" and make a copy of it for yourself. Then fill it out section by section according to your particular needs and circumstances. Perhaps add sections or items, delete them, change the order, and so on.

Your aim should be to make the plan as applicable and useful to you as possible. You should not follow the plan blindly—think it through for yourself.

Note that this process might be challenging. You might need to teach yourself things you aren't very knowledgeable about yet. You might feel like you need to do preliminary work in a different life area first. That's okay. Figure out broadly what makes sense for you, operationalize that understanding as specific actions in the [Actions](#) section, and then do them.

If it feels overwhelming, just start with the parts you find most valuable and do what you can. Tackle the rest over time. It may also help to set aside a dedicated [day](#) to work exclusively on this by yourself or with friends. Or you may choose to enlist an [UP Coach](#) to co-design and execute this plan alongside you.

Epistemic Status

This is an overview of how confident the principal [author](#) is in this plan.

- Generally high confidence in plan
- Based on 30+ years of extensive behavior change experiments for self and 1,000+ hours supporting 100+ clients with their behavior change efforts

Objectives

Decide what objectives you have with this plan and rank them in order of importance. Below are some sample objectives.

1. Improve habits to your desired levels
 - a. Eliminate unhelpful habits
 - b. Develop helpful habits
2. Improve routines to your desired levels
 - a. Eliminate unhelpful routines
 - b. Develop helpful routines
3. Improve rituals to your desired levels
 - a. Eliminate unhelpful rituals
 - b. Develop helpful rituals

Metrics

Decide what metrics you will use to evaluate the effectiveness of this plan. Also include the frequency in which you'll evaluate those metrics (e.g., ad hoc, once, hourly, daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, annually or per decade). Below are some sample metrics.

- Behavioral Rating: How would you rate your behaviors, on a 1-10 scale?
- Number of Unhelpful Habits
- Number of Unhelpful Routines
- Number of Unhelpful Rituals

Values

List all of your relevant values and rank them in order of importance. Below are some sample values.

1. Effectiveness
2. Efficiency
3. Self-respect
4. Emotional well-being
5. Happiness
6. Self-image

Value Analysis

List and then analyze all of the costs and benefits of this plan. Potentially also estimate expected value, cost-benefit, return on investment, and/or net present value.

- Time costs: ongoing
- Financial costs: \$0 - \$25,000 (e.g., coaches, therapists, apps, assessments, workshops, etc.)
- Benefits: \$X in potentially extremely large objective and subjective benefits

Strategies

Decide on your high-level strategies for achieving your objectives. Below are some sample strategies.

Key People

- Do the work on your own
- Outsource some of the work to experts (e.g., psychotherapists, coaches, etc.)
- Outsource some of the work to assistants

Key Timings

- Make incremental changes every day until you reach your objectives
- Make as many changes as you can over a set period (e.g., one week or one month)
- Make changes as intensively as you can until you reach your objectives

Actions

List the specific actions you will take to achieve your objectives. You should add these tasks to your project management system unless you are choosing to do them now. Below is an example sequence of actions you might take.

1. Describe your [mental model](#) of your behavior
 - a. Create a visual representation from memory without referencing this plan or outside sources of information
 - b. Create a new visual representation after thoroughly studying this plan and any relevant sources of information
 - c. Pay special attention to the improvements in the second version as incorporating those new insights may be crucial to the success of your plan
2. Finish every section of this plan, including the [assessments](#), [tools](#), and [resources](#) below

3. Generate a ranked list of the most useful [strategies and tactics](#) for inducing behavior change in yourself and add them below (e.g., using accountability partners, setting deadlines, using trigger-action plans/implementation intentions, making financial bets, working in a library without internet, etc.)
 - a. Item #1
 - b. Item #2
 - c. Item #3
4. Design and implement your most promising behavior change strategies and tactics
 - a. In general, avoid making too many changes at once unless you have a significant amount of time, energy, and support systems to experiment with more intensive change experiments
 - b. Write down each new experiment
 - c. Begin experimenting
 - d. Track your results
 - e. Adjust your approach as necessary
5. Design and implement your desired habits, [routines](#), and rituals
 - a. As a rule, remember that less is more
 - b. Make a list of each habit, routine, and ritual
 - c. Begin experimenting
 - d. Track your results
 - e. Adjust your approach as necessary
6. Improve your [productivity](#)
7. Improve your surrounding [environments](#)
8. Improve your [time management](#)
9. Develop your [values](#)
10. Develop your [purpose](#)

Assessments

List all of the assessments you might take to understand how you're doing compared to your objectives. Below are some sample assessments.

- [ADHD Assessment](#): a multi-step process, involving clinical examination, interview, behavioral observations, and completion of rating scales to determine Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) scale
- [Adult ADHD Self-Report Scale \(ASRSv1.1\)](#): a questionnaire used to determine Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) scale
- [Altman Self-Rating Mania Scale \(ASRM\)](#): a self-assessment questionnaire that can be helpful in assessing the presence and severity of manic or hypomanic symptoms
- [Autism-Spectrum Quotient \(AQ\)](#): a diagnostic questionnaire measuring the severity of Autism-Spectrum Disorders in individuals
- [Autism Spectrum Screening Questionnaire \(ASSQ\)](#): a questionnaire developed to assess the prevalence of Asperger Syndrome and high-functioning Autism Spectrum Disorder

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- [Balloon Analogue Risk Task \(BART\)](#): a computerized measure of risk taking behavior that models real-world risk behavior through the conceptual frame of balancing the potential for reward versus loss (request assessment by emailing Dr. Carl W. Lejuez at clejuez@ku.edu)
- [Barratt Impulsiveness Scale \(BIS\)](#): a questionnaire designed to assess the personality/behavioral construct of impulsiveness
- [Bergen Facebook Addiction Scale \(BFAS\)](#): an 18-item instrument to assess Facebook addiction
- [Bergen Shopping Addiction Scale \(BSAS\)](#): a questionnaire to determine if a person has a shopping addiction
- [CAGE Alcohol Questionnaire \(CAGE\)](#): a questionnaire to identify potential problems with alcohol abuse
- [Cognitive Appraisal of Risky Events — Revised \(CARE-R\)](#): a questionnaire to assess drug and alcohol use, and sexual behavior which also assesses level of sexual coercion (for men) and being sexually coerced (for women)
- [Cooperative/Competitive Strategy Scale \(CCSS\)](#): a scale to measure positive and negative attitudes toward success and competitive and cooperative success strategies
- [Diagnostic Screen for Gambling Disorders \(NODS-CLIP\)](#): a rapid screening test for adult pathological and problematic gambling
- [Domain-Specific Risk-Taking \(DOSPERT\) Scale](#): a psychometric scale that assesses risk taking in financial, health/safety, recreational, ethical, and social decisions
- [Dominance Scale \(DS\)](#): a new measure that examines 3 forms of dominance: authority, restrictiveness, and disparagement
- [Excessive Gaming Screening Tool \(EGST\)](#): a guide to determine if video games and/or Internet use may be a problem in a person's life but should not be used to make a "clinical diagnosis"
- [General Procrastination Scale \(GPS\)](#): a self-report measure of procrastination traits (UP Top Pick)
- [Harm Reduction Attitudes Questionnaire](#): a questionnaire to test how you feel about reducing the harm associated with drug use
- [Hypersensitive Narcissism Scale \(HSNS\)](#): a measure of hypersensitive narcissism derived by correlating the items of H. A. Murray's (1938) Narcism Scale with an MMPI-based composite measure of covert narcissism
- [Internet Addiction Assessment \(IAA\)](#): a screening test used to reveal some of the more pathological aspects of internet and smartphone use but should not be used as a definitive diagnostic test
- [Jackson Personality Inventory - Revised \(JPI-R\)](#): an assessment to reveal personality traits to predict an individual's behavior in a variety of settings and environments, including work, education, teams, and interpersonal situations (US \$22-\$191)
- [Materialistic Values Scale \(MVS\)](#): a test to examine materialism as a facet of consumer behavior
- [Multidimensional Attitude towards Ambiguity Scale \(MAAS\)](#): an assessment to measure the multidimensional nature of ambiguity attitudes
- [Narcissistic Personality Inventory-16 \(NPI-16\)](#): a short 16-item measure of subclinical narcissism that has shown meaningful face, internal, discriminant, and predictive validity
- [Need for Cognition \(NFC\)](#): a very short scale to measure the need for cognition

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- [Pathological Internet Use Questionnaire \(PIUQ\)](#): a reliable measurement for assessing the extent of problems caused by the “misuse” of the Internet that contains three subscales: obsession, neglect, and control disorder
- [Procrastinatory Cognitions Inventory \(PCI\)](#): a scale that captures case studies of individuals who are troubled by procrastination
- [Regret and Disappointment Scale \(RDS\)](#): a scale to assess how individuals deal with decision situations after the decision has been made, specifically the extent to which they feel regret
- [Resistance to Change \(RTC\)](#): an assessment to measure an individuals' tendencies to resist or avoid making changes, to devalue change generally, and to find change aversive across diverse contexts and types of change
- [Response-to-Failure Scale \(RTFS\)](#): a scale that examines sequential self-control behavior
- [Risk-Taking Assessment — Revised \(RiskTA-R\)](#): an assessment designed to determine a person’s level of comfort with risk-taking and how it could affect their career measured on 6 scales: sensation-seeking; harm avoidance; conscientiousness, locus of control, comfort with ambiguity, and reward orientation
- [Ritvo Autism & Asperger Diagnostic Scale \(RAADS-14\)](#): a screening instrument to aid in the identification of patients who may have undiagnosed Autism Spectrum Disorder
- [Self-Monitoring Scale](#): an assessment to measure the extent to which individuals differ in their use of social cues to guide behavior
- [Short Autism-Spectrum Quotient \(AQ\)](#): a diagnostic questionnaire measuring the severity of Autism-Spectrum Disorders in individuals
- [Short Health Anxiety Inventory \(HAI-18\)](#): an 18-item version of the original 48-item measure designed to assess fear of illness and fear of negative consequences of an illness by using a two-factor structure
- [Shyness Scale \(SS\)](#): a measure developed to obtain individuals' self-report of their shyness
- [SKEP Scale](#): a 9-item Likert-type scale developed to measure consumer skepticism toward advertising and advertising claims
- [Social Media Disorder Scale \(SMD\)](#): a 9-item scale that measures degree of addiction to social media
- [Spheres of Control \(SOC\) Scale](#): a multidimensional measure of locus of control, originally designed to assess personal control, interpersonal control, and socio-political control
- [Taylor Manifest Anxiety Scale \(TMAS\)](#): a test of anxiety as a personality trait
- [Vanderbilt ADHD Diagnostic Rating Scale \(VADRS\)](#): a psychological assessment tool for parents of children aged 6 to 12 designed to measure the severity of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) symptoms
- [Zung Self-Rating Anxiety Scale \(SAS\)](#): a 20-item self-report assessment device built to measure anxiety levels, based on scoring in four groups of manifestations: cognitive, autonomic, motor and central nervous system symptoms

Tools

List all of the tools and resources you might use to achieve your objectives. Here below are some sample tools.

- [Accountability partner](#)
- [Amazing Marvin](#)
- [Appreciative Inquiry](#)
- [Beeminder](#)
- [Cigarette Counter](#)
- [Clearer Thinking](#)
- [Coach.me](#)
- [Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy](#)
- [Daily Habit Tracker](#)
- [Dreamforce](#)
- [FB Purity](#)
- [Flip Band](#)
- [Focused Space](#)
- [Focusmate](#)
- [Freedom](#)
- [Goalmap](#)
- [GoalsWon](#)
- [Habit](#)
- [Habit Canvas](#)
- [Habitica](#)
- [Habit List](#)
- [Healthy But Smart](#)
- [Imperative](#)
- [Junto](#)
- [KSafe](#)
- [Kwit](#)
- [Loop Habit Tracker](#)
- [Mightier](#)
- [Neura](#)
- [Optimized](#)
- [Ornish Lifestyle Medicine](#)
- [Paco](#)
- [PAL](#)
- [Pavlok](#)
- [Psychology Tools](#)
- [Qbserve](#)
- [Quit Smoking](#)

- [Repeat Habit](#)
- [ReWi](#)
- [Screen Time Genie](#)
- [Sprig](#)
- [Streaks](#)
- [Thnx4](#)
- [The Done App](#)
- [Toodledo](#)
- [UP Actions](#)
- [UP Assessments](#)
- [UP Curriculum](#)
- [UP Environmental Plan](#)
- [UP Productivity Plan](#)
- [UP Purpose Plan](#)
- [UP Time Plan](#)
- [UP Tools](#)
- [Toodledo](#)
- [Virgin Pulse](#)
- [Way of Life](#)
- [Woop](#)

Resources

Ten Conditions for Change

The [Ten Conditions for Change](#) framework provides a way of organizing and systematizing thinking about behavior change.

The framework is organized into three main phases: decision, action, and continuation. The ten conditions together make up these three phases. Here is an outline of the whole framework:

Decision

1. **Consider** changing the behavior
2. **Desire** changing the behavior
3. **Intend** to change the behavior

Action

4. **Remember** to perform each action
5. **Believe** performing each action will help achieve the goal
6. **Choose** to perform each action

7. **Know** how to perform each action
8. **Have** needed resources to perform each action
9. **Embody** skills and traits needed to perform each action

Continuation

10. **Maintain** attributes required to perform future needed actions

Behavior Change Techniques

One framework for understanding how to change your behavior is the [Behavior Change Technique \(BCT\) Taxonomy \(v1\)](#) (PDF). It is a cross-domain, hierarchically structured taxonomy of 93 distinct behavior change techniques that are clustered into 16 groups. Experiment with each to find out which are most useful for you in particular in changing your behavior. A visual representation of 74 of these techniques as they correspond to 26 mechanisms of action is [here](#) and a simplified picture is below. Training is also [available](#).

1. **Goals and planning:** goal setting (behavior), problem solving, goal setting (outcome), action planning, review behavior goal(s), discrepancy between current behavior and goal, review outcome goal(s), behavioral contract, and commitment
2. **Feedback and monitoring:** monitoring of behavior by others without feedback, feedback on behavior, self-monitoring of behavior, self-monitoring of outcome(s) of behavior, monitoring of outcome(s) of behavior without feedback, biofeedback, and feedback on outcome(s) of behavior
3. **Social support:** social support (unspecified), social support (practical), and social support (emotional)
4. **Shaping knowledge:** instruction on how to perform the behavior, information about Antecedents, re-attribution, behavioral experiments
5. **Natural consequences:** information about health consequences, salience of consequences, information about social and environmental consequences, monitoring of emotional consequences, anticipated regret, and information about emotional consequences
6. **Comparison of behavior:** demonstration of the behavior, social comparison, and information about others' approval
7. **Associations:** prompts/cues, cue signaling reward, reduce prompts/cues, remove access to the reward, remove aversive stimulus, satiation, exposure, and associative learning
8. **Repetition and substitution:** behavioral practice/rehearsal, behavior substitution, habit formation, habit reversal, overcorrection, generalization of target behavior, and graded tasks
9. **Comparison of outcomes:** credible source, pros and cons, and comparative imagining of future outcomes

10. **Reward and threat:** material incentive (behavior), material reward (behavior), non-specific reward, social reward, social incentive, non-specific incentive, self-incentive, incentive (outcome), self-reward, reward (outcome), and future punishment
11. **Regulation:** pharmacological support, reduce negative emotions, conserving mental resources, and paradoxical instructions
12. **Antecedents:** restructuring the physical environment, restructuring the social environment, avoidance/reducing exposure to cues for the behavior, distraction, adding objects to the environment, and body changes
13. **Identity:** identification of self as role model, framing/reframing, incompatible beliefs, valued self-identify, and identity associated with changed behavior
14. **Scheduled consequences:** behavior cost, punishment, remove reward, reward approximation, rewarding completion, situation-specific reward, reward incompatible behavior, reward alternative behavior, reduce reward frequency, and remove punishment
15. **Self-belief:** verbal persuasion about capability, mental rehearsal of successful performance, focus on past success, and self-talk
16. **Covert learning:** imaginary punishment, imaginary reward, and vicarious consequences

A simplified picture¹ of this model is below. Or for a larger version, see [here](#).

Behavior Change Techniques*

Goals and Planning	Feedback and Monitoring	Social Support	Shaping Knowledge	Natural Consequences	Comparisons of Behavior	Associations	Repetition and Substitution	Comparisons of Outcomes	Reward and Threat	Regulation	Antecedents	Identity	Scheduled Consequences	Self-Belief	Covert Learning
1.1. Goal setting (behavior)	2.1. Monitoring of behavior by others without feedback	3.1. Social support (unspecified)	4.1. Instructions on how to do the behavior	5.1. Information about health consequences	6.1. Demonstration of the behavior	7.1. Prompts/cues	8.1. Behavioral practice/rehearsal	9.1. Credible source	10.1. Material incentive (behavior)	11.1. Pharmacological support	12.1. Restructuring the physical environment	13.1. Identification of self as role model	14.1. Behavior cost	15.1. Verbal persuasion about capability	16.1. Imaginary punishment
1.2. Problem solving	2.2. Feedback on behavior	3.2. Social support (practical)	4.2. Information about antecedents	5.2. Balance of consequences	6.2. Social comparisons	7.2. Cue signaling reward	8.2. Behavior substitution	9.2. Pros and cons	10.2. Material reward (behavior)	11.2. Reduce negative emotions	12.2. Restructuring the social environment	13.2. Framing/reframing	14.2. Punishment	15.2. Mental rehearsal of successful performance	16.2. Imaginary reward
1.3. Goal setting (outcome)	2.3. Self-monitoring of behavior	3.3. Social support (emotional)	4.3. Re-attribution	5.3. Information about social and environmental consequences	6.3. Information about others' approval	7.3. Reduce prompts/cues	8.3. Habit formation	9.3. Comparative imaging of future outcomes	10.3. Non-specific reward	11.3. Conserving mental resources	12.3. Avoidance/reducing exposure to cues for the behavior	13.3. Incompatible beliefs	14.3. Remove reward	15.3. Focus on past success	16.3. Vicarious consequences
1.4. Action planning (behavioral training plan)	2.4. Self-monitoring of outcomes of behavior		4.4. Behavioral experiments	5.4. Monitoring of emotional consequences		7.4. Remove access to the reward	8.4. Habit reversal		10.4. Social reward	11.4. Paradoxical instructions	12.4. Distraction	13.4. Valued self-identify	14.4. Reward approximation	15.4. Self-talk	
1.5. Review (behavior goals)	2.5. Monitoring of outcomes of behavior by others with feedback			5.5. Anticipated regret		7.5. Remove aversive stimulus	8.5. Desensitization		10.5. Social incentive		12.5. Adding objects to the environment	13.5. Identifying associated with changed behavior	14.5. Rewarding completion		
1.6. Rehearsal between covert behavior and goal	2.6. Biofeedback			5.6. Information about emotional consequences		7.6. Satiation	8.6. Generalization of target behavior		10.6. Non-specific incentive		12.6. Body changes		14.6. Situation-specific reward		
1.7. Review (outcome goals)	2.7. Feedback on outcome(s) of behavior					7.7. Exposure	8.7. Graded tasks		10.7. Self-incentive				14.7. Reward incompatible behavior		
1.8. Behavioral contract						7.8. Associative learning			10.8. Incentive (outcome)				14.8. Reward alternative behavior		
1.9. Commitment									10.9. Self-reward				14.9. Reduce reward frequency		

*BCTTv1

¹ Source

Example Routines

1. Daily Routine
 - a. Morning Routine
 - i. Make your bed
 - ii. Hydrate
 - iii. Meditate
 - iv. Practice gratitude
 - v. Exercise
 - b. Midday Routine
 - i. Stretch out
 - ii. Take vitamins/supplements
 - iii. Go for a walk
 - iv. Clean your desk space
 - c. Evening Routine
 - i. Take a warm shower/bath
 - ii. Meditate
 - iii. Do something for yourself
 - d. Bedtime Routine
 - i. Read
 - ii. Do somatic practices
2. Weekly Routines
 - a. Go to gym 3/week
 - b. Do yoga 1/week
 - c. Do cold therapy 2/week for 5.5 minutes
 - d. Do sauna 2/week
 - e. Receive a massage 2/week
3. Monthly Routines
 - a. Write journal entry on month's progress
4. Quarterly Routine
 - a. Write journal entry on quarter's progress
5. Annual Routines
 - a. Write journal entry on year's progress

General Resources

- [10 Conditions for Change: A Framework for Creating Positive Behaviors](#)
- [APA Dictionary of Psychology](#)
- [APA Thesaurus of Psychological Index Terms](#)
- [Behave: The Biology of Humans at our Best and Worst](#)
- [Behavior Institute](#)
- [Biohack Stack](#)

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- [BioMindmap](#)
- [Choiceology](#)
- [Digital detox](#)
- [Dopamine fasting](#)
- [Every Mental Disorder Diagnosis in the DSM-5](#)
- [Good Habits, Bad Habits: The Science of Making Positive Changes That Stick](#)
- [Hypnotherapy](#)
- [Judgment in Managerial Decision Making](#)
- [Morning routine](#)
- [Psychedelic Therapy](#)
- [Psychology Dictionary](#)
- [Switch: How to Change Things When Change Is Hard](#)
- [Systematic desensitization](#)
- [Therapy Sessions Recordings Database](#)
- [The Procrastination Equation: How to Stop Putting Things Off and Start Getting Stuff Done](#)
- [The Talent Code: Greatness Isn't Born. It's Grown. Here's How](#)
- [Top 100 List Behavioral Design Books](#)
- [Willpower: Rediscovering the Greatest Human Strength](#)

Schedule

Decide on which days you will take which actions. You should add these dates to your calendar now.

- [Date]: Finalize plan
- [Dates]: Execute plan
- [Dates]: Review plan's outcomes

Predictions

Predict how well you will do in achieving your objectives.

- [Name]: I predict with [X]% confidence that I will [Y] by [Z].
- [Team Member's Name]: I predict with [X]% confidence that [Name] will [Y] by [Z].
- [Team Member's Name]: I predict with [X]% confidence that [Name] will [Y] by [Z].

- Combined: We predict with an average [X]% confidence that [Name] will [Y] by [Z].

Outcomes

Objectively record how well you achieved your objectives.

- [Date #1]: [Outcomes]
- [Date #2]: [Outcomes]
- [Date #3]: [Outcomes]
- [Date #4]: [Outcomes]
- [Date #5]: [Outcomes]
- [Date #6]: [Outcomes]
- [Date #7]: [Outcomes]
- [Date #8]: [Outcomes]
- [Date #9]: [Outcomes]
- [Date #10]: [Outcomes]

Notes

Add any random thoughts, questions, and uncertainties you may have.

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