



Understanding How A Naturopathic Doctor Can Help You Break Bad Habits That No Longer Serve Your Health!



Have you ever had experiences such as, driving to work, but when you arrived you can't recall the experience of driving? Or eating an entire bag of chips while watching T.V. but having no recollection of how the chips tasted?

If you have, you're not alone! We naturally automate much of our lives. Automatic behaviors run to completion outside of our conscious awareness. To regain our capacity to influence what we think and do automatically, we need to bring our habitual nature into the light of conscious awareness.

How a Naturopathic Doctor can Help:

For most people, changing lifestyle habits requires guidance by a skilled practitioner who understands the complex system of habit formation and how to harness the psychology of change. Registered Doctors of Naturopathic Medicine have extensive training in Lifestyle Counseling and a thorough understanding of human behavior and mindfulness.

One of the key principles of naturopathic medicine is **Doctor as Teacher**. We teach the principles of healthy living and preventative medicine. ND's educate their patients and support them in an encouraging and empowering environment. ND's understand that breaking habits is not just about saying, "You need to lose weight or we will put you on blood pressure medication!" We know that it is not that simple! But, we also know that changing your lifestyle habits to regain your health is doable with skillful, individual guidance.

Here's my approach:

- I help people make **healthier** lifestyle choices without throwing their lives upside down!
- I help people feel **empowered** and inspired, never fearful or overwhelmed.
- I help my patient's harness the power of small, simple yet **powerful** lifestyle changes over time, which provides **lasting** health and prevents disease.

ND's are in the business of helping people change their unhealthy habits to healthy ones in a supportive, encouraging, and empowering environment! Sometimes, this is easier said than done, as most people's habits are automatic, unconscious, and long ingrained in their nervous systems.

Uncovering the trigger, association, reward, and repetition of a person's lifestyle habits requires bringing the conscious mind into the light of day. We must then choose a new behavior, using repetition and purpose in order to enrich a person's long-term health.

CHANGE IS SOMETHING THAT HAPPENS IN STAGES.

Change rarely happens as a giant leap from old to new. It happens in stages! According to the "stages of change" model developed by James Prochaska, PhD., the first stage of change is **IGNORANCE**. That's when people don't know what they don't know! They don't know what to do. Or, they don't know how to do it. Or, they don't know why it matters.

Habit change begins in earnest when a person arrives at the second stage of change, **RECOGNITION**. This is the ah-ha moment, in which needs, motivations, and options become conscious, information becomes available, and resources become accessible.

The third stage of change is **PLANNING**. In which you determine specifically what you want to do and how you want to do it. Your ND enhances the second and third stage of change by taking a complete health history, including a thorough investigation of your thoughts, attitudes, beliefs, and habits while providing you with an individual treatment plan to reach your health goals.

The fourth stage of change is **ACTION**. This is where you take a step forward, evaluate it for effectiveness, and then, take the next step, and so on. Your ND will encourage you and help you assess at each stage of change the effectiveness of the new strategies and help you move forward with each new change using the steps outlined from stage one to four.

The fifth stage of change is **REPETITION**. Habits become automatic through repetition and intensity, so doing something differently over and over with purpose and intention locks it into our nervous system where it can become unconscious and automatic.

Your ND will become your greatest cheerleader to help you keep repeating, with intention and purpose, the new behavior!

Part II:

The Anatomy of Habit

A habit consists of a trigger followed by a sequence of association and dissociations, and reinforced by repetition and reward until it becomes automatic.

A habit is built using two mental processes: Association and Dissociation. Association is when the mind connects one thing to something else. Dissociation is when the mind disconnects one thing from something else.

We use these two processes to build beliefs and behavioral patterns that become the basis of our automatic lives. And they are powerful. We can associate positive feelings with eating chips in front of the TV. And negative feelings of terror at the sight of a bug!

It is really up to us! But most people do not realize how true this is.

What you learn about your habit will provide you with opportunities to introduce new distinctions into the chain of events. And, sometimes just examining it with your ND introduces new distinctions to change it!

To change a habit, your ND will help you bring the unconscious program into the light of conscious awareness, then examine it closely to uncover when it began, how it began, when it occurs, how it is a problem, and what is a preferred replacement habit.

WHEN YOU WANT SOMETHING TO STOP, YOU NEED TO KNOW WHAT YOU WANT TO START IN ITS PLACE!

If you want to get healthy but feel stuck in your unhealthy lifestyle habits, come and see how an ND can help you!



Heidi McGill is a registered doctor of naturopathic medicine. She has owned and operated Healing Foundations since November 2006. She has helped dozens of families discover their best balance for overall wellness in body and mind, using the principles and practices of

naturopathic medicine. Dr. Heidi regularly appears as “Guelph’s Naturopathic Expert” on Inside Guelph a local Roger’s T.V. program. She also writes articles on topics that matter to you. Dr. Heidi is focused on educating you about how your body functions in combination with the natural and cultural environment. She is genuinely passionate about guiding you towards optimal health, vitality and more joy in your life.

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