

BUILDING BETTER HABITS THROUGH HABIT STACKING



A new year can feel like a fresh start — a chance to reset, refocus, and build healthy routines that truly stick. But big goals can feel overwhelming, and motivation often fades by February. That’s why one of the easiest ways to create lasting change is by using a simple tool called habit stacking.

Habit stacking means attaching a small new habit to something you already do every day. By linking a new action to a familiar routine, it becomes more natural, more automatic, and easier to maintain long after the New Year excitement fades.

How It Works:

Use the formula:

“After I [current habit], I will [new habit].”

For example:

- After brushing my teeth → I will take my nighttime medication.
- After starting the coffee pot → I will drink a glass of water.
- After lunch → I will take a 10-minute walk.

Small habits like these add up over time, helping you build confidence and steady momentum.

Why It Works:

- Removes decision fatigue by making the next step obvious
- Provides automatic triggers so you don’t need constant reminders
- Builds confidence through repeated success
- Leverages the brain’s desire for efficiency
- Reduces overwhelm by breaking behavior change into manageable pieces

Ideas to Support Common New Year Goals:

Eat Healthier

- After preparing dinner → add one extra serving of vegetables.
- After grocery shopping → wash and prep produce.

Move More

- After each bathroom break → walk for 2 minutes.
- After ending a meeting or phone call → stretch for 30 seconds.

Boost Mental Well-Being

- After waking up → take 1 minute for deep breathing.
- After sitting down to eat → say one thing you’re grateful for.

Sleep Better

- After brushing your teeth → dim the lights.
- After dinner → set out clothes for the next day to reduce nighttime stress.

Start Small, Stay Consistent:



The key is choosing habits that fit naturally into your day. One small step at a time is more effective — and more encouraging — than trying to overhaul everything at once.

By pairing new habits with the routines you already have, you create simple systems that support your health all year long. As you look ahead to 2026, habit stacking can help you build the healthy lifestyle you want — one small, steady step at a time.

Source:

National Society of Health Coaches. (2025, December 9).
Building better habits through habit stacking