

## HABIT FORMATION: HELPING STUDENTS DEVELOP POSITIVE HABITS

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“Small habits repeated regularly can help students cultivate character strengths like patience, gratitude, and kindness.” This was taken from the author Arthur Schwartz in his article on “How to Help Your Students Develop Positive Habits”. In the generation of learners nowadays, their study routines and behaviors inside and outside the classroom have changed from how it was years ago. Different factors contribute to this change in the students, and these have contributed to the struggles and hindrances of the teachers in making the students learn.

Positive habits help the students learn how to achieve their goals and make themselves better in whatever they do. Being able to help the students develop such kind of positive habits will also help out teachers because they tend to develop a sense of responsibility for themselves and are able to process the needs of the learning environment and the curriculum better, thus, giving lesser burden to the teachers.

Positive habits may be a struggle to develop among students, especially those in the secondary level, because of their innate attitude of doing what they please. They get out of their ways to break norms and violate standards, which for them is not so much of a big deal. But, as for teachers, they claim an immediate responsibility to correct such behavior. And helping students develop positive habits may help quite well in this area.

So, how can one help his students do so. Schwartz enumerated 5 concepts on how to help students develop positive habits, in school or even at their homes or community.

You are your habits. In a daily basis, people have habits that we naturally do but do not actually see as habitual. Just like with drinking coffee in the morning or having lunch at 12 noon or eating snacks before bedtime. These are habits, which become routinary for some people. This goes the same with students. If these young learners would opt to open their notes for 30 minutes after getting home, instead of their phones, then they can develop a habit of studying before doing their recreational activities at home. In school, teachers can choose to give a spelling task before the start of every session everyday, so that the students can make it a habit to study their vocabularies and score high in the spelling activity. James Clear, author of "Atomic Habits", stressed in his writings that "the best way to change who you are is to change what you do".

How we form habits. Habit forming is crucial to students because they must be able to understand that there are good and bad habits. The fact that they can also be able to learn bad habits make it important that they are guided in developing such habits. Habits are formed through the use of cues, which spark the habits, followed by the cravings, which become the motivating factors of the habit formation. Their response to this is later rewarded, which will be the deciding factor if the individual will continue to form the habit or will let it go.

Stable cues are vital in forming a positive habit. Since cues are the reason for habit forming, the teacher must make a stable cue for the students so that the formation of positive habits will be continuous. This means that the cue for a student must be a usual activity he does, followed by the action which the teacher wants him to form a habit of. For example, a student reaches home and changes his clothes (cue), and then opens his school notes for 30 minutes to study (action). The aim for this is that the student must be able to repeat his action of opening his school notes and studying right after coming home and changing clothes. Repetition of activities helps the brain organize itself and make a habit of the actions that helps it function properly.

Four “habit hacks” that work. These habit hacks were taken from different publications on habit formation and were compiled by Schwartz. First is “habit stacking”, which means linking a hard habit to an easier habit, so that the individual will have to exert less effort in developing habits. Second is leveraging the power of commitment, which means that the individual must be open to the idea of habit formation and be dedicated enough to pursue it or is motivated enough to start positive habits for himself. The third one is discovering one’s habit tendency, which means discovering how an individual becomes motivated to repeatedly do something, eventually forming a habit from it. And lastly, the power of positive affirmations, from the individual himself, rather than from other people. Being able to affirm yourself in doing things positively helps in making habit formation easier to achieve.

Setting goals and sheer willpower aren’t enough. Forming positive habits is not easy an easy task to fulfill. Different factors affect the motivation of a person to develop positive habits from himself. As much as long term goals can be a motivation and a reward as well from doing so, the process a student passes through in being able to achieve such may become a hindrance in the continuous process of habit formation.

Positive habits are about getting better everyday, even if it is just 1% of what you are today. Based on Aristotle, “we are what we repeatedly do”. If this is true, then forming positive habits lies more on the choice of the individual to repeatedly try to improve himself until he becomes the best version of him.

#### *References:*

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