



International Institute for Students Excellence

The Power of Habits

5-Session Syllabus

This syllabus is designed to provide a foundational understanding of how habits work and practical strategies for changing them. The course is structured around the core concepts presented in Charles Duhigg's "The Power of Habits: Why We Do What We Do in Life and Business."

Session 1: The Habit Loop - Understanding the Core Mechanism

Objective: Introduce the fundamental components of a habit and begin the process of self-analysis.

- **Topics:**
 - The neurological science behind habits.
 - Deconstructing the "Habit Loop": Cue, Routine, and Reward.
 - The concept of a "craving" and its role in the loop.
- **Key Concepts:** Habit Loop, Cue, Routine, Reward, Craving.
- **Activity/Homework:** Identify one habit you want to change. For the next week, keep a simple journal to track its Cue, Routine, and Reward.

Session 2: The Cue - Identifying the Triggers

Objective: Learn to recognize the triggers that initiate a habit and how to become more mindful of them.

- **Topics:**
 - Types of cues: environmental, emotional, time-based, social, and preceding actions.
 - Practical techniques for identifying cues in your daily life.
 - Analyzing the "why" behind your cues.
- **Key Concepts:** Cue identification, environmental triggers, internal states.
- **Activity/Homework:** For your chosen habit, identify the five most common cues that trigger the routine. Document the time, location, emotional state, and people present when the habit occurs.

Session 3: The Routine - Changing the Behavior

Objective: Explore strategies for altering the routine portion of the habit loop while keeping the original cue and reward.

- **Topics:**



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- The "Golden Rule of Habit Change": It's easier to substitute a new routine than to eliminate an old one.
- Developing and testing new routines.
- The importance of willpower and belief in the process.
- **Key Concepts:** Routine substitution, conscious effort, willpower.
- **Activity/Homework:** Experiment with one new routine to replace your old one. For example, if your old routine was to scroll social media, try reading a book instead. Reflect on the experience and its effectiveness.

Session 4: The Reward - Understanding What You're Really Craving

Objective: Uncover the true rewards that drive your habits and learn how to provide them in new ways.

- **Topics:**
 - The difference between a tangible reward and the emotional or neurological craving it satisfies.
 - The "Aha!" moment of realizing the true craving.
 - Methods for creating new, healthier rewards that fulfill the same craving.
- **Key Concepts:** Reward analysis, craving, satisfaction.
- **Activity/Homework:** For your chosen habit, try to determine what emotional or psychological need the reward is satisfying. Brainstorm and implement a new reward that is healthier but provides the same feeling of satisfaction.

Session 5: The Keystone Habit - Creating a Domino Effect

Objective: Synthesize all learned concepts and introduce the idea of a keystone habit that can lead to widespread change.

- **Topics:**
 - The concept of a "Keystone Habit" and its ripple effect on other areas of life.
 - Examples of common keystone habits (e.g., exercise, meal planning).
 - Putting it all together: creating a personal plan for lasting habit change.
- **Key Concepts:** Keystone habit, small wins, transformation.
- **Activity/Homework:** Choose one new keystone habit you want to build (e.g., exercise for 15 minutes a day, track your spending). Create a detailed plan for implementing it, using all the techniques we have discussed.