TWWB · APPLIED WISDOM

Replace the Habit

Borrowed from a conversation with Eric Hinman. The Wisdom We Borrow with Ashton Palmer.

Your 5-line game plan

The habit I'm replacing, and when it shows up: _____

What goes in its place: _____

What only I can do: _____

The one thing I'll say no to this week: _____

The one piece of friction I'll remove: _____

Replace the habit, don't just remove it.

In his late twenties, Eric weighed over 200 pounds and had no real structure to his days or nights. His key was replacing the habit, because "it's really difficult to break it unless you replace it with something else." Early morning workouts took the place of going out at night.

Apply it: this week, pick one habit you want gone and decide what goes in its place, at the time of day the old habit usually shows up.

The habit I want gone, and when it shows up: _____

What I'll do in that slot instead: _____

Put the blinders on.

At one point Eric was running an insurance business, a software company and a gym while training twenty hours a week. He made lists of what only he could do, and everything else got eliminated, delegated or automated. Getting good at saying no let him say yes to a few things.

Apply it: write down what only you can do. Then say no to one thing this week that isn't on that list.

What only I can do: _____

What I'll eliminate, delegate or automate: _____

Find the friction.

Eric has incredible memories of Syracuse, but half the year he was cooped up inside because of the cold, so he moved to Denver in 2017. His advice is to "look for friction in your life" among the people around you and in your environment. The fix doesn't have to be a move.

Apply it: ask yourself where the friction is in your life right now, in the people around you or the place you're in, and remove one piece of it this week.

Where the friction is right now: _____

The one piece I'll remove this week: _____

Borrow This (5 minutes)

Take five minutes tonight to write down one habit you want gone, the time of day it usually shows up, and one thing you'll do in that slot instead. Keep it small. Tomorrow, when that time comes, do the replacement.

Try This Prompt

Paste this into your AI tool of choice and fill in the brackets.

Act as my applied-wisdom coach. I'll give you a habit I want to change, what's on my plate right now, and where my days feel harder than they should. Use three rules: replace the habit, don't just remove it; put the blinders on; find the friction.

Give me a one-page plan for this week with three short sections:
1. Replace: look at the habit I want gone and when it usually happens. Suggest two or three replacements that fit that same time of day, and help me pick one to start tomorrow. If a replacement involves exercise, keep it to a starting point that matches the fitness level I describe. If the habit involves alcohol, drugs, or a health condition, suggest I talk with a qualified professional before cutting back, and don't give medical advice.
2. Blinders: sort what's on my plate into four groups: only I can do it, eliminate, delegate, automate. Then name one thing I should say no to this week.
3. Friction: look at the people, places, and routines I described, and name one piece of friction between me and the life I want that I could remove or reduce this week, plus the first small step. Do not tell me to move, end a friendship, or quit a job.

Before you write the plan, ask me up to two questions if anything I gave you is unclear or if you need my available time or relevant constraints to suggest safe, feasible steps. If you ask questions, wait for my answers before writing the plan. Use only the personal facts I provide; don't invent details about me. If important information is still missing, say what you cannot determine rather than guess. Don't make promises about results or suggest changes to medical treatment, and don't tell me to quit a job, leave a relationship, or take on debt.

The habit I want gone, and when it usually happens: [a few lines]
What's on my plate right now: [a few lines]
The life I want, and where my days feel harder than they should (people, places, routines): [a few lines]
My current fitness level, if a replacement might involve exercise: [a few lines, or "not relevant"]

Curiosity leads to wisdom, and wisdom leads to the life we want.