

The Habits We Most Want to Foster, or The Essential Seven

By Gretchen Rubin



My current writing project is a book that will be called *Before and After*, about the most fascinating subject ever, **the subject of habits**. How do we make and break habits—really? (To be notified when the book goes on sale, sign up [here](#).)

It was my interest in happiness that led me to the subject of habits, and of course, the study of habits is really the study of happiness. Habits are the invisible architecture of everyday life, and a significant element of happiness. If we have habits that work for us, we're much more likely to be happy, healthy, productive, and creative. **Or not.**

When I talk to people about their happiness challenges, they often point to hurdles related to a habit they want to make or break.

Last week, I posted about the “Big Five,” the areas into which most people's desired habits fall.

I asked for **reader advice** about two questions: **had I overlooked any areas**, and **was there a better name than “Big Five”?**

Thank you, readers! I got very helpful answers to both questions.

First: yes, indeed, I'd missed some important areas. Now I have seven areas.

Second: given the new number, a reader had a great idea for a snappy name: the **Essential Seven**.

Voila! The Essential Seven include...

- 1. Eat and drink more healthfully** (give up sugar, eat more vegetables, drink less alcohol)
- 2. Exercise regularly**
- 3. Save and spend wisely** (save regularly, pay down debt, donate to worthy causes, make purchases that contribute to happiness or habits, pay taxes, stay current with expense reports)
- 4. Rest, relax, and enjoy** (pursue a hobby instead of cruising the internet, enjoy the moment, stop checking email, **get enough sleep**, spend less time in the car, take time for myself)
- 5. Stop procrastinating, make consistent progress** (practice an instrument, set aside two hours daily for uninterrupted work, learn a language, maintain a blog, keep a gratitude journal)
- 6. Simplify, clear, and organize** (**make the bed every day**, file regularly, put keys away in the same place, recycle, give away unused clothing)
- 7. Engage more deeply—with other people, with God, with yourself, with the world** (call family members, read the Bible every day, volunteer, spend time with friends, observe the Sabbath, spend time alone in nature)

Read more: <http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-happiness-project/201402/the-habits-we-most-want-foster-or-the-essential-seven>