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# The Science of Health *and Happiness* *for young people*©



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# Week 1 - Part two

# How to form strong habits

*Dr Pádraic Dunne*



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# Immunologist

- Research scientist (PhD) – specialising in how the immune system fights infection

## About me



# Psychotherapist & counsellor

- Lecturer and researcher at the new RCSI Centre for Positive Psychology & Health
- Interested in studying the impacts of our physical health on our psychological health and vice versa

# Secondary School

- CBS Athy, Co. Kildare (now Ard Scoil Na Trionaide)

# How long does it take to make a habit stick?

# 66 days

(Between 18 and 254 days, depending on the habit and the person)

# SMART habits

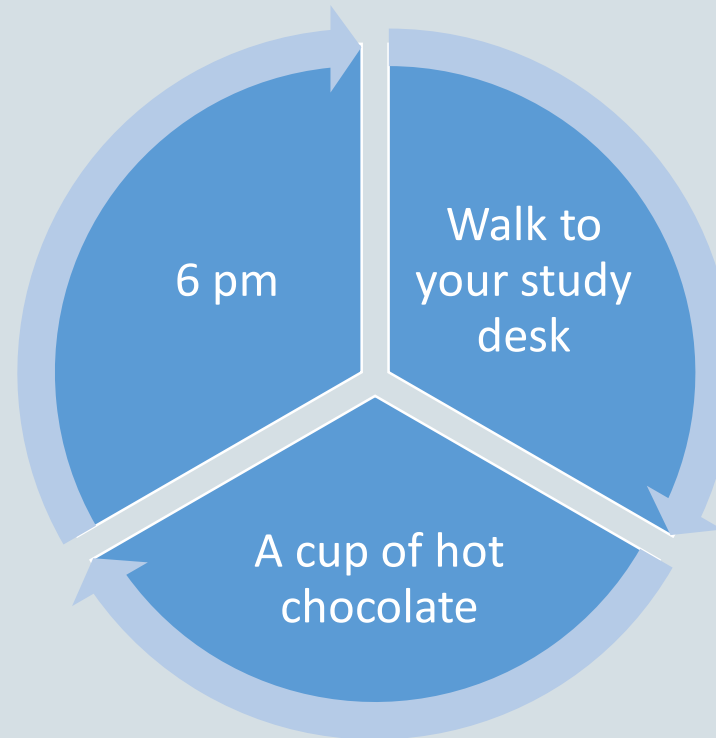
How to make new goals, the <b>SMART</b> way		Example – I want to study for 2 hours each night during the week
<b>S</b>	<b>Specific</b>	<i>I want to increase my study time from 1 to 2 hours, starting at 6 pm Mon to Fri.</i>
<b>M</b>	<b>Measurable &amp; meaningful</b>	<i><b>Measurable</b> by time (1 to 2 hours); <b>meaningful</b> – why do you want to increase your study time? E.g. to achieve a certain grade; to prove that you can; to make your parents proud.</i>
<b>A</b>	<b>Achievable</b>	<i>Is expanding from 1 to 2 hours achievable? Yes – you get home at 5 pm, which leaves enough time for dinner, a break before starting.</i>
<b>R</b>	<b>Realistic, rewarding</b>	<i>Is it realistic? Yes. Even with a 15 minute break in between, there is enough time to study for 2 hours. 5 hours might not be realistic but 2 hours is. Have you set short, medium and long-term <b>rewards</b>?</i>
<b>T</b>	<b>Trackable</b>	<i>Yes, I can monitor my progress using a chart that I check each night.</i>

# SMART habits – the habit loop

The habit loop



New study habit loop



You can set up habit loops for all sorts of new habits

**Note** – If you want to study at the weekend, you need to generate a different habit loop

You can read more on the Habit Loop in Charles Duhigg's book – *The Power of Habit*

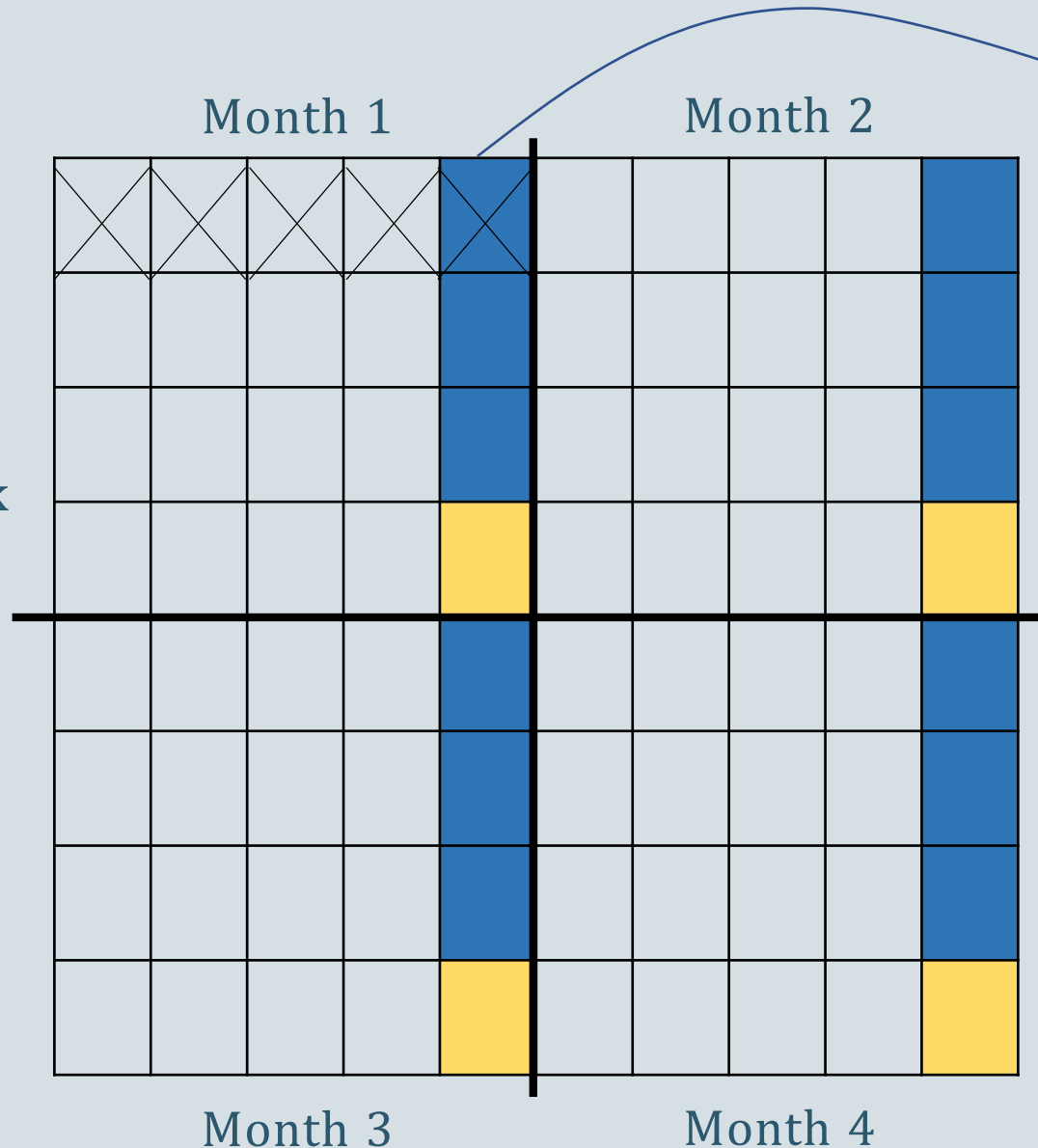
# SMART habits – rewards

REWARD	Example
SHORT (each evening)	Hot chocolate, Netflix show
MEDIUM (each weekend)	Time with friends, e.g. cinema
LONGTERM (after 4 months)	A new jacket

# SMART habit template – trackable

## Four month study tracker

- 5 evenings per week
- 2 hours each night



- Tick each square, every time you study for 2 hours.
- Dark blue squares indicate a medium-term reward.
- Yellow squares indicate a long-term reward.



# Your New Habit Check-list

**Have you created a stable, supportive environment or context for your new habit?**

- e.g. a neat and tidy desk area with everything you need (pens, papers etc.)

**Is your new habit specific?**

- e.g. 2 hours study nightly

**Have you decided on your motivation – why do you want to create this new habit?**

- For better grades

**Have you created a habit loop with short, medium and long-term rewards?**

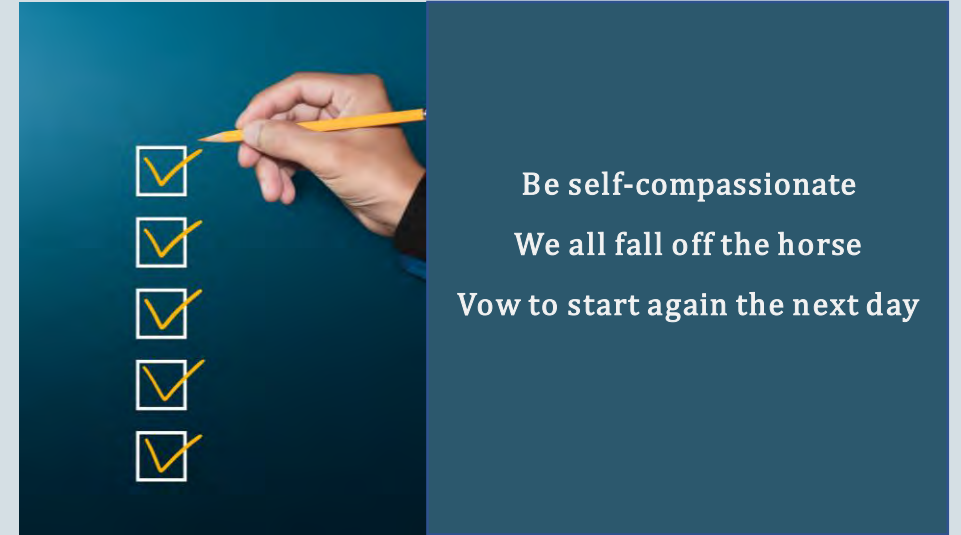
**Is your new habit achievable?**

**Is your new habit realistic?**

**Can you track your progress?**

**Have you told everyone about your new habit?**

- Telling everyone will put a gentle pressure on you to commit



# Your homework for this week

- Write down your new habit plan, based on the SMART system
- Decide your rewards
- Print out or draw a SMART habit template (or use a calendar – remember to put your reward dates into it)
- Tick all the boxes on your new habit check-list



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# Thank you



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