

How to Change

HOW TO CHANGE



In Episode 2 of [The Naked Art of Living](#) podcast, we explore what it actually takes to change.

If you have a reaction or feeling that's not serving you, a habit you want to create or break, an urge or craving you want to dissolve – you can rewire your brain to do what you want it to do, using the same process that created the problem in the first place.

In many ways, our brain doesn't differentiate between a real experience and one that we imagine.

This can lead to some problematic situations – if you're afraid of something, for example, just thinking about that thing can trigger a cascade of emotions and sensations in your body. The more this happens, the more your brain gets used to sending you a specific set of thoughts, emotions, and sensations.

The good news is that you can use this same process to create a new experience.

This is not one more more hack or technique to help you force or push or trick yourself to change or do something you don't really want to do.

This is a process that empowers you to train your brain to give you the kind of experience you want – as long as it's what you really want.

You can change today, and you can do it in a way that doesn't involve pushing or unproductive suffering, in a way that actually feels good.

Here's a bit on the neuroscience of why this process works:

Your brain on imagination: It's a lot like reality, study shows

1 Identify your desired change.

The goal is to get clear on what you want to change, at a deeper level.

This process will only work if your desired change is something you truly, genuinely want.

This process doesn't work if you're trying to force or trick yourself into something you don't authentically want. Most other hacks and techniques won't work either, and if you do manage to force yourself into submission, you'll wind up with something you don't actually want.

So please, really connect with what's true for you, and take all the time you need to do that. It's the best way to honor yourself, and the best way to honor the people who matter to you.

GUIDED EXPLORATION

- + What do you want to change?

EXAMPLES

- + I want to stop feeling anxiety around public speaking
- + I want to make progress on writing my book and not feel so stuck
- + I want to stop overeating
- + I want to wake up when my alarm goes off
- + I want to quit smoking
- + I want to stop being so afraid of spiders
- + I want to stop looking at my phone every few minutes

2 Find the trigger.

The goal is to identify the thing that tells your brain to give you that experience you don't want to have.

You'll know you've found a trigger when you have an observable reaction – visceral, physical, emotional – to the thought of the trigger.

If you find more than one trigger, you'll go through this entire process (steps 1 through 5) for one trigger at a time.

GUIDED EXPLORATION

- + When was the last time you experienced that thing you want to change?
- + What was it like?
- + Where were you?
- + What do you see/hear/notice as you're imagining it?
- + What do you feel?
- + What does it feel like, having that experience that you don't want to be having, that experience that is getting in the way of what you want?
- + Where is that feeling in your body?
- + What's it like in your body?

EXAMPLE – PUBLIC SPEAKING

I might want to change how I feel about public speaking. I don't want to feel anxious. But if it's just an intellectual or cognitive thought, with no observable reaction, I haven't yet found the trigger. As I do some detective work, I might find that one of my triggers is the thought of an audience. When I imagine the people who are listening, the audience, I might experience a a very cringe-y, squirm-y reaction. And that's the trigger I would use in Step 5.

3 Block the old pattern.

The goal is to put up a roadblock between the trigger and what you used to do.

This roadblock interrupts your brain from going down the well-worn path that used to bring that old experience that you want to change.

You can use these types of interruptors to interrupt anything you don't want or like – for example, anxious or depressed thoughts, a craving, an impulse or urge.

There are probably thousands of techniques you can use to create roadblocks – I'll include two of them here, plus some resources where you can find many more.

BILATERAL STIMULATION

- + You'll need something you can fit in your hand, like a water bottle, a small ball, a phone – hold it out in front of you, and pass it back and forth from one hand to the other, as you're moving your arms out to the side one at a time.
- + Do this for 30-60 seconds, notice how you feel, and if that old feeling is still there repeat.
- + Watch a few seconds of this video to see bilateral stimulation in action: <https://youtu.be/AWpqUBgcQII?t=150>

THE RIDGES OF YOUR FINGERS

- + Sitting comfortably, with your eyes closed, very slowly rub two fingers together, with such exquisite awareness that you notice the ridges of your fingertips moving slowly against each other.
- + Do this for 30-60 seconds, notice how you feel, and if that old feeling is still there repeat.

ADDITIONAL PRACTICES

- + "PQ reps" described in the book *Positive Intelligence* by Shirzad Chamine
- + Many short meditations available via the [Insight Timer](#) app

4 Create a new resource.

The goal is to deeply connect with the way you want to feel instead – not just thinking it, but feeling it, as intensely as possible, right now in this moment.

You can take your time and do what you need to do to get into the feeling of it.

GUIDED EXPLORATION

- + How do you want to feel instead?
- + What does it feel like, to feel that way? You might think of a time when you felt that way in the past.
- + What do you notice?
- + What do you see? Is it a static image, or is it more like a movie?
- + Who do you see? Who's there?
- + What do you Hear? Smell? What can you touch, taste, sense?
- + What do you feel in your body?
- + Where do you feel it in your body?
- + How does someone who is feeling this way think, talk, move? Imagine doing that.
- + On a scale of 1-10, how much are you feeling this amazing feeling in this moment?
- + Then, see if you can move the dial up a notch, continuing to imagine what it's like to feel this way.
- + Once you are feeling really good, having good thoughts, feeling it in your bones, it's time to move to the next step.

EXAMPLE – PUBLIC SPEAKING

I want to feel confident, excited, curious, connected, grounded, open. My body feels relaxed, my posture is straight, shoulders back, I feel tall and calm and relaxed. I'm walking around the stage slowly, totally comfortable in my body, not really thinking about myself at all. Just very excited to get to share and connect with people, profoundly grateful to be able to do that. I can sense many people around me, I can feel their presence, and it feels good.

5 Create a new pattern.

This step empowers you to create a new pattern by associating your new resource with the trigger.

The key in this step, just as in Step 4, is to keep swimming and luxuriating in all those good feelings you just created and then think of the trigger.

You'll do this several times until it feels smooth, until there's not a hint of the old reaction present when you think of the trigger. You'll be surprised by how quickly this happens.

You are rewiring your brain to give you a new experience whenever you encounter the trigger. You are creating the change that you want for yourself. Remember, this is something you already do, all day long. You know how to imagine an experience fully, and you know how to do it well. Use this superpower intentionally, and enjoy. ♥

GUIDED EXPLORATION

- + Feeling all the good feelings you've just created for yourself, think of your trigger.
- + What's it like? What do you notice?
- + Imagine everything in as much detail as possible, just like you did in the last step.
- + Repeat these steps over and over, getting deeply into the feelings and experience of your new resource, then imagining your trigger in different scenarios – maybe in the past, in the future, in a different context, with different details.

EXAMPLE – PUBLIC SPEAKING

As I'm feeling confident, excited, curious, connected, grounded, open, I think about the audience. All those people sitting there, listening to me, watching me. The lights are hot and bright but I'm slowly able to make out their faces, looking up at me, engaged and inspired by what I'm saying. It feels really good, so connected.

I'll repeat this step with different versions of the trigger – a small audience, a large auditorium, maybe a TED talk, a Zoom presentation with thousands of people, me as a solo speaker, me on a panel... until there's no hint of the old reaction left.