



#1 GET MOVING

Exercise. We know it's good for us, but what can you do when the dog eats your gym clothes? **The “Scientific 7-Minute Workout” might be a game changer.** In 12 exercises using your body weight, a chair, and a wall, this amazing workout fulfills the latest rules for high-intensity effort. It combines a long run and a visit to the weight room into about seven minutes of steady discomfort—all of it based on science. The upside: when the seven minutes are over, you're done.

See “Scientific 7-Minute Workout,” p. 4

#2 MANAGE STRESS

None of us can escape stress. The challenge is to manage it. Some stress is okay; it keeps us on our toes. Too much can be toxic; we lose our ability to think straight and our bodies cringe. Believe it or not, something you're doing right now, probably without even thinking about it, is a proven stress reliever: breathing. With three to five minutes a day of **“controlled breathing” exercises**, you can train your body to relax in stressful situations.

See *Controlled Breathing Exercise*, p. 5

#3 READ FOR THE HECK OF IT

Reading is good for us, we know. It builds literacy, opens worlds unlike our own, strengthens the mind, and much more. Reading for school, though, can seem like sour-tasting medicine: you're reading something you didn't pick and you're being graded.

Here's our challenge: Over the course of this coming year, **pick three books that intrigue you, for whatever reason, and just read them for the heck of it.** Ask teachers, friends, a librarian for suggestions. The world is filled with so many great reads: science fiction, fantasy, gothic novels, inspirational biographies, page-turning mysteries, love stories.

#4 EAT SLOW

There was a time when families sat down over dinner with a home-cooked meal. Today, the “sit-down meal” has become endangered species and fast food or takeout has replaced homemade. Meanwhile, we’re all getting fatter. (Researchers calculate that just one meal a week away from home can translate into two extra pounds a year for the average person; the average adult now eats out nearly five times a week.)

Here’s our challenge: **Prepare a home-cooked meal for your family.** (It doesn’t have to be fancy.) Choose a menu and some recipes, buy the ingredients, and roll up your sleeves. Partner with a friend and take turns preparing a real, down-to-earth sit-down meal for the folks with whom you live. A bonus: You may find that you like cooking.

#5 SIGN UP

If you’re one of those people who dislikes group activities and joining “things,” here’s the year to sign up and give some “thing” a try: a sport, music, spoken word, photography, chess, dance, a church group, a community service project . . . Don’t think of it as the choice of a lifetime but as **practice getting out of yourself, doing something new, and joining others.** If you’re already involved in extracurriculars, convince a friend who isn’t to join you in an activity.

#6 GET YOUR COLLEGE GEAR TOGETHER

Whether you come from a family with college graduates or you are the first in your family, the business of making it to college can be daunting. Taking the right courses, managing your GPA, studying for entrance exams, picking colleges, securing financial aid, writing college essays, meeting application deadlines—there’s so, so much to keep in mind.

WKCD has created a planning calendar, with a checklist for every year of high school, that can **help you stay on track and organized.**

Download our grade-by-grade checklists:

http://www.firstinthefamily.org/highschool/Planning_checklists.html

#7 KEEP AT IT

Persistence means that you keep going, even when it’s hard and you feel like quitting. Actor and comedian Will Smith tells it straight. Talent, he says, you have naturally. Skill is only developed by “hours and hours and hours of beating on your craft.” Smith doesn’t consider himself as particularly talented. “Where I excel is sickening, ridiculous work ethic.” Few of us can match Will Smith’s fierce persistence, but we can take small steps.

See exercises for pushing your limits, staying focused, and ending procrastination, p. 6.

#8 CHANGE A HABIT

Many New Year's resolutions involve something you're going to *stop* doing, often a bad habit. If you've ever tried to break a bad habit, though, you know how tough it can be.

Research says the best way to change a habit is, first, to understand its structure: what triggers it and what's the reward. The next step is to replace the bad habit with a good one. It helps to have a friend or relative follow your progress.

See "How to Change a Habit Flowchart," from the bestselling *The Power of Habit* by Charles Duhigg, p. 7. Watch a video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4H0fTwtPLfo>

#9 FIND A CAUSE

As the big national youth website DoSomething.org says, "Apathy sucks." Join over 2.2 million young people taking action. If you want to find a cause or campaign that can make the world a better place—if only, slightly—check out this website and get started.

#10 TAKE A (HEALTHY) RISK

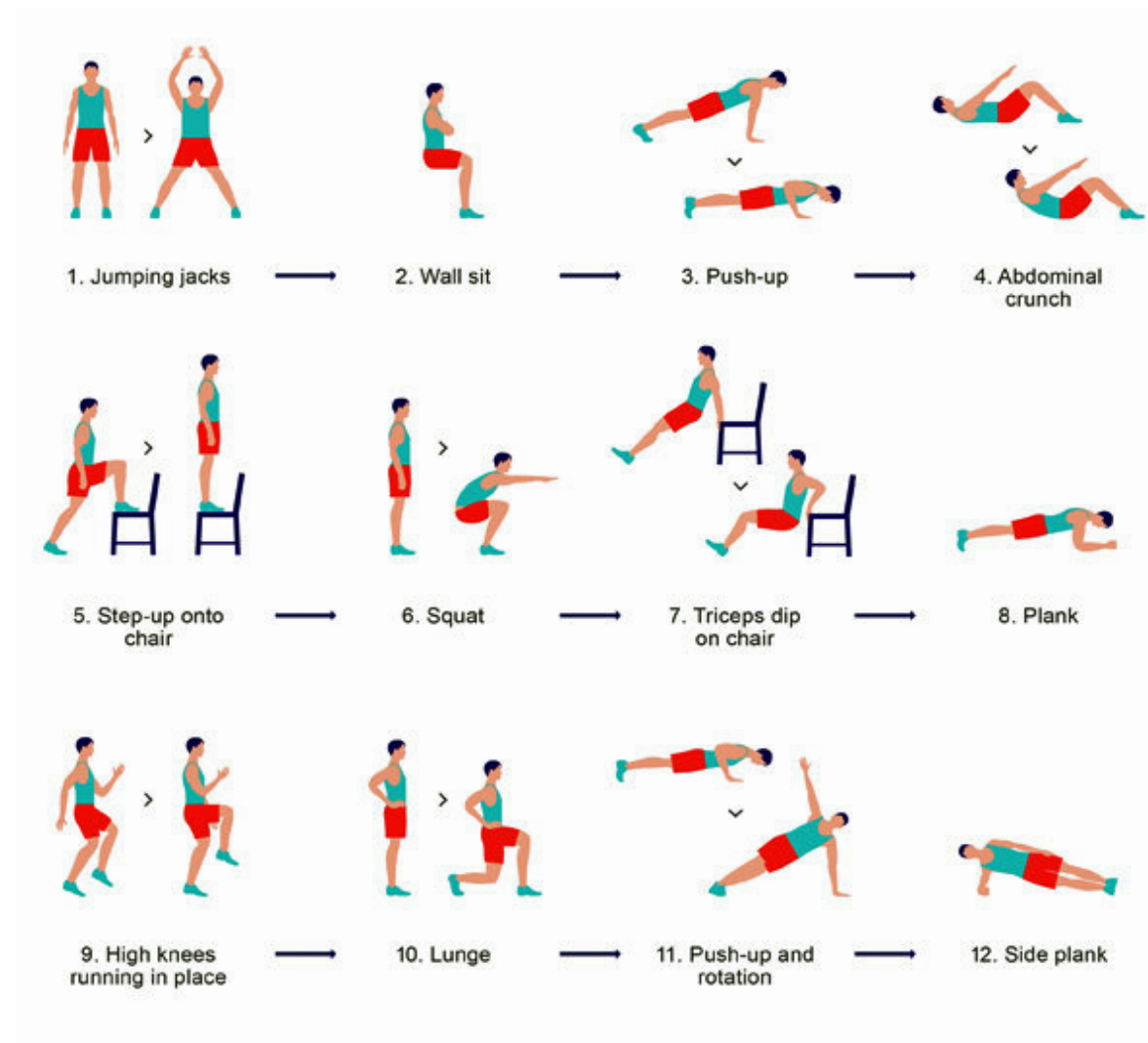
We're used to thinking of risks as bad. Driving without a seatbelt or under the influence are good examples. We know the potential dangers—injury or even death if there's an accident—but we take the chance figuring it won't happen to us, that we *won't* succeed. Good risks are the opposite: We often avoid them because we fear we'll fail, disappointing others and ourselves.

So here's our last challenge: **Take at least one resolution on this list and try it. Give the resolution a chance to create a bit of magic in your life.**

THE SCIENTIFIC 7-MINUTE WORKOUT

(By GRETCHEN REYNOLDS, New York Times, May 9, 2013;

<http://well.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/05/09/the-scientific-7-minute-workout/>)



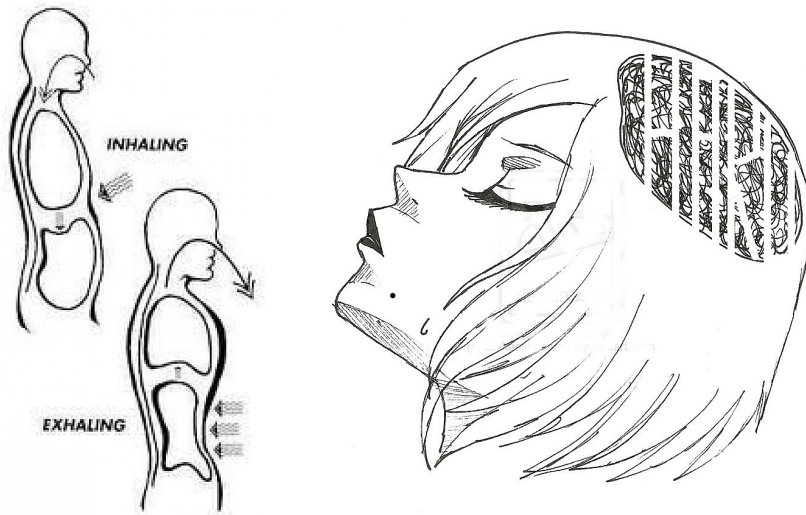
DIRECTIONS

There's growing evidence that high-intensity interval training provides many of the fitness benefits of prolonged endurance training but in much less time.

Interval training, though, requires intervals. The extremely intense activity must be mixed with brief periods of recovery. In "The Scientific 7-Minute Workout," this recovery is provided in part by a 10-second rest between exercises. But it's also accomplished by alternating an exercise that emphasizes the large muscles in the upper body with those in the lower body. During the rest, the unexercised muscles have a moment to recuperate, which makes the order of the exercises important.

The exercises should be performed in rapid succession, allowing 30 seconds for each, while, throughout, the intensity hovers at about an 8 on a discomfort scale of 1 to 10. Those seven minutes should be, in a word, unpleasant. The upside is, after seven minutes, you're done.

CONTROLLED BREATHING



DIRECTIONS

1. Sit upright in a comfortable position.
2. Focus on your present state and existence (this is often termed being "mindful"). Block out intrusive thoughts—the thoughts that interfere with your concentration. You may close your eyes if you wish.
3. Pay attention to your breathing. Inhale slowly through the nose, taking several seconds.
4. Exhale through the mouth, trying to make the exhalation phase last twice as long as the inhalation.
5. Continue this mindful breathing for three to five minutes.

You may also find the following tips helpful:

- Choose a special place where you can sit (or lie down) comfortably and quietly.
- Don't try too hard. That may just cause you to tense up.
- Don't be too passive, either. The key to eliciting the relaxation response lies in shifting your focus from stressors to deeper, calmer rhythms — and having a focal point is essential.
- Try to practice once or twice a day, ideally at the same time, in order to enhance the sense of ritual and establish a habit.

With regular practice, you can train your body to relax in stressful situations.

Anime drawing: shikaeshi-sama.deviantart.com

KEEPING AT IT



THE PERSISTENCE HABIT

- **Measure yourself.** Pick a task like a major homework assignment. Figure out how long you can work effectively. Measure how long it takes before you slow down or give up.
- **Do an extra 20 percent.** When you feel like quitting, go an extra 20 percent. If you've been working hard for an hour and want to stop, try another 15 minutes before taking a break.
- **Run a burnout day.** Try working longer for one day, following it with a shorter day. By stretching your focus for longer periods once in a while, you can boost your persistence for normal days.

FORMING THE FOCUS HABIT

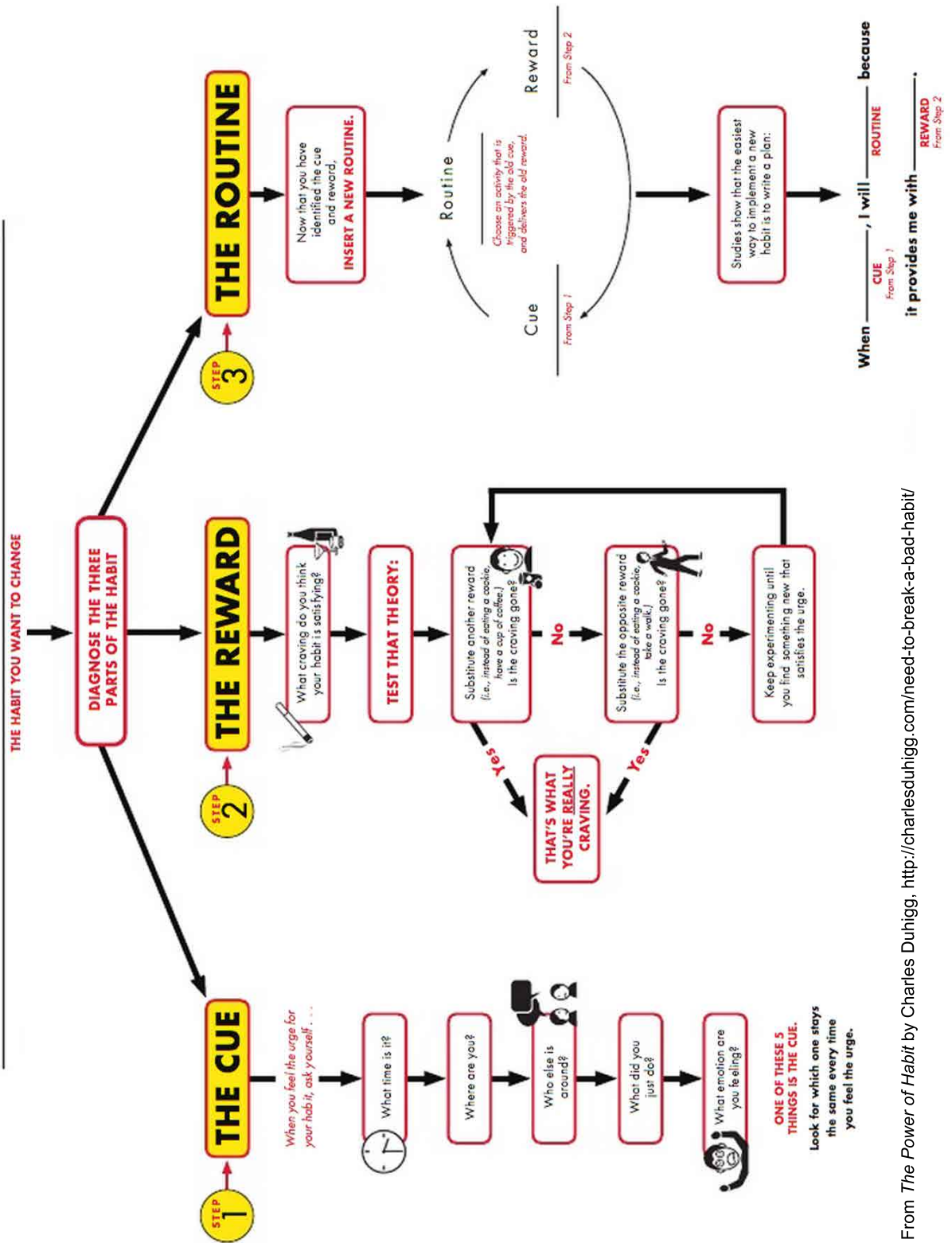
- **Timebox.** Give yourself 60 minutes to work on a particular task, without resting or engaging in any distractions.
- **Accelerate.** It can take anywhere from 10 to 30 minutes to build up a concentrated focus. Give yourself time to accelerate into a focused state.
- **Cut distractions.** Practice the habit of turning off all outside noise: phones, television, chatting with family or friends.

FORMING THE 'DO IT NOW' HABIT

- **Do it now for 30 days.** For the next 30 days, define periods of your day you want to devote to work or personal projects. During those times, remind yourself to "do it now" whenever you feel the urge to procrastinate.

Source: www.lifehack.org. Drawings: (L & R) the-art-of-rgoto.blogspot.com; (C) Trevor Trav at www.deviantart.com

HOW TO CHANGE A HABIT



From *The Power of Habit* by Charles Duhigg, <http://charlesduhigg.com/need-to-break-a-bad-habit/>