

Behavior Change Practices Are Missing The Mark In Three Key Ways

MY FORMULA PROVIDES A SOLUTION

BY YEDDA STANCIL

ABSTRACT

Mindfulness-based behavior change can be distilled down to the formula:

$C=A^3$ (Change = Awakening x Awareness x Availability).

$C=A^3$ encompasses the entire behavior change process in three comprehensive steps.

There's something in your behavior you want to change, right? That's true for practically everyone. But once you've made the decision to change, where do you start? How is holistic, sustainable behavior change really achieved—and is it even possible in the first place?

Let's start with some basics. Our world is filled with people who engage in behaviors that cause undue stressⁱ and even chronic diseaseⁱⁱ. Stress studies produce statistics like 77 percent of people regularly experience physical symptoms caused by stress, 73 percent of people regularly experience psychological symptoms caused by stress, and 33 percent of people report living with extreme anxiety. When it comes to health risk behaviors, studies show that 47 percent of US adults have at least one significant risk factor for heart disease or stroke, including uncontrolled high blood pressure, uncontrolled high LDL cholesterol, or are current smokers. Drinking too much alcohol is responsible for 88,000 deaths each year. And, as of a decade ago, more than half (52 percent) of adults aged 18 years or older did not meet recommendations for aerobic exercise or physical activity. Health risk behaviors like lack of exercise or physical activity, poor nutrition, tobacco use, and drinking too much alcohol cause so much illness, suffering, and early death related to chronic diseases and conditions.

These behaviors come at a cost—and it amounts to more than just lives. There are dollar amounts behind each health risk behaviorⁱⁱⁱ, and the numbers are staggering. For example, as of 2019, 90 percent of the nation's \$3.3 trillion in annual health care expenditures are for people with chronic and mental health conditions. Heart disease and stroke cost the US health care system \$199 billion per year and an additional \$131 billion in lost job productivity. Obesity costs the US health care system \$147 billion a year, and as of 2006, annual medical costs for people who were obese were \$1,429 higher than those for people of average weight.

The behaviors that lead to these outcomes are all behaviors you can change. If you exhibit one or more of these behaviors—or others—you've probably even thought about making a change. But they persist in causing poor health and chronic disease because most of us are missing some key aspects of the behavior change process.

But I get it—you're busy. You want quick answers. You've thought about making a change in your life long enough, and you just want someone to give you the one failsafe key to accomplishing it.

$C=A^3$ is what you're looking for.

Statistics show that changing behavior is more difficult than changing your religion. (Encouraging, I know.) Some studies on the neurobiology of behavior change demonstrate that one reason it's so hard to change a habit is that if you don't act on the desired shift within five seconds of thinking about it^{iv}, the brain begins to form arguments for why NOT to make a change. It's like a biological emergency break, but one that doesn't always serve you.

Every day, habits will dictate an average of 40-45 percent of what someone does^v. But most of the time, we are unaware of these habits and how and why they became habits in the first place. This is called a "habit loop," and by identifying yours, you'll be able to create new routines that will lead to new, healthier habits.

A habit loop works like this: You sense you're craving something. Typically, that craving is for a feeling like happiness or fulfillment, though it often comes disguised as the impulse to overeat, over-imbibe, overwork, or over-spend. That impulse produces a behavior—your habit.

When it comes to habits, most people only think of these two parts of the equation: The craving or impulse and the behavior that attempts to satisfy it. But what if I told you the most critically important part of understanding any habit and being able to change its pattern comes before you're even aware of your impulse in the first place?

The most essential component of any habit loop (your biological trigger-reward response) is the stimulus that cues your impulse in the first place. That cue is the thing that happens before the trigger. But you cannot understand what that cue is from your conscious mind. In fact, it's often your conscious mind that protects you from seeing your triggers and the resulting impulses in the first place.

There are several assumptions that people make regarding the process and motivations for changing behavior^{vi}. The first is the myth that if you educate yourself on why a behavior is unhealthy, you will change it. But time and again, studies show this is simply not true. Another is that you simply need to change your attitude—if you change your mindset, you can change your behavior. If you've ever tried to change a habit by changing your feelings about it, you know that tactic never works for long. Finally, another misconception about behavior change that people fall prey to is the idea that reward-based motivations will lead to sustainable change. But you'll always go back to the old, patterned behavior the minute the reward runs out.

Actual behavior change requires addressing each habit and behavior on a subconscious level.

That's what Change = Awakening x Awareness x Availability solves for.

So, let's break this formula down.

The first step in the behavior change process is **awakening**. As a society, we refuse to wake up. We numb the bad—but when we numb the bad, we numb the good too. Awakening is messy. But you cannot change a behavior until you truly awaken to the fact that something is not working in your life, and you've avoided that suffering instead of staring it in the face. Believe it or not, awakening to the fact that you do not want to suffer anymore is the hardest part of behavior change. It requires you to consider the idea that, perhaps, all of the things that life brings to you are working for you rather than against you.

Once you've done the hard work of awakening, **awareness** is the next step in the behavior change process. You'll discover, once you're awake, that you begin to look at your life and the world around you with fresh eyes—it's like life is in technicolor. Both the struggles and the beauty appear in sharp relief. Using mindfulness and meditation, you begin to cultivate and expand your window of awareness.

Finally, the last step in behavior change is **availability**. By staying awake and expanding the awareness that you've built, you'll discover life offers you different choices of behavior than you may have been selecting

from before. In a place of availability, you can experiment and repattern lifelong behaviors. Every day becomes a new opportunity to experiment, discover new options, and show up to your life in a creative way. If you continue showing up and being available, you'll ultimately foster a calm, centered sense of grounding from which you can offer the world more than you ever thought possible.

The bottom line is *there's a process to behavior change*. The solution is not out in the world but instead inside your ability to awaken, become aware, and remain available. These three steps— $C=A^3$ —are the key to learning or re-learning how you create your behaviors and how to let go of those that are no longer serving you.

So, what can you expect when you implement this formula in your own life?^{vii} Consider the happiness studies currently being conducted at Harvard University. Researchers compiled the results of filling your life with healthy behaviors. They include being 39percent more likely to live to age ninety-four, experiencing 3 times more creativity and 31percent more productivity, feeling 10 times more engaged in daily life while experiencing 25 percent less fatigue, and more.

All by changing unhealthy behaviors to operate from healthy ones.

New behaviors lead to discovering new truths, which requires a consciously awakened, aware, and available connection to something greater than yourself. This connection makes you a game-changer.

Research on global game-changers demonstrates that three things happen when you reach high levels of awakening and awareness. The first is you become independent of the opinions of others and are a self-thinker who trusts your gut and intuition. You also become detached from outcomes and stay in the process of growth and evolution, knowing how to quiet your fear-driven voices. You have let go of your limiting beliefs and aren't worried about what is coming next because you're fully immersed in the present moment. Finally, you have no investment in power or control over others and love being on purpose.

I believe that everybody, deep in their heart, would love to be able to summon all these things within themselves. One key differentiator of my coaching is my signature blend of leadership, mindfulness, and personal development skills uniquely designed to guide leaders in living $C=A^3$ every day of their lives. Through years of work and study, I've found that the ego is our greatest barrier to doing this work. Realizing leaders need an invitation to tell their egos to "shut up and sit," I created a comprehensive coaching manual for leadership development. It's built on a foundation of personal development and offers a unique "inner MBA" coaching process designed to encourage kind, compassionate, consciously connected leadership by helping you mindfully Master your Behaviors and Aspirations.

Are you ready to roll up your sleeves and put his equation into action in your life? Check out the resources below.

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<https://www.suascommunity.com>

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<https://yeddastancil.com/go-all-in/>

Inquire about my Conscious Consulting for Corporations:

<https://yeddastancil.com/consulting/>

SOURCES

i Daily Life

<https://www.stress.org/daily-life>

ii Health and Economic Costs Of Chronic Disease | Cdc

<https://www.cdc.gov/chronicdisease/about/costs/index.htm>

iii Health and Economic Costs Of Chronic Disease | Cdc

<https://www.cdc.gov/chronicdisease/about/costs/index.htm>

iv The 5 Second Rule

<https://melrobbins.com/blog/the-5-second-rule/>

v How we form habits, change existing ones

<https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2014/08/140808111931.htm>

vi Three Myths Of Behavior Change - What You Think You Know That You Don't: Jeni Cross At Tedxcsu

TEDx Talks - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l5d8GW6GdR0>

vii A 30-year Harvard Study Reveals the 5 Simple Habits That May Prolong Your Life By 10 Years or More

Johnhall - <https://www.cnbc.com/2019/04/09/harvard-study-says-these-5-habits-may-help-you-live-10-years-longer.html>

YEDDA L. STANCIL, MBA

RICHMOND, VA • STANCILYEDDA@GMAIL.COM • WWW.LINKEDIN.COM/IN/YEDDASTANCIL

804.405.4358 • WWW.YEDDASTANCIL.COM