

# Routine Creates Freedom!

Compiled by: Abhay B. Joshi (abjoshi@yahoo.com)

Note: As I always maintain, everything I say below is only my opinion, which is based on my own experiences and observations. – Swami Devanand

It is a common belief among people (especially young ones) that any sort of “routine” is boring and dull; it is antithetical to “freedom” and “adventure”.

After some thought and analysis, I have come to believe that “routine” is actually a good thing, because it in fact *creates* opportunities for freedom and adventure.

How is that? I think it depends on how you define “routine”.

A routine basically consists of habits that take care of all the *mundane* but *essential* requirements of your life. A daily exercise, for example, takes care of the need to stay fit. It may also include activities that you think are *good* for you – for instance reading a few pages of a book every day.

Once you define such a routine and dedicate the required amount of time and energy to it, you become *free* to pursue any adventure in the remaining time and energy. And that freedom is unencumbered by mundane worries and practical matters – precisely because they are all already taken care of by your “routine”!

So, the key, as you can see, is to set up your routine carefully.

## Routine is a collection of habits!

Humans are intelligent beings - we possess highly developed brains. Using the ‘computer’ metaphor, we can say that the brain does all the “soft” work for us, while the body does all the “hard” work.

Brain’s capabilities are numerous, but, for the sake of this discussion, let’s divide them into two types: One type uses emotions, impulses, intuition – which we will refer to as “Feelings”. And the other type uses logic, intelligence, analytical ability, reasoning, etc. – we will call this simply as “Logic”.

When you use “Logic” you benefit immensely, because the brain is capable of analyzing difficult conundrums and solving complex problems for us. But, the reality is that most of our actions are driven by “feelings”.

Consider an example. “Logic” informs us that doing physical exercise is a good thing for our bodies. And yet, a simple feeling called “lethargy” prevents many people from following that sound advice! To make matters worse, “Logic” usually fails to thwart your emotions! If you try to reason with “lethargy” the benefits of exercise every morning, you will always fail!

That’s where “habit” comes to rescue! Habit is a way to overcome the “unreasonable” dominance of feelings in our lives! If you develop a habit of exercising, the feeling of lethargy doesn’t even get a chance to interfere.

So, that is the trick: whenever your “Logic” informs you that something is good for you, look for a way to make it a habit. Sensible and reasonably intelligent people develop habits to ensure that they are able to do all the good things without risking disruption by our whims, moods, or negative emotions.

What’s a habit? It is a mechanical (un-feeling) way of doing something – your feelings don’t get a chance to interfere, because you do not think, consider pros and cons, or convince yourself every time about the benefits! You simply do it!

For example, I am convinced that reading books is a good thing, and so, I have developed the habit of reading a few pages every night before going to sleep.

Routine consisting of such carefully designed habits is certain to get important things done and create long-lasting and unfettered freedom in your life!

### **How do we develop habits?**

Most of us have no trouble understanding and accepting what is good for us. For instance, no one would argue with the benefits of exercise. The main challenge is turning that desire into a habit.

The first step in this endeavor is to ensure you really believe that that habit is good for you. Getting inspired temporarily, for example, after listening to a particularly motivating speech, is not enough. You need to ask yourself a number of times and check if you really want to do that thing.

Changing or modifying your environment so that it becomes conducive to your new habit is important. If you want to read books every day, having books around you would obviously help. If you think you get distracted easily, removing the sources of distraction is necessary.

Next, look for ways to make the new habit interesting. Running for 10 minutes as part of your exercise can quickly become boring. But, if you listen to an audiobook while running, or watch a video while doing your treadmill, suddenly the boredom is taken care of.

Finally, focus on “regularity” more than “rigor” when you are building a new habit. Running just for 1 minute is not a great exercise, but you could start that way, and make sure you do it regularly without fail, say for a couple of weeks or a month, until you are sure you won’t skip. Then, you could increase it to 3 minutes and then to 5 and so on. Habits die or survive on the “regularity” aspect – which must be your primary focus. A lot of people get so inspired with some new idea they want to pursue, that they go overboard in their first attempt and then get exhausted. The result is it becomes a passing fad.

*Last updated: 28 November 2017*