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*“Motivation is what gets you started. Habit is what keeps you going.”*  
~ Jim Ryun

*“We are what we repeatedly do.”*  
~ Aristotle

## ***New Year, New Beginnings, New Habits***

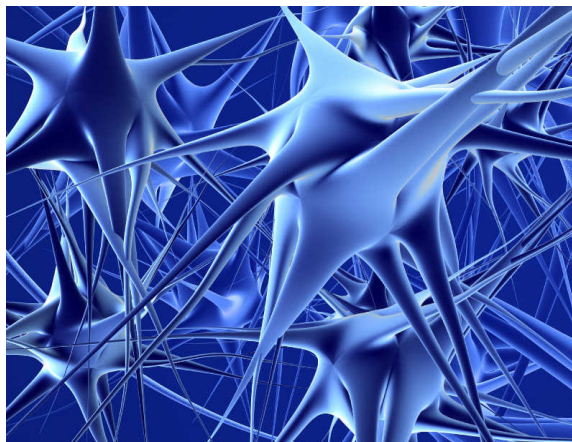
There is something about the Fall season that has always excited me. Perhaps it is memories of going back-to-school shopping and getting ready for another school year. Somehow, I have not out-grown that excitement about September and it always feels more like a ‘new year’ to me than January 1st.

Although the days of preparing to go back to school are long gone, I have found it useful to take advantage of the energy around this time of year to look ahead and make plans for the coming months.

As you make plans and set new goals for the coming year, you may realize that to achieve these goals you will need to change some of your existing behaviours and activities. For some people, this idea of change can be intimidating, so I want to share with you a ‘brain-based’ view of learning that may help you re-frame the process of change.

Our brains are made up of billions of neurons, which are tiny nerve cells that connect and communicate with other neurons. These neurons connect together to make

networks or ‘neuronets’. It is through these connections that the most basic functions are learned and carried out. In a very simple sense, every time a new thought, skill, or activity is learned, it is represented by a brand new neuronet in your brain.



The more frequently a thought, skill, or activity is carried out, the stronger the connections become in the neuronet. Eventually, this new learning becomes engrained in the way we do things, and the thought or activity becomes a *habit*.

On a very basic level, nearly everything we do on a daily basis is habitual. Think about your own daily routine: from the time you get up in the morning, to what you eat for breakfast, to how you get ready for work. For most

people these activities change very little from day to day.

The key to making successful changes is to use the power of these habitual patterns to create responses that will move you closer to your goals. When thoughts and

actions become a regular part of our routine, they become easy for us to do without even thinking about them.

In addition, just as easily as the brain forms these new connections and neuronets, the connections can also begin to

disappear if a particular thought or action is not used on a regular basis. The connections between the neurons will become weaker until the pattern is no longer a habit.

A very simple example of this is when you reorganize your office and move your phone to a new location. The first few times the phone rings, you may automatically reach toward the spot where it used to be. However, over time, new connections will form among the (cont'd on pg 2)

## ~ Thanks for your support!!! ~

As many of you know, I took part in the 2007 Weekend to End Breast Cancer (WEBC) at the beginning of September. The WEBC is a 60-km walk to raise money for Breast Cancer research and treatment in Canada. Thanks to your generous support, my walking partner and I raised \$5860 for this important cause.

What an incredible experience! There were over 5,300 people walking together in this event, raising more than \$13.2 million in net proceeds. The energy and support from people along the way were fantastic and it was amazing to see the challenges that some of the walkers had overcome to participate in, and finish, the walk. It made me so thankful for all the blessings in my life.

*Thank you again for your tremendous encouragement and support!*

### *New Year, New Beginnings, New Habits (cont'd from page 1)*

neurons in your brain and it will become automatic to reach for the phone in its new location.

Change only becomes difficult when we don't see our routine thoughts and actions for what they are: *just habits that can be changed*. It is helpful when we want to change our existing actions to more positive ones to keep this idea in mind. Anything you can do to interrupt the 'neural circuitry' will help to disconnect those old patterns and begin fresh, positive ones.

So, are you wondering how creating new habits can help you reach your goals for this 'new year'? If you are ready to start making some positive changes in your life to become more productive and successful, join me in this month's *Live Your Strengths Challenge*!



## *Live Your Strengths Monthly Challenge*

As you look ahead to the coming year, examine your goals and determine what are the habits (either daily or weekly) you must develop to accomplish these goals.

These habits might include developing practical systems such as:

- Setting up a system to effectively record details about new prospects and clients
- Decluttering your office space to ensure optimal productivity
- Adjusting your work schedule to allow time to go to the gym every day at lunch

These habits may also include creating internal habits such as:

- Paying close attention to your 'self-talk' and replacing negative thoughts, words and phrases with more positive, beneficial ones
- Setting aside 5 minutes each day to visualize your goals

- Creating space in your schedule every evening to plan and prioritize the next day's activities

Not sure what habits would most positively impact your life? Find someone who has successfully achieved the goals you are working towards and find out what they do consistently that contributes to their success. These same habits may also work for you.

As you commit to these new, positive thoughts and behaviours, be aware that you may occasionally 'relapse' into your old habitual patterns. This is a normal part of the change process and can be viewed as a reinforcement of the tremendous power of the brain to form and sustain thoughts and actions. *So, don't give up!*

Could you use some guidance with this month's challenge? Call Denise for a free 30-minute coaching session. Start living *your* strengths!

*"Bad habits are like chains that are too light to feel until they are too heavy to carry."*  
~ Warren Buffet

*"Habit is either the best of servants or the worst of masters."*  
~ Nathaniel Emmons

*Do you have suggestions for upcoming newsletters or success stories you want to share?  
Contact Denise [denise@insearchofexcellence.ca](mailto:denise@insearchofexcellence.ca)*