

Progression Activities

Exercise 1

In preparation for your final essay progression(!), **make a list of 3 possible daily behavioral changes you are willing to attempt for the final weeks of the semester.** This could be anything from limiting time on social media for four weeks, to taking a walk for the sake of walking once a day for four weeks, to getting eight hours of sleep a night for four weeks, to eating one vegan meal a day for four weeks, etc.

*Beware of coming up with an abstract goal instead of a habit. For example, "to stop procrastinating" is a larger goal, made up of many smaller habits. In that case, what would be a smaller daily habit change you could make in support of that larger goal?

The goal for this assignment is to make a list of options for a daily habit you can talk through with a partner in class to decide what will not only be possible to do, but also personally valuable for you to do with the rest of our time this semester. Consider bad habits you have been wanting to break but have not been able to muster the courage or energy to attempt before. Consider good habits you would like to form for yourself (like taking the stairs instead of the elevator, for instance!).

This final essay is about you, to give you a chance to try out a little bit of an experiment, to learn more about your own values, automaticity, and the socio-cultural forces at work in your life that perhaps pull more strings on your daily behavioral choices than you are aware of, so that you can be more in control of becoming the kind person you want to be!

[Author's note: Students are also asked to listen to a *Hidden Brain* podcast, "Creatures of Habit", in which host Shankar Vedantam talks with psychologist Wendy Wood to debunk various myths around habit-building and provide methods students and I reference for the habit-building process itself.]

Exercise 2

Having made a choice of what habit you will choose from your peer conversations, **begin your habit and observe what happens!**

Observation log:

Maintain a daily observation log in which you write to reflect on what you've observed each day by way of challenges, ease, discomfort, joy, and suffering since you've started your new habit.

Write to reflect as much as you can, as these observations are invaluable to guiding your research and essay intention and some of these observations will make their way into your formal essay as evidence.

Be honest in your log as well. The goal for this assignment is not so much about being "successful" in forming a new habit as it is about examining the personal, social and cultural forces at work that impact the ease of forming this habit you are attempting to adopt. If you "fail" to perform your habit for a day, that's ok! Write to reflect on what happened. What caused you to miss a day? Then, try again the next day to resume your new habit.

Some questions/suggestions inspired by the “Creatures of Habit” podcast to help you do this:

How do you imagine you can reduce whatever “friction” is getting in your way and set yourself up for success?

What “short-term rewards” can you establish for yourself to persist with this habit?

What “friction” or “mental blinders” can you introduce to reinforce the habit you want to establish?

How could you “stack” the new habit you want to make onto a pre-existing habit?

What “cues” or “triggers” are associated with the bad habit you want to break?

How could you establish a “cue” to engage your new good habit?

***It is important to continue to update and maintain this observation log daily (even if it's just a couple of sentences) for the duration of the writing process for this essay, even once we begin drafting.** The more you document about your experience, the more material you will have to work with when the time comes to start writing your essay! Stay open to how your experience changes over time as you attempt to maintain your habit and the luster of newness wears off.

Exercise 3

It's been a week since you began your habit challenge. **Ideally, you have been making daily notes to your observation log that you can work with.**

1. **Write to reflect** on your experiences and observations so far that are guiding the essay you are imagining writing at this point, including any challenges or surprises you have encountered so far in **1-2 paragraphs**. What genuine questions are guiding your research?
2. Then, **conduct research for 3-4 academically verified sources** to see if your challenge and observational insights are part of a larger, well known phenomenon that you are experiencing (e.g. if my habit challenge was to not be on my phone between 1pm and

7pm, and I notice that I feel “[phantom vibrations](#)” from my cell phone during that time, I can find a wealth of information about that phenomenon of feeling like my phone is buzzing, when it is actually silenced!). For your research, you might also consider: is the habit you chose to attempt a well-documented social concern (e.g. cell phone addiction)? Explore what documented research has been conducted on what you’ve chosen to experiment with to help contextualize your observational insights about your experiences. You are not alone in the struggles you are encountering! Your struggle becomes a point of relation to other writers and your readers.

Try to locate 3-4 sources that will help you explore a variety of observations you have been making. For each source you locate, please provide the following information:

- a. The **Title** of the source, **Author/Speaker/Director** of the source, **Year** of publication, the **Genre** (e.g. essay, documentary, podcast, etc.), and **url** link for each source
- b. What the **essential purpose/argument/idea** of the source is (3-4 sentences per source)
- c. **How you intend to engage the source** in your own essay (e.g. as an Exhibit, as a Theory, in conversation with another source, etc.) **and how it relates to your other sources** (3-4 sentences per source)

1.	Title	Author/Speaker/Director	Genre	Year	Stable URL
a.					
b. Essential purpose/ argument/ idea					
c. How you intend to engage the source + how it relates to yourself and your other sources					