



OLD HABITS DIE HARD

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I am a helpless creature of habit. If there is somebody out there who can sufficiently prove that he is not so, then he deserves an award of some kind. Humans are helpless creatures who easily succumb to well-formed and deeply-entrenched habits that refuse to die readily. We virtually spend every waking and slumbering hour under the humongous influences of the habits we internalize, or externalize for that matter.

Fortunately, some habits are great to have.

I admire those who spend their first wakeful moments steeped in early morning prayer. Those people genuinely want to start their day right, so what better way to do so than to immerse oneself deep in communication with the Almighty? Such transcendental habits certainly amount to greater assurances of daily grace. While I spend my first wakeful seconds shuffling to the kitchen, I can only manage a thank you for having woken up to another fresh day. So my day begins.

Unfortunately, there are habits that can be classified as downright crazy.

My children have often remarked that I am obsessive-compulsive. This type of behavior makes those afflicted with it as having a sometimes extreme “mental and interpersonal control at the expense of flexibility, openness, and efficiency”. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Obsessive%E2%80%93compulsive_personality_disorder) Being thus, I have the habit of checking more than once if I’d turned off the cooking gas tank, made the bed, shut off the lights in the room, and many such repetitive actions. I also get mad when other people in the house fail to put back something they take to its proper place. It pisses me off when anybody in the household sits down on the sofa and doesn’t fix the cover as I had, or when somebody leaves a spot on the floor that will require another buffing. Guests are exempt, but household members have no excuse whatsoever.

It had been even worse before my sickness last January. I am proud to say that the degree of my obsessive-compulsive behavior has lessened somehow since then. I recognize now when my frail constitution tells me to take it easier. Oh, I still do the habit of checking more than once on things I have already done prior, but my children do not have to be too worried about not keeping things messy? I just tell them to fix up whatever they had messed up. It’s kind of like teaching them how difficult house work can be if done repeatedly and at invariable times of the day.

Most old habits die hard. Let us strive to have habits like prayerfulness and keen listening as part of our daily living and interactions. Shove the undesirable ones that translate to personality disorders out the door, where they belong.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. What good habits do you believe you possess? Why do you classify them as good ones?
2. What bad habits do you believe you have? Why do you consider them bad?
3. Why is it difficult to let go of any habit?
4. How are habits formed? Can we actually learn habits from other people?
5. What good habits do you wish you had? Why do you want to have such habits?