

[IMAGE]

Change Up Your Routine

By Perry Nickelston, DC, FMS, SFMA

Rut [ruht]: noun, *a fixed or established mode of procedure or course of life, usually dull or unpromising.*

Does this sound like your life? Are stuck in a rut, desperate to find a way to break free of your boring routine? Well, it's time to start adding some much-needed spice to your life. So often we feel helpless and frustrated with the status quo of everyday living. Going through the motions and feeling a lack of control in your life can be disheartening. The good news is that you are in 100 percent total control. By taking responsibility for the decisions you make and the feelings you choose to respond with during any given situation, *you* hold the key to change.

Rule 1: Change Your Mindset

Many of the things you want to do, but are hesitant to do, lie just outside your comfort zone. We grow when we feel uncomfortable and challenged. Status quo may be safe, but it is also boring! The ability to take risks and open up your mind to new possibilities can be the most empowering combination for change you will ever learn. No risk, no nothing! Abraham Lincoln once said, "People are about as happy as they make up their own minds to be." Oh, how true that is. The next time you are in a situation in which you feel overwhelmed, anxious, angry, irritated or experience negative emotions, take back control of how you feel. Do not fall into the trap of instantly *reacting* to situations in your life; begin *responding*. At first glance, these words may appear to be the same, but they are vastly different. Reacting is a primal instinct attached with intense emotion; responding is a thought-controlled, principle-centered decision. So the foundational step in changing your routine comes from adjusting your thought process. Now let's get into some action steps for change. To help get you started in the mindset of change, here are some small, powerful ideas to kiss that rut goodbye.

Rule 2: Feed Fitness

Change Up Your Routine - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark The mind-body connection is undeniable. How you feel is directly related to how well you take care of your body. Exercise can be a love-hate relationship if you do it the wrong way. It does not take much effort to make a positive impact on

your body. If you are not currently exercising, check out a local fitness club. The very act of joining and spending just 30 minutes or so four times a week, investing in yourself, will suppress that rut. If you are exercising on a regular basis, change up your routine by doing exercises you have never done before. Take a kick-boxing class, yoga, Pilates, weight-lifting, or begin training with a workout partner.

One of the best ways to add excitement to your workout is by training in different gyms. Drop by several fitness spots and try a workout session on new equipment in a fresh environment. (Most gyms are more than happy to let you try out their facilities with a complimentary workout pass, and your current gym chain likely has multiple locations in your area.) Who knows, you just might like the new place better than your current gym, and you will have the added benefit of meeting new people.

Rule 3: Explore New Ideas

Do you have a hobby you are passionate about? Would you like to share that passion with others? Do you want to start a new hobby? Then do it. For example, visit Meetup.com, a wonderful Web site where you can find like-minded individuals who are passionate about the things you love. Find locations in your area of groups and clubs related to just about any subject you can imagine. One of the most exciting parts about Meetup is that you can venture out into hobbies, topics or subjects that you may have been interested in learning more about, but did not know where to begin. This is an opportunity to meet new people and form friendships with people who share common interests.

Rule 4: Control the Clock

Change your normal routine of going to bed and waking up. Choose to stay up longer or wake up earlier to invest time in yourself. Take some much needed *me time*, free from interruptions of family, friends, roommates, television and the overall white noise of daily living. Take this opportunity to read a good book, listen to music, write in a journal, focus on your goals and map out your activities for the day. This is a time period with no pressure, deadlines, anxiety, or interference from anything or anyone. Make better use of your time and devote energy to improving yourself. When was the last occasion you had an hour to yourself without obligations? You can control how you spend this time. Feeling a sense of control over our lives fosters self-empowerment, self-reliance and self-confidence. What better way to control your life than by controlling your time?

Rule 5: Make Your Own Map

Do you ever find yourself sitting in your car at your final destination and wondering how in the world you got there? You can't remember anything; it's like you were on autopilot the entire trip. Normal routines get ingrained in your brain, to the point that every stop and turn is mindless. This is the epitome of ritual rut! You go from home to work and then work to home, making ceremonial stops along the way. How about changing up that boredom and choosing an alternate route? Make a left instead of a right, take a different highway, choose a more scenic route, go straight instead of turning, be creative and become your own GPS. If you have an actual GPS in your car, type in "alternate route" as an option and let the GPS decide for you. The idea is to change it up and let your mind capture the new surroundings along your new journey.

Rule 6: Just Say Yes

Whenever you feel like saying "no" to something or someone, just decide to say yes! Jim Carrey made a movie several years ago called "Yes Man." The movie's premise revolved around a guy who was stuck in a rut; his life was boring and humdrum with a set routine every day. He always said no whenever someone asked him to go out and do something fun or different. One day, after seeing a motivational speaker, he decided to start saying yes to everything and his world transformed. New experiences, new people and exciting moments began occurring in his life.

When we say no, it is usually because something is pushing us outside of our comfort zone. We tend to pull back into our zone because of an underlying sense of fear. Face the fear and do it anyway. Don't really want to go out on that date? Say yes. Don't want to go to the office party? Say yes. Don't want to volunteer for that project at work? Say yes. Don't want to go on that diet? Say yes. Let the transformation begin! In most cases, you'll probably say to yourself, *I can't believe I almost didn't do that.*

Rule 7: Volunteer

The act of volunteering your time, energy, expertise, companionship, friendship and energy to helping others will change you forever! By taking attention off yourself and devoting it to others, you will automatically feel more happiness and less stagnation. People often feel they have limited time in their own lives and that finding more time for volunteering is impossible. Yes, our lives can certainly be crazy and hectic in this fast-paced society. Everyone is forever on the go, being pulled in a million different directions. But if you take the opportunity to really look at how you spend your days, you will find many opportunities

to replace trivial wasted moments.

How often do you sit in front of the television every week? The average American watches three hours of television per day! What a waste. Invest that time in helping others. Search for a national or local organization and discover how you can become involved, even if it's only for one hour a week. Transform yourself and improve the world in the process. Can there be any greater gift than that?

Rule 8: Try a Change of Taste

The simple act of changing your food selections can bust your rut. Do you always order the same thing off a menu? Well, stop doing that! Go for something completely different and make a 180-degree turn in your choices. Try eating ethnic foods for a change of taste. Visit an ethnic restaurant and experience the flavor of other cultures. Visit the worlds of Greece, Thailand, India, Middle East, Europe, China and Mexico, to name a few. Wake up those taste buds and spice up your palate.

Food is an emotional experience. How many moments of our lives are spent with others around the dinner table? It's how we socialize and foster relationships. So many new relationships lie in wait from the people you will meet in the "New World" restaurant tour. Change up your menu at work and home, too. Choose different foods for breakfast and dinner. If you go out to lunch with colleagues at work, pick a different venue every few days.

If you want to make over your life, start with a few little changes and work your way to bigger ones. A primary reason people fail in their quest for lasting change is that they alter too many things at once. In their zest for getting out of a rut, they alter everything and it ends up being an overload. Slow and steady wins the race. Small adjustments in your routine can have enormous impact on how you feel. Have you ever had a small pebble stuck in your shoe? Did it hurt every time you took a step? To get rid of the pain, you simply take the pebble out of your shoe. Now take control and remove the small pebbles from your life. Small is big.

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