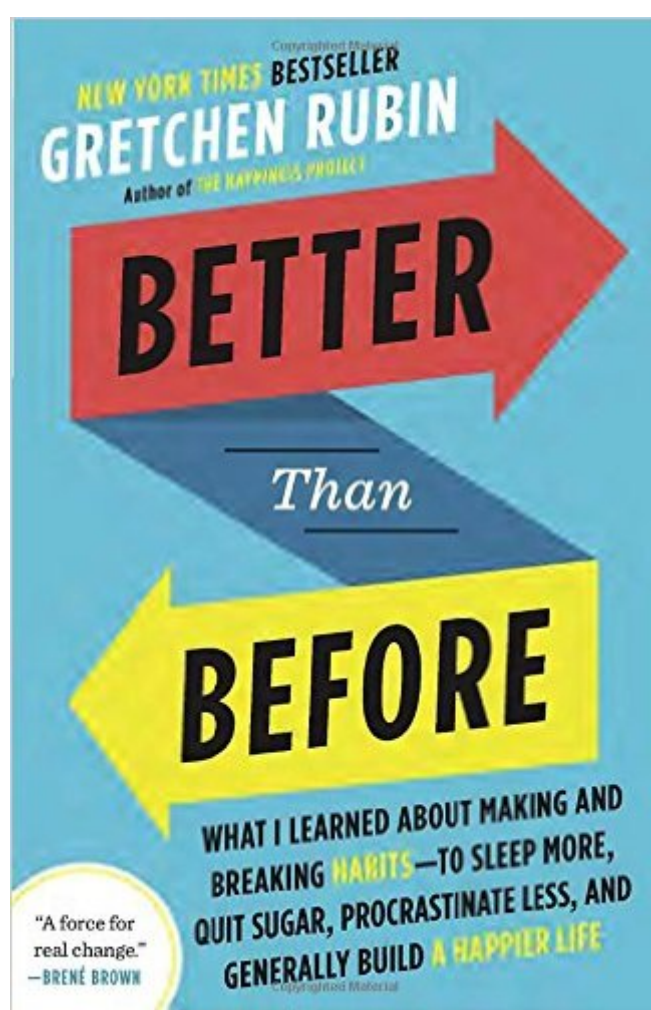


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# Better Than Before: What I Learned About Making And Breaking Habits--to Sleep More, Quit Sugar, Procrastinate Less, And Generally Build A Happier Life



## Synopsis

New York Times Bestseller Washington Post Bestseller **Â** The author of the blockbuster **Â** New York Times **Â** bestsellers, **Â** The Happiness Project **Â** and **Â** Happier at Home, **Â** tackles the critical question: **Â** How do we change? **Â** **Â** Gretchen Rubin's answer: through habits. Habits are the invisible architecture of everyday life. **Â** It takes work to make a habit, but once that habit is set, we can harness the energy of habits to build happier, stronger, more productive lives. **Â** So if habits are a key to change, then what we really need to know is: How do we change our habits? **Â** Better than Before answers that question. It presents a practical, concrete framework to allow readers to understand their habits **Â** and to change them for good. Infused with Rubin **Â** 's compelling voice, rigorous research, and easy humor, and packed with vivid stories of lives transformed, Better than Before explains the (sometimes counter-intuitive) core principles of habit formation. **Â** Along the way, Rubin uses herself as guinea pig, tests her theories on family and friends, and answers readers **Â** ' most pressing questions **Â** "oddly, questions that other writers and researchers tend to ignore: **Â** **Â** Why do I find it tough to create a habit for something I **Â** love **Â** to do? **Â** **Â** Sometimes I can change a habit overnight, and sometimes I can **Â** 't change a habit, no matter how hard I try. Why? **Â** **Â** How quickly can I change a habit? **Â** **Â** What can I do to make sure I stick to a new habit? **Â** **Â** How can I help someone else change a habit? **Â** **Â** Why can I keep habits that benefit others, but can **Â** 't make habits that are just for me? Whether readers want to get more sleep, stop checking their devices, maintain a healthy weight, or finish an important project, habits make **Â** change possible. Reading just a few chapters of Better Than Before will make readers eager to start work on their own habits **Â** "even before they **Â** 've finished the book. From the Hardcover edition.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I guess I am a sucker for books on habits, because all of a sudden I realized I've read a lot of them. This one is unique - I wouldn't say its the best for actually forming habits, but there are plenty of valuable insights here that make it well worth the read. And its might be the first one that I recommend to anyone else who asks, because it is very accessible and relatable. The author strikes a perfect balance of information and anecdote, and you will learn a lot without even realizing it.

Things I Loved About This Book:

- \* The 4 Tendencies: For most of this book, I thought these were not too impressive - I felt like all of them fit me somewhat. However, by the end of the book, I realized just how helpful they were. The quiz at the end to determine which tendency you fall in is very helpful, and you might want to skip ahead after the first chapter if you aren't sure what category you fall in. (I'm a questioner).
- \* Habits are different for different people. Rubin is the first author I've read who captures this concept well, and it makes complete sense once its presented. I have a 'lightning bolt' habit approach where habits are often formed overnight, but its helpful to see that many people aren't wired that way.
- \* Loved the section on abstinence being easier than moderation (for some people some of the time). Great insight, and a unique observation.
- \* The loophole spotting chapter is very helpful as well. Helps correct some of the self-defeating loopholes we often build into our habits.
- \* The danger of rewards and the benefits of treats was very good as well. External rewards that combat the habits we want to set are bad, internal treats that reinforce our habits are good. Simple . . . but hard to implement.

I wasn't familiar with Gretchen Rubin before ordering an advanced copy of this book as part of the Vine program, but I love self-help books and thought that this book would help me with some New Year's resolutions that, two weeks into 2015, I still haven't been able to make happen. Eat better? Exercise more? Stop procrastinating on certain work projects? Cut back on my internet addiction? Yes, I have a long list of things I need to work on, and this book is a great first step in making those things happen.

The premise of this book is we can establish and then use habits to affect change in our lives. "Habits," Rubin states in the book's introduction, "make change possible by freeing us from decision-making and from using self-control." What Rubin means by this is that we can learn how to modify our behaviors so that we automatically do those things that we might otherwise not want to (like exercise, clean up after ourselves, avoid junk food, etc.). In the same way that we

automatically brush our teeth without thinking about it, we can learn how to make other desirable behaviors (like eating better, avoiding time wasters, etc.) into "no brainers" that become folded into our everyday lives. As Rubin further explains in the opening section, we have to choose strategies that will work for our specific personality type. To accomplish that, the book opens with a section that has you figure out what your main "tendency" is: are you an Upholder, Questioner, Rebel, Obliger, or perhaps a combo of these four types? From there, Rubin puts the principles in action by providing twenty-one strategies for helping you establish the habits that you want to create in your own life.

I hate giving a one star review, but if I can't finish a book, then the author has failed at her job. I gave this book a fighting chance. I purchased it after all--I thought I would like it. I read about halfway before I got too irritated to keep going. The author attempts to present herself as an everywoman, going out and trying these new things that she reads about so that she can share her advice with others. But she lacks all self-awareness. Even though she talks about researching the science of habits, she shares surprisingly little of that science, and instead spends most of her time talking about herself and what did and didn't work for her. I will give her a little bit of credit for being honest and saying that people should find what works best for themselves, and that what works for her won't work for everyone, but she doesn't focus on anyone but herself. Then she creates these arbitrary categories, including these "four tendencies" but she doesn't allow for an individual to change their tendency depending on context. The rest of the book (well, the rest of the first half of the book) follows in the same vein--yet more categories to put yourself into, with obvious, banal results when she tries out new habits for herself. The straw that broke the camels back for me was a parenthetical aside at the end of a paragraph in which she mentions talking about habits with a friend: "(I love to throw in research. It's more convincing to people if I cite a study.)" It's the entitled, self-satisfied, manipulative way that she says all this that really gets under my skin. She is not an everywoman! She is a smug, privileged elitist who peddles her advice in memoir form to the masses who are too ignorant to read the real science for themselves!

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