
BETTER *Than* BEFORE

READING GUIDES

BETTER THAN BEFORE

WHAT I LEARNED ABOUT MAKING AND
BREAKING **HABITS**—TO SLEEP MORE,
QUIT SUGAR, PROCRASTINATE LESS,
AND GENERALLY BUILD **A HAPPIER LIFE**

BY GRETCHEN RUBIN

For general book groups and
groups of families and friends

For organizations and
teams at work

For spirituality book groups,
congregations,
and faith-based groups



READING GROUP GUIDE

For Book Groups and Groups of Families and Friends

1. If you could magically, effortlessly change a few habits, which habits would you pick? Why?
2. Unlike most habit-formation experts, Gretchen Rubin emphasizes that the most important step in changing a habit is to know yourself. Do you agree? Did reading *Better Than Before* allow you to see yourself more clearly?
3. Are you an Upholder, a Questioner, an Obliger, or a Rebel? Did the Four Tendencies help you gain a better understanding of your patterns of habit-formation?
4. What steps might you take to strengthen your Foundation?
5. Have you ever found it easier to form a habit (for good or bad) when you were starting something new—when you were taking the first steps, when you had a clean slate?
6. Have you ever been hit by a Lightning Bolt, so that that your habits changed overnight? What form did it take? Were you surprised by how quickly your habits altered?
7. Rubin argues that for many people, abstaining is easier than being moderate—which strikes some people as counter-intuitive. Are you an Abstainer, Moderator, or neither?
8. Convenience and Inconvenience are two of the most familiar and powerful strategies for habit-formation. How have you used convenience or inconvenience to shape your habits?
9. In reading the chapter on Loophole-Spotting, did any category sound particularly familiar? What forms do your loopholes take?
10. What are some of your treats—both healthy and unhealthy?
11. People exert enormous influence over each other's habits. Have you ever picked up a habit from someone else?
12. If you could change a habit of someone close to you, what habit would you choose? Can you think of ways to help that person change a habit?
13. Of your current habits, which ones work best for you? Any lessons there to apply to habits that are more challenging?
14. Identify one specific habit that you'd like to adopt. How exactly might you foster that habit? Use as many strategies as possible.

READING GROUP GUIDE

For Organizations and Teams at Work

1. Unlike most habit-formation experts, Gretchen Rubin emphasizes that the most important step in changing a habit is to know *yourself*. Do you agree? Did reading *Better Than Before* allow you to see yourself more clearly—in a way that helped you shape your habits?
2. Are you an Upholder, a Questioner, an Obliger, or a Rebel? Did the Four Tendencies help you gain a better understanding of your patterns of habit-formation or your work style?
3. Do the Four Tendencies give you insight into how you might manage others better, or work more smoothly with them?
4. Can you identify ways in which your organization could make changes to support people's healthy habits? By making it easier to exercise, eat healthfully, or get vaccinations, for instance, or by making it harder to smoke, eat junk food, or show up late to meetings?
5. For many people, especially Obligers, Accountability is a key strategy of habit-formation. How might you form accountability groups, such as a *Better Than Before* habit group at work, to help people stick to their habits?
6. Organizations often use rewards and incentives to try to encourage good habits. Does your organization do so? Gretchen Rubin argues that, counter-intuitively, rewards often don't help and may hurt the formation of good habits. Can you think of ways to encourage good habits without offering rewards—except for the rewards that come from the good habit itself?
7. Is there anyone at work who is a persistent positive influence on people's habits? Or a persistent negative influence? For instance, someone who keeps bringing in doughnuts, even when people say they're trying to eat better.
8. What can you do, as a group of co-workers, to help each other foster good habits, and to help each other to shape your lives to reflect your values, and to create a work environment that makes it as easy as possible to follow the habits you want?
9. Do any aspects of office culture make it difficult for people to stick to good habits? For instance, putting in a lot of face time, letting meetings running long, bringing in goodies, sitting at a computer for hours without a break, or completing work at the last minute?
10. If you could suggest five specific changes to your workplace, to make the environment more conducive to good habits, what would you suggest? Are there rules, customs, or systems that could be improved?

READING GROUP GUIDE

For Spirituality Book Groups, Congregations, and Faith-Based Groups

1. Unlike most habit-formation experts, Gretchen Rubin emphasizes that the most important step in changing a habit is to know yourself. Do you agree? Did reading *Better Than Before* allow you to see yourself more clearly—in a way that helped you shape your habits?
2. What habits might you adopt to strengthen your spiritual life? For instance, you might read holy books for an hour every day or write in a gratitude journal.
3. Is there a way in which your habits don't reflect your beliefs? For instance, you work when you want to observe the Sabbath, or you're inconsistent with your meditation practice.
4. Are you an Upholder, a Questioner, an Obliger, or a Rebel? Did the Four Tendencies help you gain a better understanding of your patterns of habit-formation?
5. How strong is your Foundation? Are there steps you can take to strengthen it?
6. Do you observe—and perhaps even enjoy—periods of exceptional spiritual discipline, such as fasting or abstaining from certain activities?
7. Is there anyone at work who is a persistent positive influence on people's habits? Or a persistent negative influence? For instance, someone who keeps bringing in doughnuts, even when people say they're trying to eat better.
8. If you could effortlessly, magically change a few of your habits, what would you choose? Now, thinking more realistically, what steps might you take to change those habits?
9. Have you ever been hit by a Lightning Bolt, so that that your habits changed overnight? What form did it take? Were you surprised by how quickly your habits altered?
10. What habits energize you and make you feel in control of yourself and enthusiastic about your ability to make change?
11. What habits drag you down by making you feel guilty, helpless, or full of regret? Which ones work best for you?
12. What can you do, as a group, to help each other foster good habits and shape your lives to reflect your values? How can members of your group help each other?
13. For many people—especially Obligers—accountability is a key to habit-formation. How might you form accountability groups, such as a *Better Than Before* habits group, to help people stick to their habits?