

Reading 8

Habits are routine behaviors performed with little conscious thought, and they play a significant role in shaping daily life. Psychologists suggest that habits form through a cycle known as the “habit loop,” which includes a cue, a routine, and a reward. A cue triggers the brain to initiate a behavior; the routine is the behavior itself; and the reward reinforces the behavior, making it more likely to occur again in the future.

Neuroscientific research shows that repeated behaviors strengthen neural pathways in the basal ganglia, a region involved in motor control and learning. As these pathways are reinforced, actions become more automatic. For example, individuals who practice a musical instrument consistently often reach a point where certain movements require minimal conscious effort.

However, breaking an established habit can be challenging. Because habit loops operate largely outside conscious awareness, individuals must deliberately identify the cues and rewards that maintain them. Many researchers argue that replacing an unwanted routine with a healthier one—rather than eliminating the habit entirely—is more effective. This substitution allows the brain to maintain the familiar cue-reward structure while redirecting behavior.

Questions

1. **What is the primary purpose of the passage?**
 - A. To describe the neurological basis and structure of habit formation
 - B. To compare habits with instincts
 - C. To argue that habits cannot be changed
 - D. To criticize psychological research

2. **According to the passage, what makes behaviors more automatic over time?**
 - A. Increased motivation
 - B. Strengthened neural pathways
 - C. Social pressure
 - D. Reduced rewards

3. **The word “deliberately” in paragraph 3 most nearly means:**
- A. accidentally
 - B. carefully
 - C. eventually
 - D. rarely
4. **What can be inferred about replacing habits?**
- A. It is easier than identifying habit cues.
 - B. It works because it preserves certain parts of the existing habit loop.
 - C. It is less successful than eliminating habits completely.
 - D. It requires no understanding of rewards.
5. **How does paragraph 3 function within the passage?**
- A. It contradicts the information in paragraph 1.
 - B. It provides examples of ineffective habit-breaking strategies.
 - C. It explains a practical application of the concepts discussed earlier.
 - D. It introduces a new topic unrelated to habits.

ANSWERS: ABBBC