

# O

THE  
M

# Brave New You!

RESOLUTION  
REBOOT  
9 Rules for Making  
Habits Stick

How to tame  
your fears and  
start living  
your happiest  
year yet



## Are You Your Own Best Frenemy?

The key to taking it  
easy on yourself, pg. 38

## THE ULTIMATE HOME MAKEOVER

Nate Berkus pays Iyanla a  
life-changing visit, pg. 92



RULE

5

# Bad Habits? They're Actually Solutions

WHEN YOU UNDERSTAND HOW YOUR VICES HELP YOU, YOU'LL HAVE A BETTER SHOT AT KICKING THEM TO THE CURB.



➡ Admit it: You drink at least two cans of Diet Coke a day. Or like 28 percent of Americans, you hit the drive-through once a week. Or like roughly 16 percent of women, you still smoke. You know you shouldn't, but the real reason you can't stop yourself may be because you haven't admitted that these "bad" habits are actually solutions instead of problems, says executive coach Deborah Grayson Riegel, author of *Oy Vey! Isn't a Strategy: 25 Solutions for Personal and Professional Success*. Don't think your habit could possibly be doing you any favors? Grayson Riegel begs to differ: Diet Coke provides energy when you're tired; fast food saves time when you're too overscheduled to plan, prepare, and cook a meal; cigarettes give you a feeling of belonging to a community, a me-time break from work, or a sense of rebelliousness. Once you've identified the problem your vice is solving, give yourself some credit: There's no question that you have the power to troubleshoot

your own problems. Then ask yourself, *What would I be capable of if I used my conscious mind to develop a new, healthier strategy?* "You'll be far more successful if you can replace the original action with something that gets you the same reward," says Alexandra Jamieson, holistic health counselor and author of *Women, Food, and Desire: Embrace Your Cravings, Make Peace with Food, Reclaim Your Body*. "Try transforming a habit by substituting something else enjoyable: If ice cream is your go-to comfort food, try taking a bath with a few drops of grapefruit essential oil, which is still sensory," says Jamieson. "If you'd normally swing by the drive-through after a bad day at work, try stopping at a stationery store if that's your thing and buy a cute card. You still have the problem of wanting to feel comforted, but now you have solutions in place that aren't bad for you, making them guilt-free and far more sustainable." —S.W.

## NEVER MIND THE NAYSAYING

Don't let these old untruths derail your resolution resolve.

### MYTH: WILLPOWER IS LIMITED

**FACT:** We tend to think of willpower as something that can be depleted. But a growing body of research suggests that isn't so and that we may, in fact, have control over our self-control. In a Stanford University study, participants were prompted to regard willpower as either limited or limitless, and then asked to complete a cognitively challenging task. The result: Those who believed willpower was unlimited performed better on a subsequent test of self-control than people who thought the opposite. The next time you worry about your wobbly willpower, just think: It's all in your mind.

### MYTH: IT TAKES 21 DAYS TO MAKE (OR BREAK) A HABIT

**FACT:** Although widely touted, that oft-quoted number has no real science to back it up. "The length of time it takes to establish new habits depends on the person and the complexity of the behavior," says University of Southern California psychology professor Wendy Wood, PhD. So while one study found that participants needed, on average, 66 days to establish new routines (like eating fruit with lunch or drinking more water), the range spanned 18 to 254 days. Bottom line: Don't give up—even if you feel like it's taking you a *really* long time to find your groove.

### MYTH: CHANGING NOW WON'T MAKE A DIFFERENCE IF YOU'RE TOO FAR GONE

**FACT:** It's never too late to adopt healthier ways. In a recent study, smokers who quit between the ages of 35 and 44 added about nine years to their lives; even those who waited until their early 60s increased their longevity by roughly four years. The same goes for exercise: A study in the *Journal of the American College of Cardiology* found that running for even five to ten minutes a day (and at leisurely speeds) can boost life expectancy by an average of three years, regardless of age, BMI, or preexisting medical conditions. —ZOE DONALDSON