

Before reading: Exercise 2

Tick (✓) the bad habits that you have. Then add two more of your own.

- ☐ not doing enough exercise
- ☐ leaving your homework until the last minute
- ☐ forgetting important dates
- ☐ texting when you shouldn't
- ☐ playing computer games when you should be studying
- ☐ getting up late for school

After reading: Exercise 5

5  1.08 Read the article again and listen. Mark the sentences T (true) or F (false).

- 1 The writer has to finish the article by the following day. ☐
- 2 The writer is finding it easy to lead a healthier life. ☐
- 3 We use different parts of our brain depending on who we're thinking about. ☐
- 4 Our brains don't always let us make good choices for our future selves. ☐
- 5 It takes just under two months for our brains to feel happy with changes to our lifestyles. ☐
- 6 The writer has decided that she'll never be able to change her habits. ☐



I miss my bad habits

I don't believe it! It's 11 pm and I'm still sitting here writing this article for the school magazine! I've had two weeks to write it and my teacher wants it tomorrow. She's always complaining that I leave things to the last minute. Maybe she's right. A month ago, I made a resolution to be more efficient this year and to never leave things to the last minute. Well, I've failed. At the moment, I guess kids all over the country are thinking back to the resolutions they made at the beginning of the school year. Some of them have already given up for this year. Others are still doing well. Many, I suspect, like me, are struggling with them. I've also been trying to get fitter for four weeks now. I've started going to the gym, I've taken up karate lessons and I've changed my diet. I've even been going to bed earlier. But I'm not feeling any fitter, just a little unhappier. I miss my bad habits. Why is leading a better life so hard?

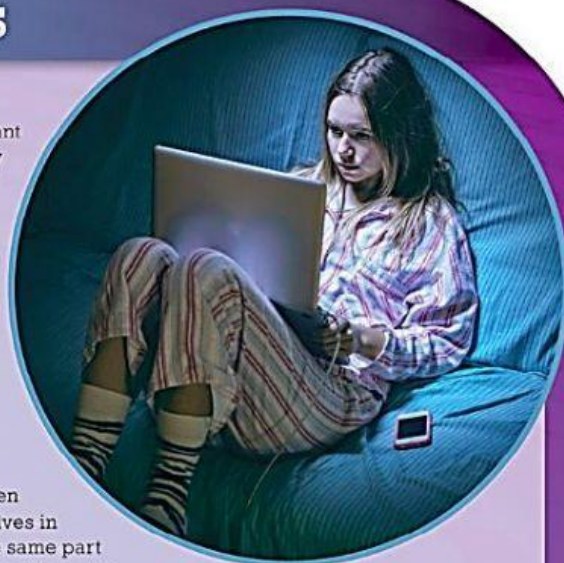
I've just read an article on a website and I've discovered that it isn't my fault! In fact, it isn't anyone's fault. It's our brains. They're programmed to make it difficult to break bad habits. There's nothing we can do. For example, you're sitting up late playing

Minecraft. You know you've got an important test tomorrow, so why don't you just turn off the computer and go to bed? As I said, it's your brain's fault. Scientists have done experiments that show we use one part of our brain when we think about ourselves and another when we think about other people. However, when we think about ourselves in the future, we use the same part of the brain that we usually use to think about other people. In other words, the brain sees the 'future you' as a different person to your 'present you'. And that's why we don't always find it easy to make sensible decisions for ourselves in the future.

But that's not all. Scientists have also discovered that it takes around ten weeks to form a good habit. For example, it's going to take another six weeks before going to the gym stops being so difficult and becomes an automatic part of my life. That's because ten weeks is the amount of time the brain needs to

change and accept new behavioural patterns as part of everyday life. The good news is that once you make it to ten weeks, everything becomes a lot easier. The bad news is that ten weeks is a really long time, so it's easy to give up on your good intentions sooner.

So there you are. Maybe we want to change our ways and become better people but our brains won't let us. Or is this just an excuse? Look – I've finished my article on time! Anything is possible!



"Reading
is to the
mind
what exercise
is to the
body."

— Seneca the Younger