Motivation: Habit Loop Activity

Habits allow our lives to take shape and make meaning. Our brains form habits as a means to conserving energy and maintaining productivity. You have the opportunity in college to form new habits and change existing habits. Below we will identify a personal habit and develop an action plan for how to change (if desired).

Part 1: Understand habits

1. Cue— the trigger that initiates the behavior
2. Routine— the action you take as a result
3. Reward— the benefit you gain from doing the behavior

Example:

1. Cue— cell phone beeps or buzzes
2. Routine— you open your email from your professor
3. Reward— you find out you received an “A” on a project

Part 2: Define a personal example

1. My cue: ______________________
2. My routine: ______________________
3. My reward: ______________________

• When did this behavior begin?

• How does it continue to benefit you?

• Are you interested in changing this habit? (Circle one) YES or NO

If yes, continue to part 3.

If no, reflect on how this habit either positively or negatively holds a place in your life.
Part 3: Experiment with different routines

You may be unaware of what drives your habits to continue. In the previous example, you may want to stop checking your cell phone so frequently. Typically the “routine” component of the cycle is what is problematic about our habit. Research shows that replacing your original routine with another routine can allow your behavior to change.

Example:

Instead of checking my phone immediately after it rings, I can put it back in my bag and ask my friend a question about their day.

What would be an alternative routine(s) to the habit you are hoping to change?

1. __________________________________________________________
2. __________________________________________________________
3. __________________________________________________________

Part 4: Creating a plan

Choose an alternative routine you think is best and redefine your habit loop below.

1. My cue: _________________________________________
2. My (new) routine: _____________________________________
3. My reward: _________________________________________

Identify individuals who can support your change

1. ________________________________________________
2. ________________________________________________

Identify benefits of making this change

1. ________________________________________________
2. ________________________________________________
