

Project Proposal: How to stop your bad habits

Problem Statement

Everyone at one point in their life has had a bad habit that they wish they could get rid of. Some bad habits, like smoking and alcohol, can pose extremely serious health risks. However, I am specifically looking at 'softer' habits like nail biting and using 'umm' and 'like' in sentences. Although not as bad as others, some of these bad habits can be extremely annoying and frustrating for us and those around us, as well as posing potential health risks. I want to be able track the problem of these bad habits, or 'soft addictions'.

Background and target demographic

Some of us have been cracking knuckles or biting nails for years, so how do we stop now? Breaking a bad habit is often more difficult than it may seem, and willpower alone doesn't always work. This is because habits can arise from repetition, and doing it over and over again strengthens the habit even more. Moreover, when a habit becomes automatic, we often find ourselves doing it unconsciously because the brain has internalized the behavior and is freeing up focus to do different things.

My target is for the most part the teen population, as these problems are most likely going to affect them the most. In fact, around half of all children between the ages of 10 and 18 reports biting their nails at one time or another, although most people have stopped by the time they reach 30.

Background and Proposed Solution

One approach to break a bad habit is to become more aware of your unhealthy habits, which then will allow to consciously counteracting them. This involves finding out when and why you engage in a bad habit. My proposed solution will be a wearable band or bracelet that will detect when the bad behavior is being exhibited and use a vibration or contraction to alert the user to stop. This bracelet will also track how often the negative behavior is being performed throughout the day and for how long it occurred.

Sources:

<http://www.webmd.com/anxiety-panic/tc/nail-biting-topic-overview>

<http://newsinhealth.nih.gov/issue/Jan2012/Feature1>