



Foundational Habits for Early Career Professionals

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A Bit About Me

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Let's Discuss

Some questions I would like to answer today:

- ❖ What are foundational habits?
- ❖ Why do they matter?
- ❖ How to create foundational habits
- ❖ What should the habits be?
- ❖ How are these helpful for my work?
- ❖ How are these beneficial in my personal life?



Goals

01

Balance

02

Connection

03

Movement

04

Holistic Care

05

Passion



Foundation Habits

When we start our careers, we are busy, maybe overwhelmed, excited, and nervous

It is easy to feel there is no pattern, no routine, and to feel disconnected or untethered



Defining the Terms

Defining

Foundational habits are repeated, consistent behaviors that form the bedrock of your personal, professional, and overall well-being



Systems

They are the daily routines and practices that, over time, shape your character, health, and success

Foundational habits are structural — they create systems that help you stay aligned with your goals even when motivation wanes

How to develop foundational habits

Creating a **foundational habit** means building a small, consistent behavior that becomes automatic and supports your long-term goals. It's not about perfection — it's about repetition, context, and reinforcement.

1. Understand the Habit Loop

- A habit is a **cue** → **routine** → **reward** loop.
- **Cue:** The trigger that prompts the habit (e.g., seeing your phone, feeling hungry).
- **Routine:** The behavior you perform (e.g., checking social media, eating a snack).
- **Reward:** The positive outcome that reinforces the habit (e.g., distraction, comfort).

Design your cue and reward so they're clear and satisfying.

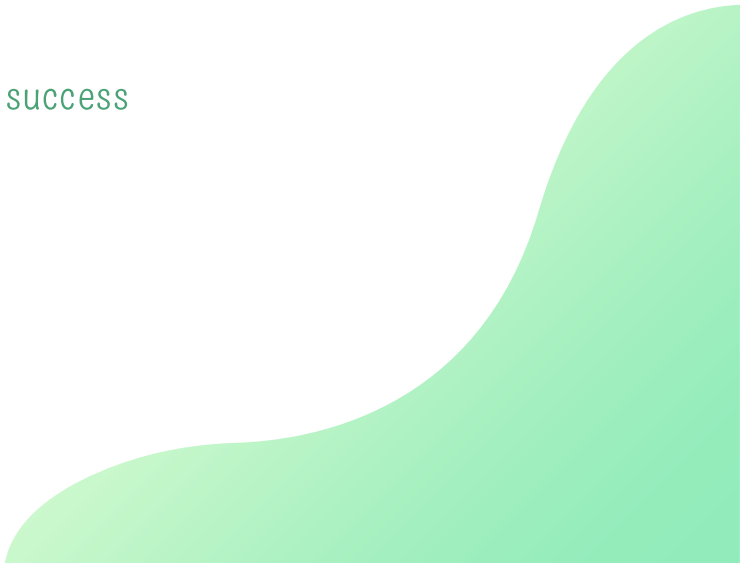
How to develop foundational habits

2. Start Small and Focused

- Research shows the **median time to form a habit is about 66 days** (range 18–254).
- Pick **one habit** at a time to avoid “ego depletion” — focusing on multiple changes at once drains willpower.
- Choose a **tiny, manageable action** (e.g., 1 minute of reading, 5 minutes of walking).

How to develop foundational habits

3. Make It Obvious, Easy, and Visible

- **Obvious cue:** Place your habit in a high-traffic spot (e.g., water bottle by your bed).
 - **Easy routine:** Keep it short and require minimal effort.
 - **Visible progress:** Use a tracker or streak counter to make success tangible.
- 
- A decorative green wavy shape is located in the bottom right corner of the slide, extending from the bottom edge and curving upwards and to the left.

How to develop foundational habits

4. Use Habit Stacking

- Attach your new habit to an existing one you already do.
Example: “After I brush my teeth (existing habit), I will do 1 minute of stretching (new habit)”.

5. Link to Your Identity

- **Identity-based habits** work because they align with who you want to be.
Example: “I am a person who reads daily” instead of “I will read 10 pages”.

How to develop foundational habits

6. Plan for Obstacles

- Anticipate slips and have a plan:
- If you miss a day, don't quit — just restart the next day.
- Prepare alternatives (e.g., if you can't walk, do bodyweight exercises).

7. Reward Yourself

- **Immediate reward:** A quick treat or mental boost after completing the habit.
- **Long-term reward:** Tie the habit to a bigger goal (e.g., better sleep → more energy).

8. Track and Adjust

- Log your habit daily to spot patterns.
- Adjust the cue, routine, or reward if it's not working

Why form Foundational Habits?



- ❑ Motivation is fleeting
- ❑ Habits endure
- ❑ Important things will off your to-do list when you get busy, stressed, or distracted
- ❑ These things have to be scheduled and prioritized

360 million
people worldwide

report being
burnt out



Effects



68% of burned-out employees have "difficulty concentrating," a key marker of mental exhaustion

2022 Gallup Poll

28% of remote workers experience "blurred boundaries" between work and home

2023 Buffer Report

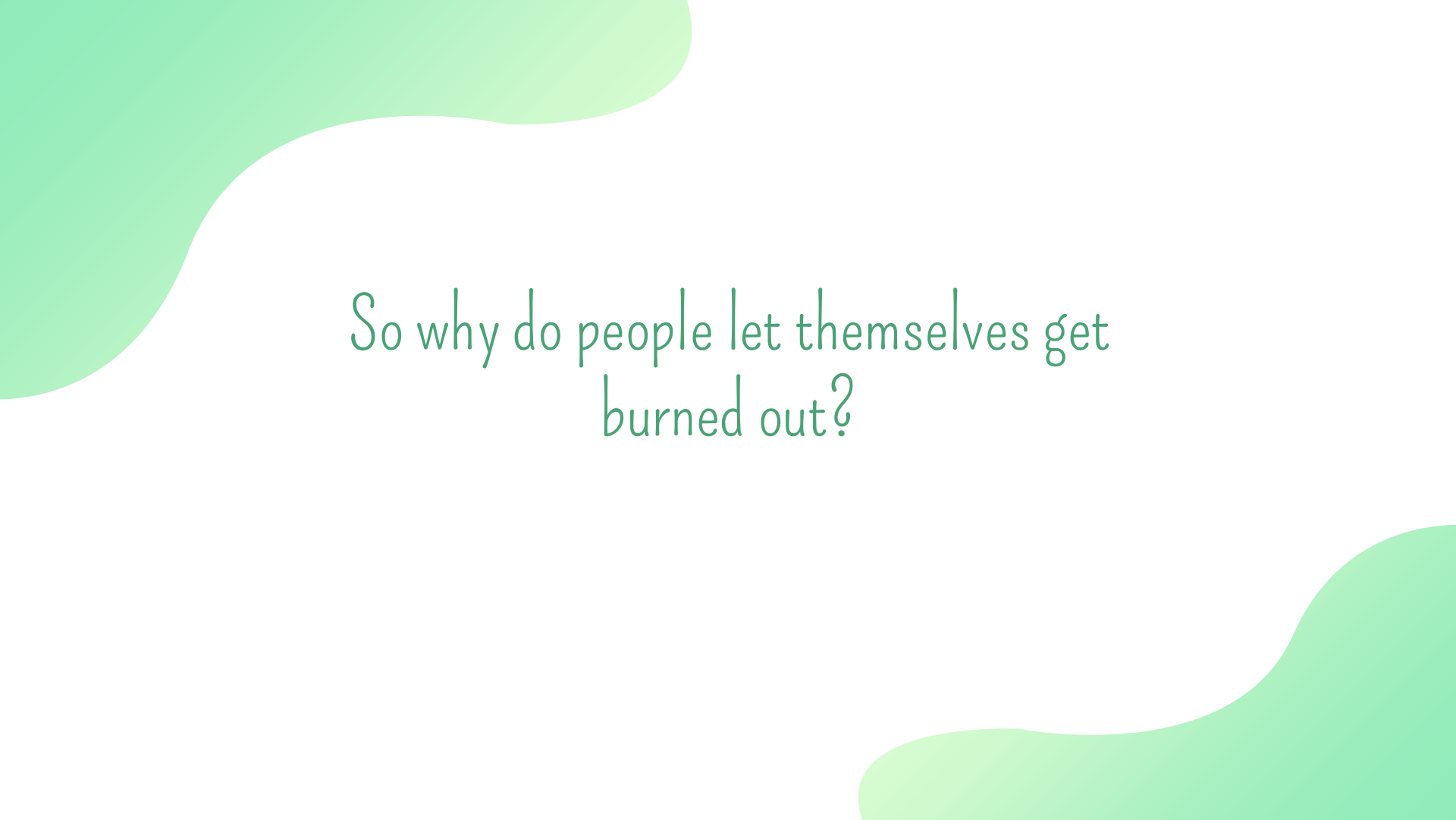
41% of burned-out employees miss social events due to work, damaging relationships

2022 Gallup-Sharecare report



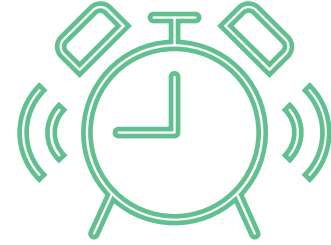
85%

of burned-out workers report
frequent headaches or body pain,
linked to chronic stress, per a 2023
APA study

The background features two large, abstract, organic shapes in a light green color. One shape is in the top-left corner, and the other is in the bottom-right corner, both with soft, wavy edges. The central text is positioned between these shapes.

So why do people let themselves get
burned out?

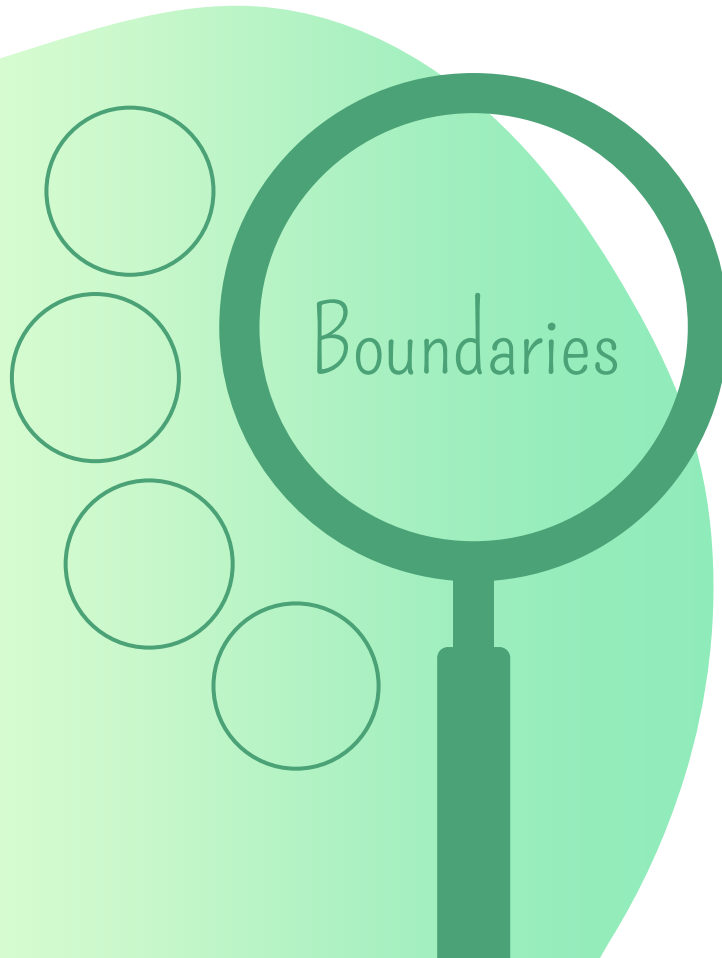
Barriers



- When I do trainings about self-care the number one thing people say is that they don't have time
- If we have foundational habits in our schedule, routine, and way of thinking, they will not go by the wayside



Balance



Boundaries

Balance

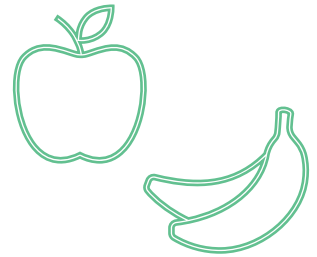
Balance means that elements in one's life are equal or in the correct proportion

Forming a balance between work and personal life early on will create a strong routine that benefits you and your clients

Balance

Start early:

- Don't need to be in touch 24/7? Take the email off your phone
- Establish specific work hours and follow them
- Working remotely? Create specific workspaces
- Not everything needs to get done today – determine what is most important to get done
- Use time wisely (there are many systems for this)
- Ask for guidance on how to best utilize your time at work; what to prioritize
- Eat meals, take breaks



“CONNECTION IS THE ENERGY THAT EXISTS
BETWEEN PEOPLE WHEN THEY FEEL
SEEN, HEARD, AND VALUED;
WHEN THEY CAN GIVE AND RECEIVE
WITHOUT JUDGMENT;
AND WHEN THEY DERIVE
SUSTENANCE AND STRENGTH FROM
THE RELATIONSHIP.”

BRENÉ BROWN

THE GIFTS OF IMPERFECTION
10th Anniversary Edition

Connection

Connections



01

At work

02

Outside work

03

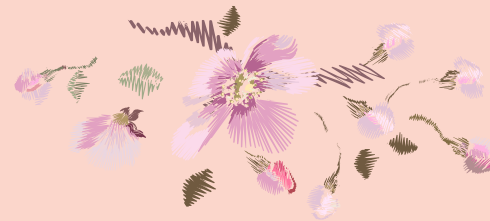
With self

Benefits of connection

- Human connection is the sense of closeness and belongingness a person can experience when having supportive relationships with those around them
- Connecting with others on a physical and emotional level can improve our health and overall well-being
- It is foundational to both mental and physical health; it helps us reduce feelings of isolation and loneliness
- Connection is when two or more people interact with each other and each person feels valued, seen, and heard
- There's no judgment, and you feel stronger and nourished after engaging with them

Disconnection

- A 2023 large study confirmed that loneliness and social isolation are associated with increased mortality and worse physical and mental health
- A massive meta-analysis of cohort studies involving more than 1.3 million people found that social isolation is associated with an increased risk for all-cause mortality
- Another huge analysis found that people who felt lonely and isolated were more likely to die sooner from any cause but, in particular, from cardiovascular disease or cancer



Connection

- Mental health boost
- Longer lifespan
- Improved quality of life
- Increased fulfillment

Self-Connection

Grounding

Practice gentle
grounding
exercises
(breathing,
naming five
things you see)

Check-In

Keep a daily check-in
journal: “How
do I feel in my
body right
now?”

Movement

Engage in movement
(yoga,
stretching,
walking) to
restore body
awareness

Self-Connection

Remember, or discover, what brings you joy:

- ❖ Gratitude practices have shown to have great benefits
- ❖ Self-care
- ❖ Mindfulness

There are a ton of resources available to look into these practices



Connect with Community

Volunteer – the benefits of volunteering are well known including on preventing burnout

Volunteering alongside others gives people a shared purpose, replacing isolation with the feeling that they have something valuable to contribute





Nature offers connection without judgment.

- * Sit under a tree and notice the sounds around you.
- * Plant something and tend to it.
- * Walk in a park, allowing yourself to move at your own pace.

Nature reminds us we belong, even when we feel cut off.

Engage with Nature

Explore Creative Expression

Creativity can build bridges and provide stress relief.

Art, music, or dance therapy

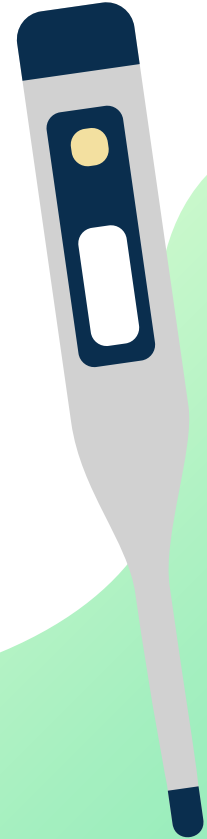
Journaling or poetry

Photography or simple doodling

Creative expression can reconnect you with emotions in safe, gradual ways.



Movement



Exercise



The benefits of moving our bodies is widely researched and known



We feel good when we move our bodies due to the happy chemicals that are released



However, we continue to forget, be inconsistent, or put exercise on the back burner

Foundational Habits: Exercise

- Habits form through repetition, rewiring your brain's "habit loop"

For example:

- **Cue:** Returning home from work
- **Routine:** Driving to the gym and working out
- **Reward:** Feeling less stressed and more energized

Consistency is more important than intensity in the first 66 days, as your brain learns to trigger the behavior automatically



How to Build a Foundational Habit

- **Set a consistent cue** — e.g., lay out workout clothes by your bed or place your shoes by the door
- **Choose a fixed time/place** — e.g., morning jog in the same park every day
- **Start small** — 15 minutes of light exercise daily is more effective than sporadic long sessions
- **Pair with existing routines** — e.g., walk after breakfast or dinner
- **Track progress** — even if it's just a checklist, it reinforces the habit loop.

How to Build a Foundational Habit

Example Foundational Habit + Exercise Routine

- **Morning (7:00 a.m.):** Lay out workout clothes → 10 push-ups → 10 lunges → 10 glute bridges.
- **Evening (7:00 p.m.):** Place gym bag in car seat → 10 rows → 10 deadlifts (bodyweight or light weight).
- By combining **behavioral consistency** with **core movement patterns**, you create a habit that's both sustainable and effective for long-term fitness

Do what you can, when you can

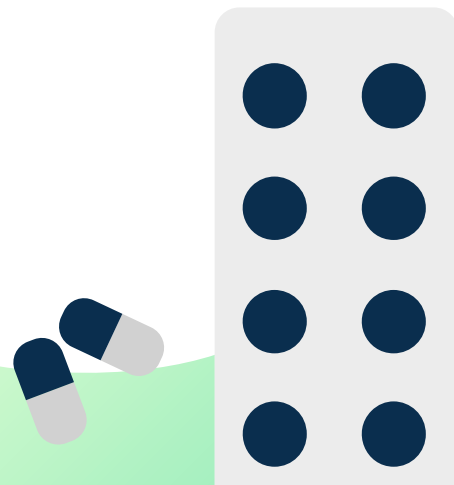


- Park farthest away at work and get your steps
- Always take the elevator
- Take stretch breaks
- See if colleagues want to walk with you on break
- Get a yoga teacher to come to your organization once a week
- Do exercise in your facility, as appropriate and allowed
- Meet up for walk dates with friends



Holistic Care

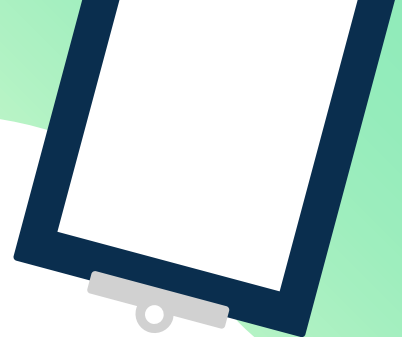
You are not just a body



What else do YOU need?



- Is it important to you to keep up a regular spiritual practice?
- To keep your mind fresh? What do you care about?
- As a new professional, or someone forming new habits, prioritize those things
- For example, if church is critically important, protect that time and space. If you go Sunday mornings, Sat nights are off limits for late night plans.
- Take an online class or go to a class locally. Set aside that time and make it non-negotiable.



Passion

Remembering why you do
what you do

Passion

Enthusiasm &
Excitement

Natural Talent & Skills

Empower & Advocate



Empathy & Compassion

Desire to Help &
Advocate for Others

Inspiration. Motivation.

Passion

Remember



Ask yourself why you started this work

Remember why you are here



Values

Express

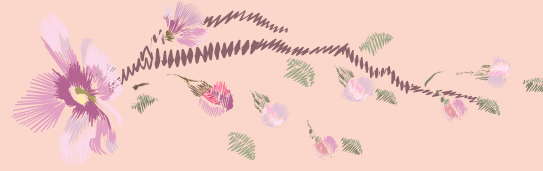


Share with others why you do what you do

Think of the impact of your work



Visualize



Ways to Maintain your Passion

Mentor others



Train/teach
others



Share with
University
students about
your career



Share with
family and
friends your
impact



Thank you for your time and attention!

Please take care of you

Contact me anytime at chopkin3@usf.edu