

**A Baker's Dozen of Mind-Hacks and Brain Facts**  
**Creatures of Habit**  
Session Two  
Presented by VOICE  
(Virginia Tech Office of Interactive Communication & Empowerment)

- 1) Know the [habit loop](#). There's a specific pattern, a circuit, that kicks in when we've created a habit. Trigger, behavior, reward.
- 2) Our [brains like routines](#); which are the product of our habits. Routines minimize uncertainty and helps us focus on what needs attention.
- 3) We are all addicts. Our [brains release dopamine](#), which trains our brain to want something (even if it is not good for us).
- 4) Eat healthy foods and drinks that [increase dopamine production](#). Avocados, bananas, beans, chocolate, green leafy vegetables, nuts, olives oil and turmeric are just some examples. Black, white, oolong, green tea and coffee encourage dopamine production.
- 5) Changing our habits is not easy; similarly, our [brains don't like change](#) (think of a new job, end of a relationship, etc.) because change is often seen as a threat.
- 6) To create new habits and manage change we need to [increase our BDNF](#). Brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF) is a protein that is critical for learning and adaptability.
- 7) Know your [cues/triggers](#). One strategy is to [change your environment](#) to eliminate the trigger.
- 8) Create an [implementation plan](#) for your new habit. Leverage the most powerful cues which are time and location.
- 9) Manage your emotional state to create leverage. [Get a partner](#) to hold you accountable.
- 10) [Repetition](#) is the mother of habit. Commit to repetition. Do today the behavior you want to ingrain. Do it again tomorrow. And keep doing it until it is a habit.
- 11) [Give it time](#). Depending on the complexity of the habit research indicates it may take just a few days to 18 days, to (on average) 66 days to develop a habit.
- 12) [Reward yourself](#).
- 13) [Will power may not be enough](#). Will power takes energy and can actually decrease throughout the day. What's needed is also [strategy](#).