

STAGES OF THE PROCESS OF ACQUISITION OF A HABIT

(Short version)

By

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Integral Human Development

- The **formation** of man must cover all its aspects: intelligence, will, feelings, body, etc.
- It is not enough that the intelligence knows how to discern what is right or wrong, but that the person must be **capable of doing good**, of acting in a manner consistent with what he thinks.
- To achieve this goal, the person needs **to acquire good habits** (virtues).

Human Faculties

- **Spiritual** faculties:
 - **intelligence**: acquires knowledge
 - **will**: that moves **freely** towards/away the object presented by the intelligence
- **Material** faculties:
 - **senses**: provides information about the physical reality,
 - **external senses**: sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch
 - **inner senses**: common sense, imagination, memory and cognitive
 - **sensitive appetites, passions or emotions**: that moves **automatically** towards/away the object presented by the senses
- The human being has in common with plants the **nutritional faculties** and with the superior animals the **sensitive faculties** - sensible senses and appetites.

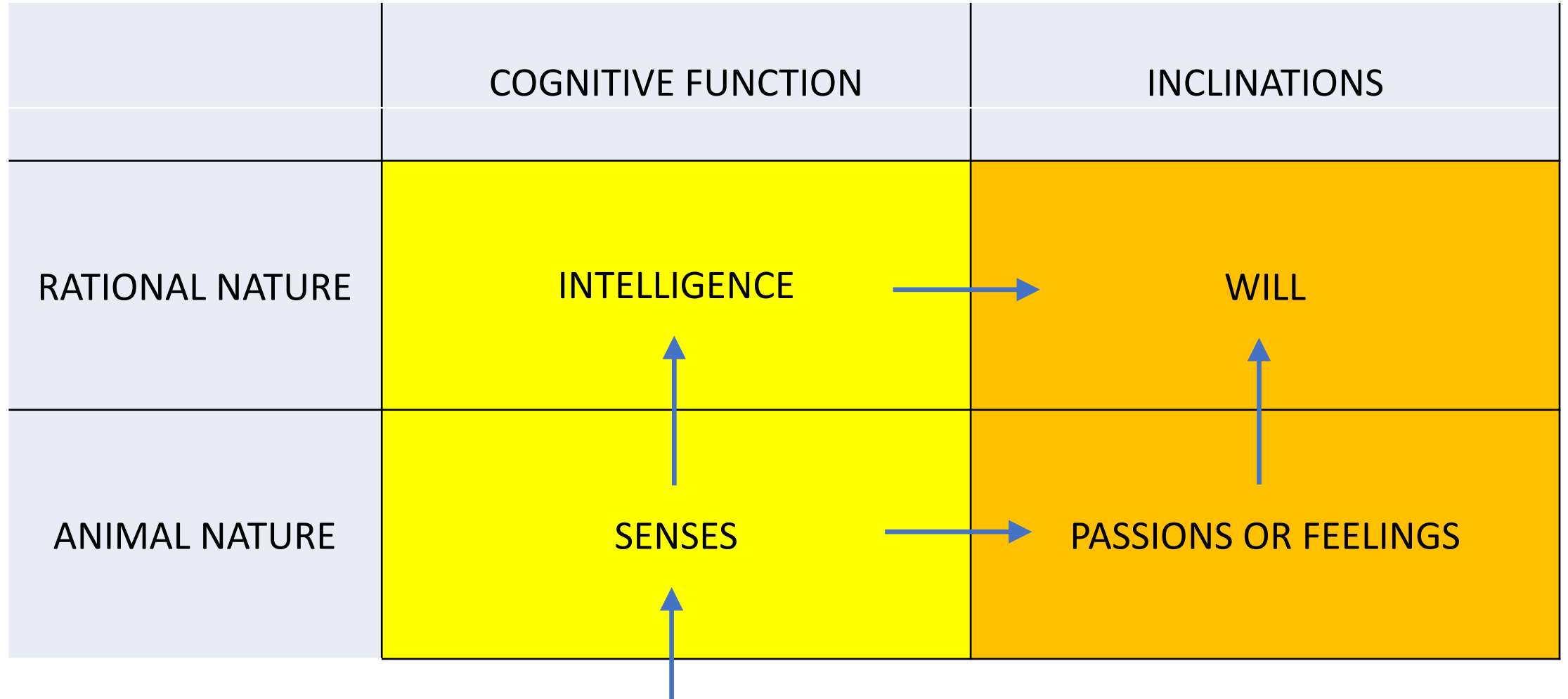
Cognitive Function

- The **intelligence** is capable of knowing through the senses, both internal and external, that present concrete and unique realities.
- Each **external sense** captures an aspect of the sensible realities of the physical world.
- The **formal inner senses** receive and retain sensible forms with their objective, real, aspects.
 - **common sense**: unifies the plurality of sensations provided by the external senses in an image of the perceived object
 - **imagination**: retains and preserves sensitive forms that have previously been received by common sense
- The **intentional inner senses** elaborate and internalize subjective evaluations of perceived objects
 - **cogitative**: values the object known as beneficial or harmful
 - **memory**: retains in file the assessments made by the cogitative

Inclinations

- **Sensitive appetite or passions:** tend to seek or avoid the object known to the senses.
 - The **concupiscible appetite** tends towards what has been perceived as a sensible good or to avoid the harmful: love & hate, desire & aversion, joy and sorrow.
 - The **irascible appetite** tends to a good that is not at hand, but difficult to attain: hope & despair, confidence & fear, anger.
- **Intellective appetite: the will:** moves itself, receives information from intelligence and feelings.
 - The **intelligence** tells the will the right or wrong way to act, what is good or bad.
 - The **feelings or emotions** inform the will about what they want, about what they perceive as pleasant or unpleasant, what they like or dislike.

Dynamism of the Human Faculties



Interplay between Will and Feelings

- While the intellect moves the will toward **truth and good**, appetites and feelings lean toward obtaining **sensible goods** (pleasure).
- In the fallen state of nature, there is often an **opposition between the two inclinations** that can result in different behaviors:
 - a) Intelligence and feelings present the **same assessment**, positive or negative, of the object or action: they facilitate the right decision of the will
 - b) Intelligence and feelings have **opposite assessments**, but **the will opts for intelligence**: path towards a good habit or virtue.
 - c) The intelligence and the feelings present **opposite assessments**, but **the will chooses the feelings**: path towards a bad habit or vice.
- The **will plays a central role** in the formation of habits.

Nature of Habits

- Habits are **stable dispositions for acting** that result from the repetition of actions in the same direction.
- Through habits, the person tends to **act with consistency, ease and spontaneity** in the sense of previous decisions.
- Habits are difficult to remove, however, they do **not constitute irreversible states**, but allow growth, decrease and corruption.
- The good habit - **virtue** - reflects the harmony between the different faculties of the person, while the bad habit - **vice** - reflects the lack of that harmony.
- Character or personality is the result of habits acting on a biological substrate, the **temperament**.

Heymans' classification of temperaments

- The classification is based in the combination of three parameters:
 - **Emotivity** (E): strength and frequency of emotional response to an event or stimulus
 - **Activity** (A): energy and quantity of action in response to a motive or stimulus
 - **Secondarity** (S): degree to which emotions, events, or images have long-term effects
- Temperaments:
 - passionate: E+ A+ S+
 - choleric: E+ A+ S-
 - sentimental: E+ A- S+
 - neurotic: E+ A- S-
 - phlegmatic: E- A+ S+
 - sanguine: E- A+ S-
 - apathetic: E- A- S+
 - amorphous: E- A- S-

The 7 Stages of a Habit Acquisition

- It is not enough to know what is good, it takes good habits (virtues) to **habitually succeed in doing good.**
- The transition from a bad habit to a good habit that opposes it requires the intervention of **intelligence, will and appetites** in a process that may take 3-5 years and comprises the following 7 stages:
 - STAGE 1: Starting point
 - STAGE 2: Motivate the change
 - STAGE 3: Overcome the strong resistance of vice
 - STAGE 4: Sustain the struggle
 - STAGE 5: Progress in the struggle
 - STAGE 6: Tipping point
 - STAGE 7: Birth of a new habit

STAGE 1: Starting Point

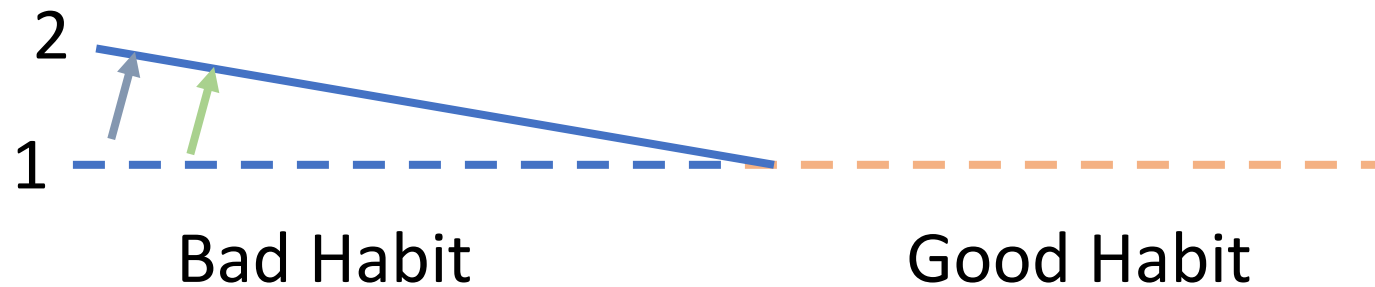
INTELLIGENCE	WILL	FEELINGS
<p>What the person understands by the good habit is very poor. It still doesn't come into play.</p>	<p>The person is not aware of the bad habit or does not feel the need to change his behaviour.</p>	<p>Feelings are satisfied with the bad habit. They are in their comfort zone.</p>
REFLECTION	MOTIVATION	GOALS
<p>The person acts badly without further questioning or reflection.</p>	<p>There is no motivation for change.</p>	<p>No new targets for change have been identified.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">ENVIRONMENT</p>		
<p>The environment has not impact on the behaviour of the person.</p>		

STAGE 2: Motivate the Change

INTELLIGENCE	WILL	FEELINGS
<p>It plays an important role at this stage: presenting the person with the new option as an attractive value.</p>	<p>With a trigger: good advice, the death of someone ... the person realizes that he must choose that value.</p>	<p>They are filled with great enthusiasm, most of the time transitory.</p>
REFLECTION	MOTIVATION	GOALS
<p>By reflecting and finding reasons to change that are important.</p>	<p>The motivation, essential at this stage, is maintained by offering sufficient and valid reasons.</p>	<p>Small goals –concrete, accessible and measurable.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">ENVIRONMENT</p> <p>It makes the initial fight easier to have a good atmosphere: the comments, ridicule or opinions of others influence to speed up or hinder progress.</p>		

STAGE 2: Motivate the Change

- The person starts the change with enthusiasm.
- Will (→) and feelings (→) push lightly in the right direction.
- Small progress.

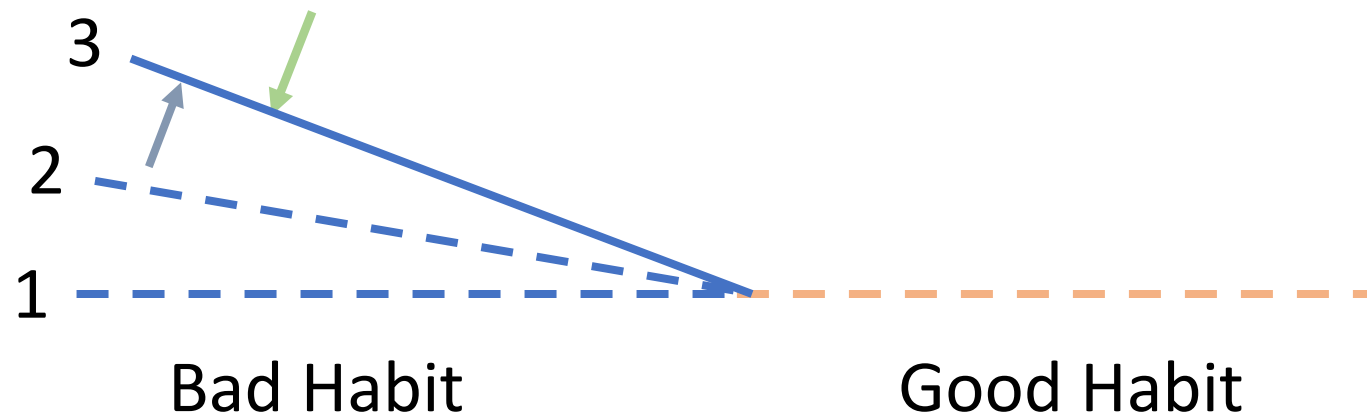


STAGE 3: Overcome the Strong Resistance of Vice

INTELLIGENCE	→ WILL →	FEELINGS
The clarity that was in the previous stage fades, the intelligence is obscured by the force of the bad habit.	It is unsupported: reasons are shyly presented, and feelings oppose change.	Initial enthusiasm is gone. Feelings cease to support the decision of the will to do something they don't like.
REFLECTION	MOTIVATION	GOALS
The will needs to be sustained with the reasons found at the beginning.	To maintain motivation it will be important to continue with the achievement of small goals.	Constancy plays a fundamental role: it is the engine that allows the person to move forward
<p style="text-align: center;">ENVIRONMENT</p> <p>The close monitoring, understanding and affection of the formators is very important; avoiding comparisons, noting that the fight is only with oneself.</p>		

STAGE 3: Overcome the Strong Resistance of Vice

- The fillings find the change difficult and push back.
- The will's motivation is sustained by the few results already attained.
- Strong temptation to give up.

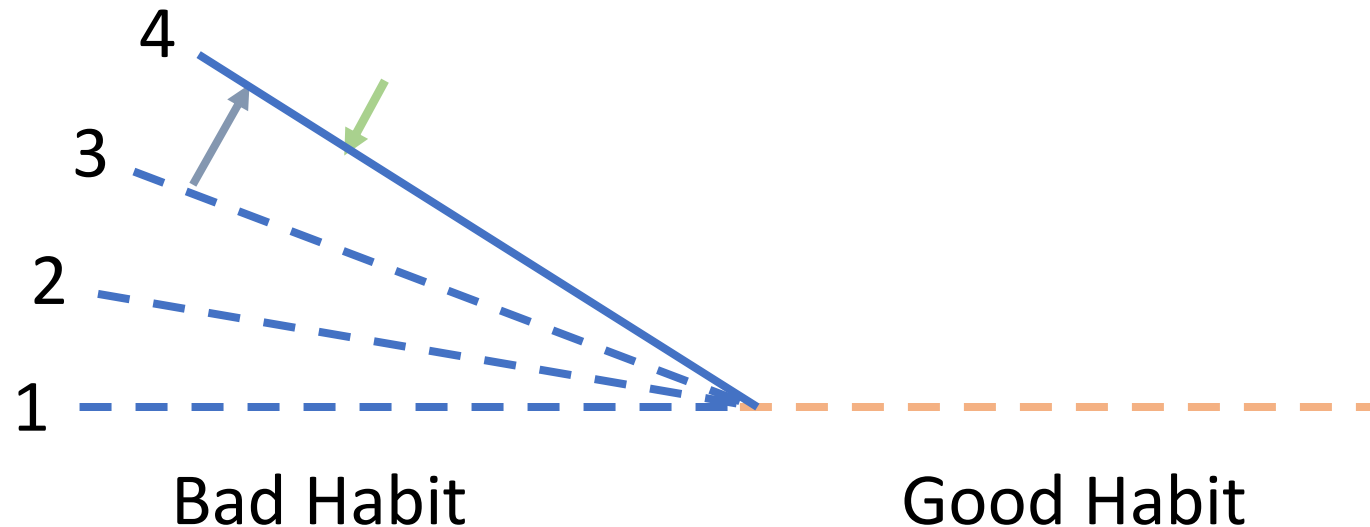


STAGE 4: Sustain the Struggle

INTELLIGENCE	WILL	FEELINGS
Keep supporting with reasons and presenting the consequences, negative for vice and positive for virtue.	The will must be sustained so that it continues to opt for the good habit.	They continue to present opposition, albeit less, to the change due to the arduousness of the path.
REFLECTION	MOTIVATION	GOALS
Keep feeding on good reasons with readings, short motivational phrases, biographies, movies.	The achieved goals are motivating. Let's do it for love. If necessary, reward or punishment.	Set a small goal and, once accomplished, another; it is easier than several at the same time.
<p style="text-align: center;">ENVIRONMENT</p> <p>It is necessary to take care of the good environment, removing obstacles that are detected, and review and care for the circle of friends.</p>		

STAGE 4: Sustain the Struggle

- As more goals are achieved, the resistance of the feelings subsides.
- The will is supported by new reasons and a good environment.
- Progress still slow and arduous.

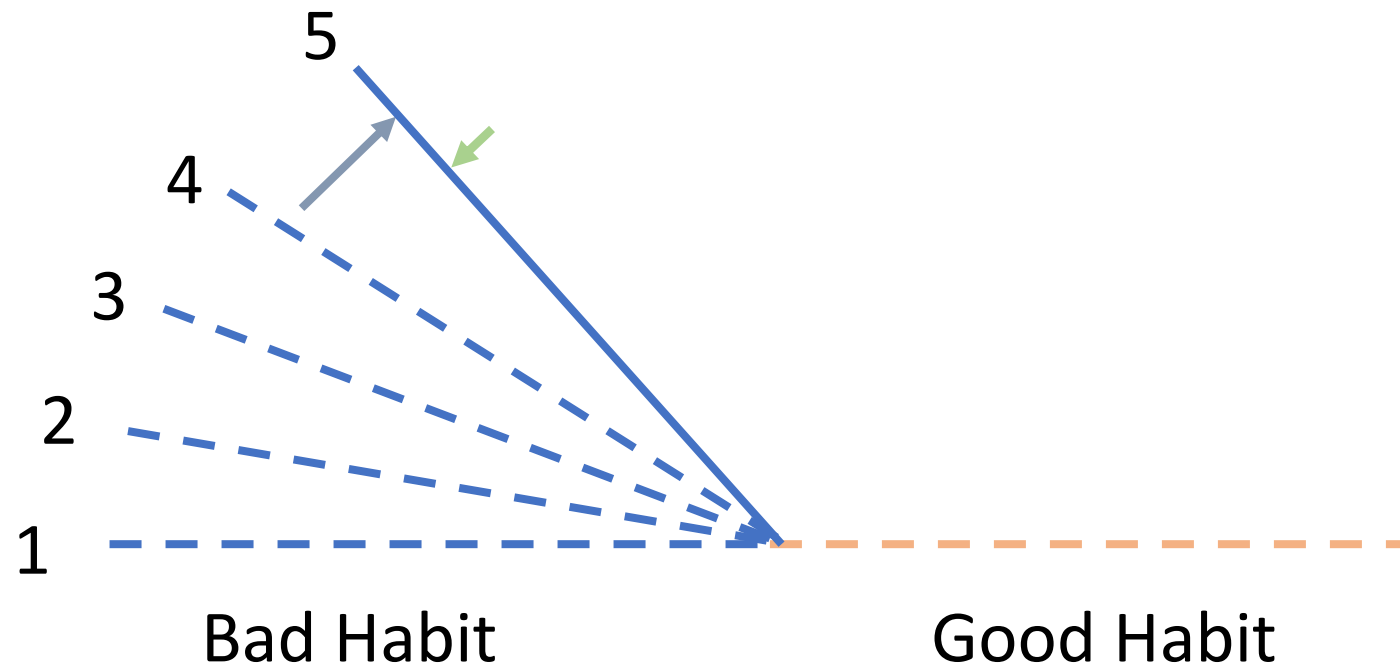


STAGE 5: Progress in the Struggle

<p>INTELLIGENCE</p>	<p>→ WILL</p>	<p>→ FEELINGS</p>
<p>A greater awareness arises. Vice is discovered in others. Any ambiguity in supporting the will is overcome.</p>	<p>The will continues to choose the good habit.</p>	<p>They appreciate the small victories and are satisfied, so, as the habit is acquired, their opposition subsides.</p>
<p>REFLECTION</p>	<p>MOTIVATION</p>	<p>GOALS</p>
<p>Keep supporting with readings, phrases, etc., and presenting the advantages of having the good habit.</p>	<p>Keep sustaining the will with small successes so that it maintains the good decision.</p>	<p>As the process progresses, new goals can be set, but without abandoning the previous ones.</p>
<p>ENVIRONMENT</p> <p>The atmosphere should be positive, with good examples around. Follow-up is still basic: as often as the person requires it.</p>		

STAGE 5: Progress in the Struggle

- The feelings appreciate the small victories and their resistance subsides even further.
- A greater awareness of the advantages of the good habit sustains the push of the will.

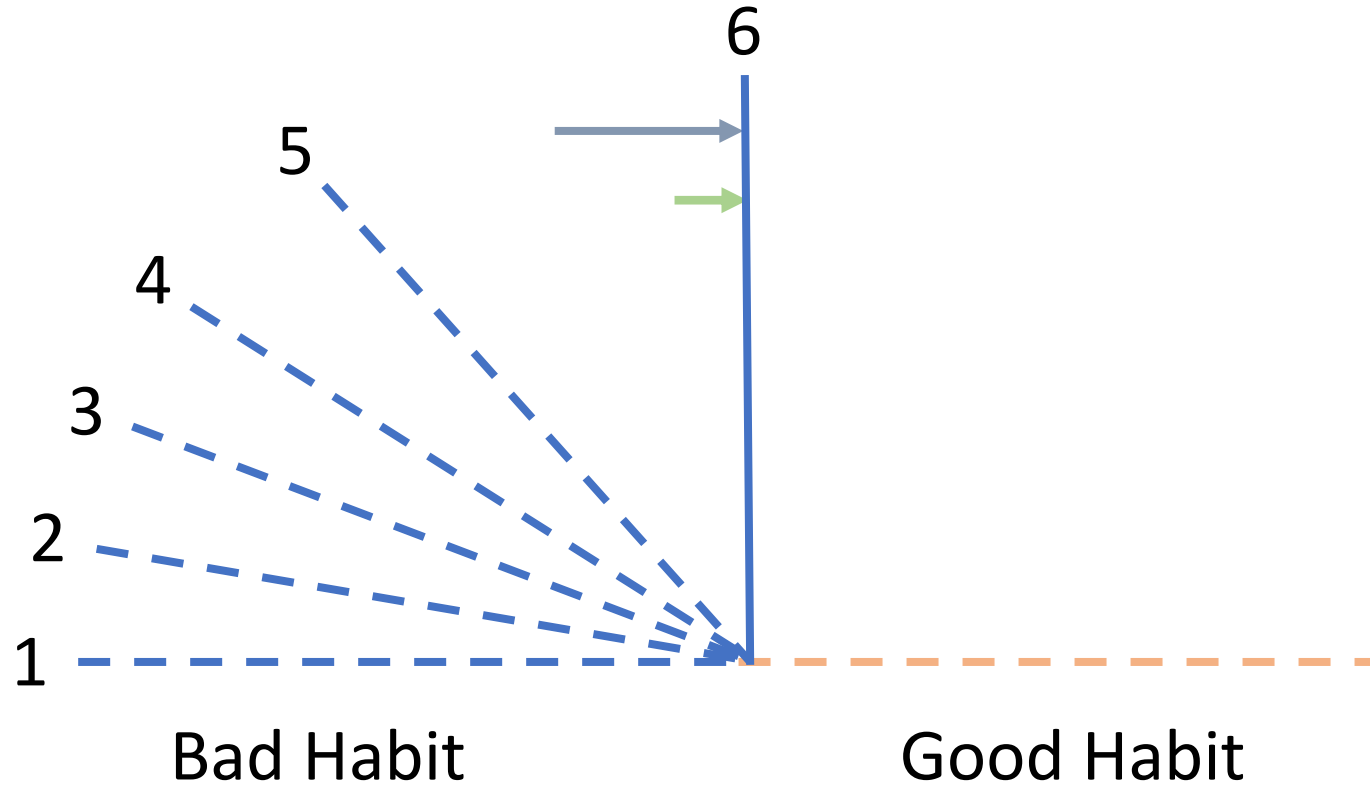


STAGE 6: Tipping Point



INTELLIGENCE	WILL	FEELINGS
It is quicker to judge each situation; sometimes he will be able to stop “an instant” before committing the act.	It is reinforced by the light of the intelligence and the small support of feelings.	Feelings begin to cooperate; they begin to like the good habit more and more.
REFLECTION	MOTIVATION	GOALS
It is important to continue strengthening the reasons for fighting, not forgetting to examine every day about the fulfillment of goals.	Put high reasons to act. The best is love, but also being happy and helping others.	It is still important to give variety to goals, with constancy and without dispersing.
<p style="text-align: center;">ENVIRONMENT</p> <p>It helps to keep good friends and avoid bad ones. At this stage, a close follow-up by the trainer is no longer necessary.</p>		

STAGE 6: Tipping Point

- The feelings like the good habit and begin pushing in the right direction.
- The will is strengthened by the intelligence with new reasons.
- From this point on the process moves downhill, it gets faster and easier.



STAGE 7: Birth of a New Habit

INTELLIGENCE 	WILL 	FEELINGS
The intelligence no longer stops to judge.	See the new habit as good. It requires less and less the input of the intelligence.	They find pleasure in the acts of the new habit: they do it quickly and without error.
REFLECTION	MOTIVATION	GOALS
No reflection is needed, most of the time, the person lives the good habit automatically.	Usually no extra motivation is needed.	No new goals needed, just don't stop acting with the habit.
<p style="text-align: center;">ENVIRONMENT</p> <p>Usually the established good habit is not dependent on the environment.</p>		

STAGE 7: Birth of a New Habit

- The feelings find pleasure in the acts of the new habit
- The input of the intelligence is needed less and less.

