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## **Old Habits Are Hard To Break**

**By: Dr. Stephen O'Neil**

We all have old habits that have been with us forever and it seems that these are the hardest to break. These patterns become ingrained in our consciousness and unconsciousness. We often find a pattern we are comfortable with and follow it without any conscious thought. For example, have you ever driven somewhere and when you arrive, realize that you remember very little, if any of the trip. You think to yourself, "Was I paying attention?" You were, it's just that it has become second nature - part of your program.

The habits that are hardest to break, are those that have been there the longest - the ones that developed early in life. Retraining the body and mind to change these patterns can only come through repeating a new pattern over and over again until it becomes ingrained. The best way to stop these habits is to never let them start. It is much easier to stop a small snowball at the top of a mountain than it is to try and stop an avalanche half way down.

What does all this have to do with chiropractic and health? Many of us have spinal habits we aren't even aware of. It is called subluxation. It is a habit that can start at birth, during childhood or any time during our lives. It is caused by the stresses in our life, whether it's birth trauma, postural problems or repetitive stresses from work. A subluxation is a disruption in the normal structural orientation of the bones in our spine. The longer this condition lasts, the harder it is to correct because like old habits, it becomes more permanent and our bodies adapt to it. The spine, made up of 24 moveable bones has two primary functions; one is to act as an anchor for the muscles to allow us to move in the way we move and the other is to provide protection to our spinal cord. The brain communicates with the rest of the body via the spinal cord, which travels through a canal through the 24 vertebrae of the spine. Between each of these bones is an opening, which allows a branch of the cord to exit and go to control a certain part of the body. Why is the structural part of the spine so important? It is for the same reason the structure of your house is so important. If your roof has a hole in it, you'll get wet next time it rains. If the structure of the spine is not 100%, then the function of the nervous system that it protects will not be 100%. Since the nervous system controls and directs every other process in the body, the effects of subluxation can be far reaching and devastating. These effects can be avoided if the "habit" is corrected before it begins or corrected early. A child's spine can be corrected relatively easily with spinal adjustments so that the structure is consistent with optimal function and ultimately, health. It is when these subluxations are left unchecked and compounded by years of altered structure and adaptation to a negative cycle that they become much more difficult to correct. Children adjusted from the very beginning may rarely need to see a chiropractor as adults because they have adapted correctly to their surroundings with optimal spinal structure and nervous system function.

Health is defined as the optimal physical, mental and social well being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. Chiropractic seeks to reduce or remove interference to the nervous system, thus allowing optimal adaptation and balance within their environment. Break some old habits and give yourself, your family and your kids a chance at true health through chiropractic care.