7 HABITS TO MAKE YOU STRONGER

STRONG 7

7-Strong.org

1. Read something rooted in truth.

"Europe was created by history. America was created by philosophy."
— Margaret Thatcher

"The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you'll go."
— Dr. Seuss

- **Strong early reading skills lead to higher intelligence later in life.**
  (https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2014/07/140724094209.htm)
- **Print exposure leads to greater reading comprehension, vocabulary, and general knowledge.**
  (https://srcd.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/cdev.12272)
- **Reading printed books increases comprehension due to "mind mapping."**
  (https://www.wired.com/2014/05/reading-on-screen-versus-paper/)
- **Reading is relaxing.**
- (https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/health/news/5070874/Reading-can-help-reduce-stress.html)
- **Reading is contagious.**
  (https://www.scholastic.com/content/dam/KFRR/PastReports/KFRR2015_5th.pdf)

2. Spend 5 minutes in silence, prayer, or meditation.

"All of humanity's problems stem from man's inability to sit quietly in a room alone."
— Blaise Pascal

- **Periods of mental boredom are linked with reduced depression, reduced mental fatigue, and increased life satisfaction.**
  (Easter, Michael. *The Comfort Crisis: Embrace Discomfort to Reclaim Your Wild, Happy, Healthy Self.* Potter/Ten Speed Press/Harmony, 2021, p.96.)
- **Prayer and meditation may help manage symptoms of medical conditions such as asthma, pain, and headaches.**
  (https://www.mayoclinic.org/tests-procedures/meditation/in-depth/meditation/art-20045858)
- **Prayer and meditation can increase attention span.**
  (https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6088366/)
- **Mindfulness meditation can alleviate symptoms of stress and reduce cortisol.**
  (https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/23724462/)
- **Prayer and meditation can improve memory.**
  (https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/29110263/)

3. Be around people who want what's best for you.

Social isolation is a common cause of self-diagnosed depression.
(Sasse, Benjamin E. *Them: Why We Hate Each Other--and How to Heal.* St. Martin's Griffin, 2019. p.24.)

- **Good friends encourage each other to avoid unhealthy lifestyle habits, such as excessive drinking or lack of exercise.**
  (https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/in-depth/friendships/art-20044860)
- **Greater cohesion in friend groups is associated with lower violent crime rates.**
  (https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5493494/)
- **Good friendships can protect against depression and anxiety.**
  (https://www.apa.org/monitor/2023/06/cover-story-science-friendship)
- **"You can harness the power of social relationships to gain healthier habits—and motivate others to do the same."**
  (https://newsinhealth.nih.gov/2021/09/power-peers)

⩘ 4. Eat healthy foods.

Healthy eating promotes muscle growth, brain development, strong bones, and boosts immunity.
(https://www.cdc.gov/nutrition/resources-publications/benefits-of-healthy-eating.html)

- **Healthy eating provides stable energy.**
  (https://www.nationwidechildrens.org/family-resources-education/700childrens/2021/03/importance-good-nutrition-kids)
- **Healthy eating gives teens clearer and healthier skin.**
  (https://www.pontchartrainpediatrics.com/5-reasons-why-teens-need-to-eat-healthy#:~:)

⩘ 5. Sleep 7–8 hours.

Lack of sufficient sleep is associated with reduced academic performance, as well as poor reaction times, impaired decision making, decreased motor skill response, and increased irritability and anxiety.
(Haidt, Jonathan. *The Anxious Generation: How the Great Rewiring of Childhood Is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness*. Penguin Press, 2024, p.123.)

- **Sleep deficiency can cause problems with learning, focusing, reacting, decision making, problem solving, memory, managing emotions and behavior, and coping with change.**
  (https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/25157012/)
- **Sufficient sleep is associated with improved mood, reduced stress, and a lower risk of major health problems such as obesity, type 2 diabetes, and heart disease.**
  (https://health.gov/myhealthfinder/healthy-living/mental-health-and-relationships/get-enough-sleep)

⩘ 6. Exercise 30 minutes.

Exercise can improve mental health, reduce stress, improve self esteem, and lower anxiety.
(https://www.eatingwell.com/article/7822525/mental-benefits-of-exercise/)

- **Health and Wellness programs reduce student absenteeism by as much as 20%.**
  (https://www.studiesweekly.com/reduce-student-absenteeism/)
- **Exercise builds cardiorespiratory fitness, strengthens bones and muscles, and helps control weight, reducing the risk of heart disease, cancer, type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, osteoporosis, and obesity.**
  (https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/physicalactivity/facts.htm)
- **Students who are physically active tend to have better academic performance.**
  (https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4606776/)

⩘ 7. Get outside for 30 minutes.

"Kids are built to move, and having more time for unstructured, outdoor play is essentially like a reset button."
— Debbie Rhea, Ed. D. Head Start

- **"Free play changes the neurons in the prefrontal cortex during childhood, prepping the brain to regulate emotions, make plans, and solve problems."** (https://www.aaastateofplay.com/30-reasons-why-free-play-benefits-child-development/)
- **Time in natural environments enhances health.**
  (https://www.nature.com/articles/srep11610)
- **Spending time in nature improves mood, increases focus, and improves physiological markers such as blood pressure and heart rate.**
  (https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/psychology/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.02942/full)
- **Access to green spaces improves mental health.**
  (https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0749379715000410)

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