

THE
13
LIFE HACKS



Hack 10
Overcoming Bad Habits:
Teacher Notes

A project of



Government Criteria Alignment Chart

Framework	Criterion / Theme	Covered in Hack 10
PSHE (Health & Wellbeing)	H1: Recognise and talk about emotions	Habit and urge awareness; tracking triggers and feelings; linking emotions to behaviour, focus, sleep, and confidence
	H4: Developing resilience and perseverance	Bamboo tree story; persistence with new habits; continuing after slip-ups
	H5: Skills to manage setbacks and change	Learning from slip-ups; reframing mistakes as growth; practising delay-of-urge; adjusting strategies
	H10: Strategies to manage pressure	Managing urges under stress; slow breathing; delaying action 5–10 minutes to regain control
	H11: Self-respect and achievement	Celebrating small wins; rewarding effort; tracking progress (e.g., calendar); building a positive identity around effort
	H17: Risks of substance use	Peer pressure and experimentation with vaping, smoking, alcohol, or addictive substances; understanding long-term health and wellbeing impact
	PSHE (Relationships)	R2: Trust, respect, communication
R13: Managing change in relationships		Understanding how habits affect friendships and family trust; repairing and maintaining relationships
RSHE (Mental Wellbeing)	Importance of accepting emotions	Normalising frustration, boredom, and cravings during change; accepting urges without acting; self-compassion
	Impact of challenges on wellbeing	Seeing how breaking habits improves mood, confidence, focus; illustrative teen stories

Government Criteria Alignment Chart

Framework	Criterion / Theme	Covered in Hack 10
Safeguarding / KCSIE	Knowing when to seek support	Clear guidance to reach out if a habit is private, escalating, or harming mood/safety/daily life
	Recognising risk behaviours	Noticing patterns/signs of harm (withdrawal, sleep issues, overwhelm) linked to habits and avoidance
	Recognising peer pressure / harmful content	Acknowledging unhealthy influence from peers or media; risks of engaging with harmful content online or offline
British Values	Individual Liberty: owning your journey	Personal responsibility and agency; SMART goals; choosing healthier routines
	Tolerance: understanding differences	Respecting others' struggles and pace of change; non-judgemental support
SMSC – Spiritual	Self-awareness and reflection	Bamboo tree metaphor; hidden growth; reflective journalling on triggers, urges, and progress
SMSC – Moral	Understanding emotional and behavioural struggles	Distinguishing healthy vs harmful habits; responsibility for choices; perseverance despite setbacks
SMSC – Social	Recognising diverse life experiences	Case studies showing impact on peers, family, and community; using support networks
SMSC – Cultural	Respecting lifestyle balance	Promoting balanced routines across digital use, leisure, study, work; healthy lifestyle choices

Learning Focus

This chapter helps students recognise the difference between harmless habits and those that can seriously affect their health, wellbeing, and relationships. It explores how habits form, why they can be difficult to break, and how peer pressure and experimentation can lead to addictive patterns. Students learn practical strategies for overcoming bad habits, such as self-awareness, tracking progress, rewarding effort, reframing slip-ups as growth, and building healthier routines. Through metaphors, real-life teen stories, and reflective exercises, the chapter encourages students to take personal responsibility, understand the risks of harmful behaviours (such as vaping, smoking, alcohol, and addictive substances), and celebrate persistence as the key to success.

Key Themes

- Everyone has habits, some are harmless, others harmful
- Peer pressure and experimentation can lead to addictive patterns (e.g. vaping, smoking, alcohol)
- Recognising urges and linking them to emotions, stress, or triggers
- Slip-ups are part of change- persistence matters more than perfection
- Practical tools: habit tracking, rewarding effort, reframing mistakes, and building routines
- Habits affect health, sleep, focus, and relationships
- You can choose your influences: resisting peer pressure and unhealthy content
- Celebrating small wins builds confidence and long-term resilience
- Building a positive identity around effort, not avoidance

Discussion Prompts

- **Understanding Habits**
 - “What’s the difference between an annoying habit and one that could harm you?”
 - “Why do you think some habits are harder to stop than others?”
 - “Can habits affect your confidence or relationships? How?”
- **Peer Pressure and Influence**
 - “Why do you think teens sometimes start vaping, smoking, or drinking even if they don’t really want to?”
 - “What are some good ways to resist peer pressure?”
 - “Have you ever been encouraged to do something you knew wasn’t right? What did you do?”
- **Slip-Ups and Resilience**
 - “Is it normal to slip up when you’re trying to change a habit?”
 - “What helps someone keep going instead of giving up after a mistake?”
 - “Why might rewarding effort be more powerful than only rewarding success?”
- **Tools and Techniques**
 - “What strategies could help you keep track of progress when breaking a habit?”
 - “Why is celebrating small wins important?”
 - “What’s one routine you’d like to build that would make life easier or healthier?”
- **Health and Wellbeing**
 - “How can habits like too much screen time or lack of sleep affect your mood and focus?”
 - “Why do substances like vaping or alcohol seem fun at first but become harmful over time?”
 - “What does it mean to build a healthy routine instead of just breaking a habit?”
- **Identity and Growth**
 - “How does breaking a habit change the way you see yourself?”
 - “Why is effort and persistence more important than being ‘perfect’?”
 - “What does it mean to build your identity around effort instead of avoidance?”

Imaginative Group Tasks

1. Urge Delay Challenge (Practising Self-Control)

How it works:

Groups are given a “habit trigger” card (e.g., “You feel stressed before an exam,” “Your friends are all on their phones,” “Someone offers you a vape”).

{See Appendix A for card examples.}

Each group acts out what happens if they follow the urge immediately vs. if they delay it by 5–10 minutes. They then brainstorm calming or distracting strategies to use during the delay.

Why it works:

Brings the *delay-the-urge* technique to life, helping students practise real scenarios and notice that urges shrink with time.

2. Habit Chain Reaction (Seeing the Consequences)

How it works:

Each group starts with a “small habit” card (e.g., “scrolling late at night,” “skipping breakfast,” “copying a friend’s bad habit”).

See Appendix B for some habit card examples.}

The group builds a “chain reaction” of how this habit could grow into bigger impacts over a week, month, or year (using post-its or a chart). Then they flip it — showing how replacing the habit with a positive one creates a different chain.

Why it works:

Shows that habits are not just isolated actions — they ripple into sleep, mood, relationships, and health. Encourages reflection on long-term outcomes.

Imaginative Group Tasks

3. Peer Pressure Role-Play (Resisting Influence)

How it works:

Half the group plays “the influencers” trying to persuade someone to give in to an unhealthy habit (smoking, vaping, staying up too late, skipping schoolwork). The other half role-plays the “resistor,” practising ways to say no, delay, or redirect without losing confidence. Roles then switch.

Why it works:

Gives students a safe, playful way to practise resisting peer pressure and experiment with assertive communication.

4. Habit Courtroom (Judging the Habit)

How it works:

Each group is assigned a “habit” (e.g., staying up late on screens, vaping, skipping homework). The group splits into two sides:

- **The Defence:** argue why the habit seems tempting or harmless at first.
- **The Prosecution:** argue why the habit is harmful in the long run.

The rest of the class (or the teacher) acts as the “jury” and decides the verdict: guilty (harmful habit to break) or not guilty (harmless or even helpful).

Why it works:

Encourages critical thinking, makes students see both short-term appeal and long-term harm of habits, and gets the whole class engaged in debate.

Torah Perspectives

Theme in Hack	Source	Hebrew & English (in same cell)	Use in Lesson
Habits shape who we are	Rambam, Hilchos De'os 1:7	דרך בריאתו של אדם להיות נמשך בדעותיו ובמעשיו אחרי רעיו – It is human nature to be drawn in habits and behaviours after one's friends.	Highlights peer pressure and the importance of choosing positive influences.
Peer pressure in habits	Pirkei Avos 1:7	רע הרחק משכן רע – Distance yourself from a bad neighbour.	Links to avoiding copying harmful habits just to fit in.
Self-control is greatness	Mishlei 16:32	טוב ארך אפים מגבור ומושל ברוחו מלכד עיר – Better to be patient than mighty, and one who rules his spirit than one who conquers a city.	Perfect for teaching that resisting urges is real strength.
Resisting urges protects you	Kiddushin 30b	בראתי יצר הרע, ובראתי לו תורה תבלין – I created the evil inclination, and I created the Torah as its remedy.	Shows that urges are part of life, but we are given tools to manage them.
Habits can enslave	Avos d'Rabbi Nosson 23	עברה מושכת עברה – One sin drags another after it.	Helps students see how negative habits spiral if left unchecked.
Building good habits	Sefer HaChinuch, Mitzvah 16	אחרי הפעולות נמשכות הלבבות – The heart is drawn after the actions.	Encourages repetition of positive habits even before you “feel it.”
Small actions make big change	Koheles 10:1	זבובי מות יבאיש יביע שמן רוקח – A little folly can outweigh wisdom and honour.	Teaches that even small negative habits can grow into major problems.
Slipping is not failing	Mishlei 24:16	שבע יפול צדיק וקם – A righteous person falls seven times and rises again.	Normalises slip-ups and emphasises getting back up.
Control over desires = freedom	Avos 6:2	אין לך בן חורין אלא מי שעוסק בתורה – The truly free person is one who engages in Torah.	Discussion point: Are habits controlling you, or are you in control?
Delay strengthens mastery	Avos 4:1	איזהו גבור? הכובש את יצרו – Who is strong? One who conquers his inclination.	Perfect fit for the “delay the urge” technique — real mastery is pausing before acting.

Suggested 3 lesson plan

Lesson 1: Understanding Habits

Learning Focus:

- Recognise the difference between small habits and damaging ones
- Explore how habits affect focus, sleep, mood, confidence, and relationships
- Understand that success comes from the willingness to break harmful habits

Key Themes Covered:

- Everyone has habits - some helpful, some harmful
- Bad habits can impact physical, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing
- Habits ripple outward, influencing many parts of life

Discussion Prompts:

- What's the difference between an annoying habit and a damaging one?
- How can one small habit (like scrolling late at night) affect your next day?
- Do you agree that breaking habits can make you feel “more in control” of life?

Group Activity:

- **Habit Chain Reaction** – build the ripple effect of a small habit over time (Appendix B)

Workbook Pages: 26-28

Lesson 2: Managing Urges

Learning Focus:

- Learn practical tools to resist and manage urges
- Explore the “Delay the Urge” technique for self-control
- Use relaxation (deep breathing) to reduce the power of cravings and impulses

Key Themes Covered:

- Urges feel powerful but shrink with time
- Breathing and calming techniques give you back control
- Delaying urges builds resilience and makes healthier choices possible

Discussion Prompts:

- What kind of triggers set off common bad habits for teens?
- What strategies could help during the “urge delay” time?
- How does calming your body affect your decisions?

Group Activity:

- **Urge Delay Challenge** – act out triggers, then practise delaying and distracting (Appendix A)

Workbook Pages: 29-34

Suggested 3 lesson plan

Lesson 3: Breaking Free and Replacing Habits

Learning Focus:

- Understand that setbacks don't mean failure
- Recognise how addictive substances and unhealthy habits take root
- Focus on replacing damaging habits with positive, growth-oriented ones
- Looking at examples from Yael & Dov

Key Themes Covered:

- Even addictive habits can be challenged step by step
- Everyone struggles - the goal is progress, not perfection
- Positive habits grow stronger the more we "travel that road"

Discussion Prompts:

- Why do teens sometimes hide their habits, even from friends or family?
- What makes addictive substances (like vaping, alcohol, or online content) especially hard to quit?
- What's one healthy habit you could start building to replace a negative one?

Group Activity:

- **Positive Habit Swap** – groups take a bad habit card and brainstorm healthier replacements {Appendix B}

End-of-Hack Activities:

- **Multiple Choice Recap Quiz** (download from: masteringyourmind.today)
- **Wordsearch** (optional calming task or early finisher activity — also available on the website)

Workbook Pages: 35-39

Appendix A

Habit Trigger Cards – Examples

- *“You feel bored at home and reach for your phone.”*
- *“You’re stressed before a test and want to snack.”*
- *“Your friends are all scrolling on their phones- you want to join in.”*
- *“You’re gaming late at night and don’t feel like stopping.”*
- *“You feel upset after an argument and want to do something you shouldn’t”*
- *“Someone offers you a vape.”*
- *“You wake up tired and want to skip schoolwork.”*
- *“You’re celebrating a simcha and want to drink*
- *“You feel lonely and want to message someone you know isn’t good for you.”*

Appendix B

Small Habit Card Examples

- Scrolling on your phone late at night instead of sleeping
- Skipping breakfast most mornings
- Copying a friend’s habit of vaping or smoking “just to try it”
- Putting off homework until the very last minute
- Spending hours gaming instead of doing other activities
- Checking your phone constantly during conversations
- Drinking energy drinks every day for a boost
- Sneaking unhealthy snacks when you feel bored
- Looking at things online you know aren’t good for you
- Saying “yes” to friends even when you don’t feel comfortable
- Trying alcohol at a party because “everyone else is”