

## Keys to Successful Stitching

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The information in this article is based on the January 2006 *The Oprah Magazine* article, *the first 30 days*.

The point of the article is that it takes 30 days to make a change or get through a life event such as starting a new job. Thirty days is long enough to accomplish a specific goal but not so long a time that it is discouraging. This theory is backed up by scientific research. **NEW HABITS, PRACTICED CONSISTENTLY FOR THREE WEEKS, CREATE "FRESH NEURAL PATHWAYS THAT HARDWIRE THE NEW BEHAVIOR."**

Dominique De Backer, French psychologist, states our brain will help or sabotage us during the first 30 days. Now here is the most important information...The brain will only accept the new information if it doesn't threaten the coherence the brain is trying to maintain.

Change will **ONLY** occur if the brain believes it:

1. Isn't dangerous
2. Doesn't cause pain, and
3. **Is safe to proceed.**

The first two points are quite logical and make a great deal of sense. Certainly practicing Japanese embroidery isn't dangerous and it shouldn't cause pain. However I never thought about the idea of it being "safe to proceed".

Basically what this means is that:

1. **The change can't be too stressful, difficult, overwhelming or like something that didn't work previously.** This is how it applies to Japanese embroidery. Don't try to sit down for an hour or two a day. Just make your goal 10 to 15 minutes a day. That's reasonable. It's doable. It isn't stressful and the amount of time isn't overwhelming. It probably isn't an approach you have ever tried before either. 😊
2. **It must bring you pleasure, happiness, joy and/or something new.** To me, seeing the results of my stitching does just that. I am a very slow stitcher so it takes a long time to see very much on my ground fabric. But I can get a tremendous amount of joy just seeing a petal or a leaf I've created. Certainly it will be something new as every design offers new challenges. At first it may be learning or improving stitching the basic techniques. Later it may be choosing some or all of the colors and/or stitches for a design. After 16 years, each day I practice my art, I have new and exciting challenges that give me tremendous pleasure. One of the advance students working on *Flutterbys* wrote that she couldn't sleep because she was so psyched thinking about the colors and the stitches she wanted to use for her piece. It is one of the coolest letters I've received in a long time because I totally understood the excitement of sitting down at my design/frame each day and creating. It is a feeling that we, as teachers, hope all our students will experience. Althea DeBrule also has reached this point. She started *Moon Princess* in October and had almost finished it by the time she arrived at Callaway. She was so excited about her piece, she started stitching 2-4 after hours each day and longer on the weekends.

Additionally, for the brain to accept a change, three things must happen:

1. **The goal must be clear and simple.** For instance, set the goal of spending 15 minutes a day on Japanese embroidery for 30 days. Think about substitutes for stitching if you are traveling. How about taking along your techniques book and reading about symbols or about the techniques for 15 minutes a day. If you are on a longer trip, take along the Portable Stitching Frame. Transfer a design element that isn't as easy for you to execute and then practice the technique(s) while on the road.
2. **The outcome of your goal must be achievable and attainable.** This will vary different for each stitcher. A couple of examples are: 1. Stitching every day will give me a sense of accomplishment and reward me with increased stitching skill for all my embroidery. 2. Stitching every day will give me a sense of accomplishment and reward me with increased knowledge of the Japanese embroidery techniques.
3. **The result of the change will positive and pleasurable.** If you stitch every day, you will continue to improve your skills and your knowledge of the needle art. The results are bound to be positive and pleasurable.