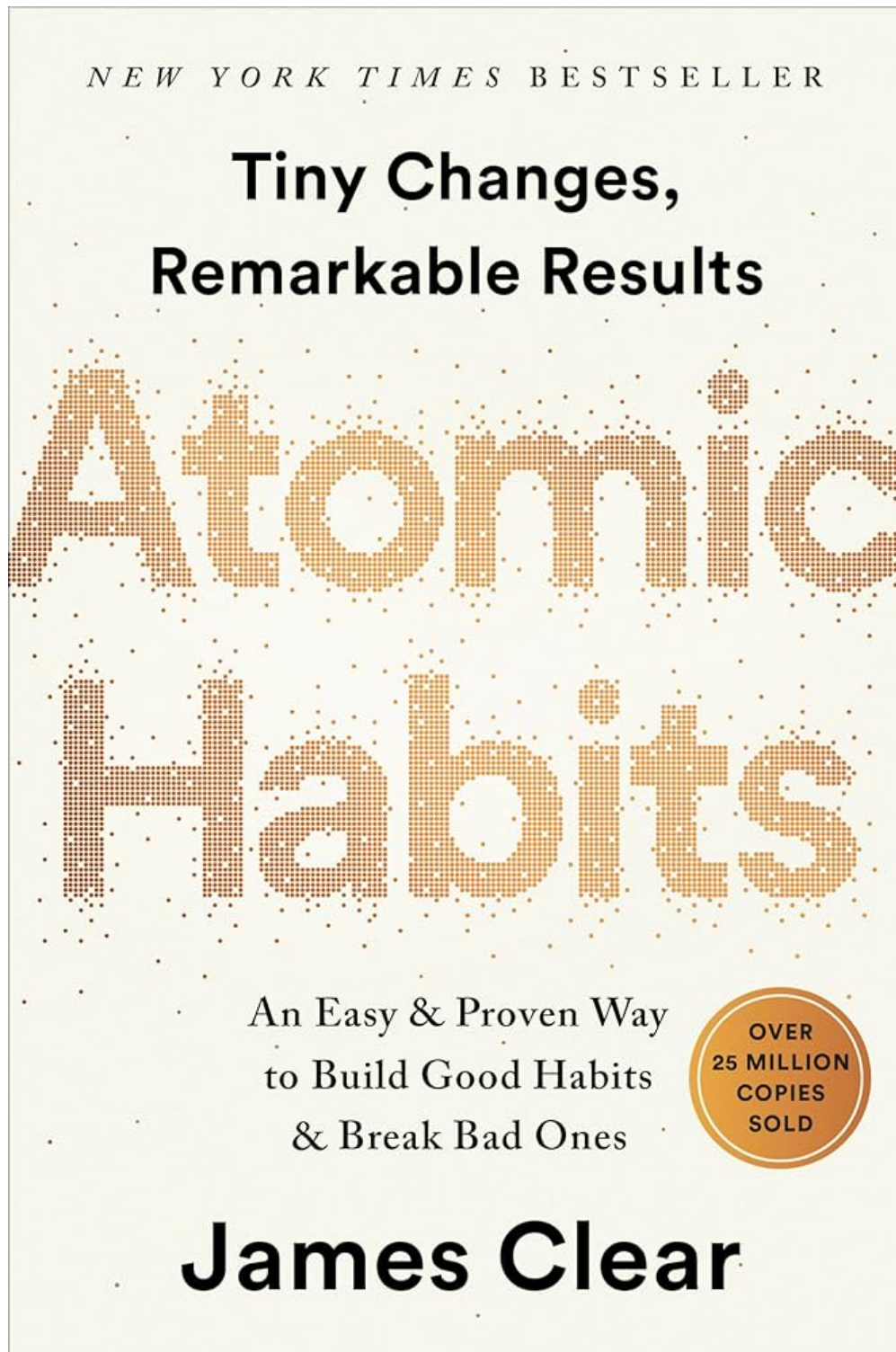


Atomic Habits: An Easy & Proven Way To Build Good Habits & Break Bad Ones (2018) - James Clear



About James Clear

American writer, entrepreneur, and speaker who in 2018, building on exchanges he had with readers of his e-mail list, published his first book [Atomic Habits](#) on how to build tiny, frequent habits that have a cumulative effect in life. He builds on his own story where he had to rehabilitate from a severe cranial injury that he suffered when playing baseball—this developed an expertise on the topic.

[What follows are quotes from the book above. These quotes stood out to psychotherapist Emil Barna in his reading of the book. They are not meant to be exhaustive nor representative of the entire book. All quotes are to be read in this context and must not replace medical and/or other professional advice. Note: Any typographical errors occurred through the transcription process and do not reflect what may be found in the book.]

All visuals in this book can be found for free at <https://s3.amazonaws.com/jamesclear/Atomic+Habits/Media.pdf>

The Fundamentals: Why Tiny Changes Make A Big Difference

Chapter 1 - The Surprising Power Of Atomic Habits

"improving by 1 percent isn't particularly notable—sometimes it isn't even noticeable—but it can be far more meaningful, especially in the long run. The difference a tiny improvement can make over time is astounding. Here's how the math works out: if you can get 1 percent better each day for one year, you'll end up thirty-seven times better by the time you're done. Conversely, if you get 1 percent worse each day for one year, you'll decline nearly down to zero. What starts as a small win or a minor setback accumulates into something much more."

1% BETTER EVERY DAY

1% worse every day for one year. $0.99^{365} = 00.03$

1% better every day for one year. $1.01^{365} = 37.78$

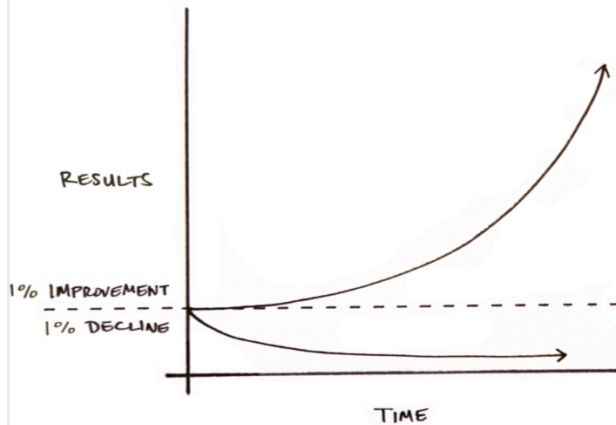


FIGURE 1: The effects of small habits compound over time. For example, if you can get just 1 percent better each day, you'll end up with results that are nearly 37 times better after one year.

"Habits are the compound interest of self-improvement. The same way that money multiplies through compound interest, the effects of your habits multiply as you repeat them. They seem to make little difference on any given day and yet the impact they deliver over the months and years can be enormous. It is only when looking back two, five, or perhaps ten years later that the value of good habits and the cost of bad ones becomes strikingly apparent."

"Cancer spends 80 percent of its life undetectable, then takes over the body in months. Bamboo can barely be seen for the first five years as it builds extensive root systems underground before exploding ninety feet into the air within six weeks."

"Mastery requires patience. The San Antonio Spurs, one of the most successful teams in NBA history, have a quote from social reformer Jacob Riis hanging in their locker room: "When nothing seems to help, I go and look at a stonecutter hammering away at his rock, perhaps a hundred times without as much as a crack showing in it. Yet at the hundred and first blow it will split in two, and I know it was not that last blow that did it— but all that had gone before.""

THE PLATEAU OF LATENT POTENTIAL

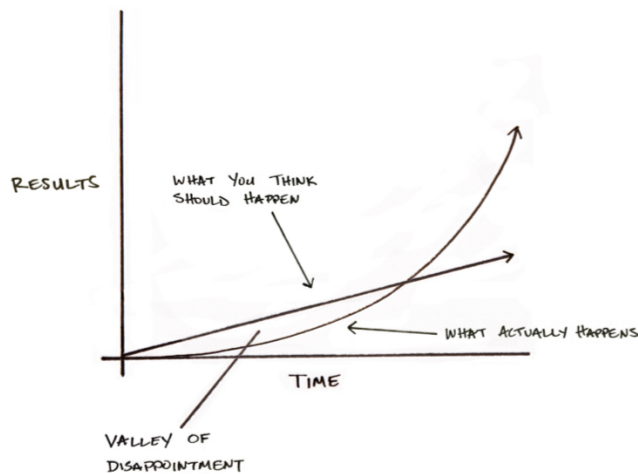


FIGURE 2: We often expect progress to be linear. At the very least, we hope it will come quickly. In reality, the results of our efforts are often delayed. It is not until months or years later that we realize the true value of the previous work we have done. This can result in a "valley of disappointment" where people feel discouraged after putting in weeks or months of hard work without experiencing any results. However, this work was not wasted. It was simply being stored. It is not until much later that the full value of previous efforts is revealed.

"When you fall in love with the process rather than the product, you don't have to wait to give yourself permission to be happy. You can be satisfied anytime your system is running. And a system can be successful in many different forms, not just the one you first envision."

"You do not rise to the level of your goals. You fall to the level of your systems."

Chapter Summary

- Habits are the compound interest of self-improvement. Getting 1 percent better every day counts for a lot in the long-run.
- Habits are a double-edged sword. They can work for you or against you, which is why understanding the details is essential.
- Small changes often appear to make no difference until you cross a critical threshold. The most powerful outcomes of any compounding process are delayed. You need to be patient.
- An atomic habit is a little habit that is part of a larger system. Just as atoms are the building blocks of molecules, atomic habits are the building blocks of remarkable results.
- If you want better results, then forget about setting goals. Focus on your system instead.
- You do not rise to the level of your goals. You fall to the level of your systems.

Chapter 2 - How Your Habits Shape Your Identity (And Vice Versa)

The first layer is changing your outcomes. This level is concerned with changing your results: losing weight, publishing a book, winning a championship. Most of the goals you set are associated with this level of change.

The second layer is changing your process. This level is concerned with changing your habits and systems: implementing a new routine at the gym, decluttering your desk for better workflow, developing a meditation practice. Most of the habits you build are associated with this level.

The third and deepest layer is changing your identity. This level is concerned with changing your beliefs: your worldview, your self-image, your judgments about yourself and others. Most of the beliefs, assumptions, and biases you hold are associated with this level.

"Outcomes are about what you get. Processes are about what you do. Identity is about what you believe. When it comes to building habits that last—when it comes to building a system of 1 percent improvements—the problem is not that one level is "better" or "worse" than another. All levels of change are useful in their own way. The problem is the *direction* of change. Many people begin the process of changing their habits by focusing on *what* they want to achieve. This leads us to outcome-based habits. The alternative is to build identity-based habits. With this approach, we start by focusing on *who* we wish to become."

"Imagine two people resisting a cigarette. When offered a smoke, the first person says, "No thanks. I'm trying to quit." It sounds like a reasonable response, but this person still believes they are a smoker who is trying to be something else. They are hoping their behavior will change while carrying around the same beliefs. The second person declines by saying, "No thanks. I'm not a smoker." It's a small difference, but this statement signals a shift in identity. Smoking was part of their former life, not their current one. They no longer identify as someone who smokes."

"True behavior change is identity change. You might start a habit because of motivation, but the only reason you'll stick with one is that it becomes part of your identity. Anyone can convince themselves to visit the gym or eat healthy once or twice, but if you don't shift the belief behind the behavior, then it is hard to stick with long-term changes. Improvements are only temporary until they become part of who you are."

"you can't get too attached to one version of your identity. Progress requires unlearning. Becoming the best version of yourself requires you to continuously edit your beliefs, and to upgrade and expand your identity. [...] You are not born

with preset beliefs. Every belief, including those about yourself, is learned and conditioned through experience."

"Every action you take is a vote for the type of person you wish to become. No single instance will transform your beliefs, but as the votes build up, so does the evidence of your new identity. This is one reason why meaningful change does not require radical change. Small habits can make a meaningful difference by providing evidence of a new identity. And if a change is meaningful, it actually is big. That's the paradox of making small improvements."

1. Decide the type of person you want to be.
2. Prove it to yourself with small wins.

Chapter Summary

- There are three levels of change: outcome change, process change, and identity change.
- The most effective way to change your habits is to focus not on what you want to achieve, but on who you wish to become.
- Your identity emerges out of your habits. Every action is a vote for the type of person you wish to become.
Becoming the best version of yourself requires you to continuously edit your beliefs, and to upgrade and expand your identity.
- The real reason habits matter is not because they can get you better results (although they can do that), but because they can change your beliefs about yourself.

Chapter 3 - How To Build Better Habits In 4 Simple Steps

"After you stumble upon an unexpected reward, you alter your strategy for next time. Your brain immediately begins to catalog the events that preceded the reward. *Wait a minute—that felt good. What did I do right before that?* This is the feedback loop behind all human behavior: try, fail, learn, try differently. With practice, the useless movements fade away and the useful actions get reinforced. That's a habit forming."

"Habits are mental shortcuts learned from experience. In a sense, a habit is just a memory of the steps you previously followed to solve a problem in the past. Whenever the conditions are right, you can draw on this memory and automatically apply the same solution. The primary reason the brain remembers the past is to better predict what will work in the future. Habit formation is incredibly useful because the conscious mind is the bottleneck of the brain. It can only pay attention to one problem at a time. As a result, your brain is always working to preserve your conscious attention for whatever task is most essential. Whenever possible, the conscious mind likes to pawn off tasks to the nonconscious mind to do automatically. This is precisely what happens

when a habit is formed. Habits reduce cognitive load and free up mental capacity, so you can allocate your attention to other tasks."

"Every craving is linked to a desire to change your internal state."

"the cue triggers a craving, which motivates a response, which provides a reward, which satisfies the craving and, ultimately, becomes associated with the cue. Together, these four steps form a neurological feedback loop—cue, craving, response, reward"

How to Create a Good Habit	
The 1st law (Cue)	Make it obvious.
The 2nd law (Craving)	Make it attractive.
The 3rd law (Response)	Make it easy.
The 4th law (Reward)	Make it satisfying.

We can invert these laws to learn how to break a bad habit.

How to Break a Bad Habit	
Inversion of the 1st law (Cue)	Make it invisible.
Inversion of the 2nd law (Craving)	Make it unattractive.
Inversion of the 3rd law (Response)	Make it difficult.
Inversion of the 4th law (Reward)	Make it unsatisfying.

Chapter Summary

- A habit is a behavior that has been repeated enough times to become automatic.
- The ultimate purpose of habits is to solve the problems of life with as little energy and effort as possible.
- Any habit can be broken down into a feedback loop that involves four steps: cue, craving, response, and reward.
- The Four Laws of Behavior Change are a simple set of rules we can use to build better habits. They are (1) make it obvious, (2) make it attractive, (3) make it easy, and (4) make it satisfying.

The 1st Law: Make It Obvious

Chapter 4 - The Man Who Didn't Look Right

"The human brain is a prediction machine. It is continuously taking in your surroundings and analyzing the information it comes across."

"Whenever you experience something repeatedly—like a paramedic seeing the face of a heart attack patient or a military analyst seeing a missile on a radar screen—your brain begins noticing what is important, sorting through the details and highlighting the relevant cues, and cataloging that information for future use. With enough practice, you can pick up on the cues that predict certain outcomes without consciously thinking about it. Automatically, your brain encodes the lessons learned through experience. We can't always explain what it is we are learning, but learning is happening all along the way, and your ability to notice the relevant cues in a given situation is the foundation for every habit you have."

"Many of our failures in performance are largely attributable to a lack of self-awareness."

"here is a question I like to use: "Does this behavior help me become the type of person I wish to be? Does this habit cast a vote for or against my desired identity?" Habits that reinforce your desired identity are usually good. Habits that conflict with your desired identity are usually bad."

[The 'Say It Aloud' Strategy]

"The first step to changing bad habits is to be on the lookout for them. If you feel like you need extra help, then you can try Pointing-and-Calling in your own life. Say out loud the action that you are thinking of taking and what the outcome will be. If you want to cut back on your junk food habit but notice yourself grabbing another cookie, say out loud, "I'm about to eat this cookie, but I don't need it. Eating it will cause me to gain weight and hurt my health." Hearing your bad habits spoken aloud makes the consequences seem more real. It adds weight to the action rather than letting yourself mindlessly slip into an old routine. This approach is useful even if you're simply trying to remember a task on your to-do list. Just saying out loud, "Tomorrow, I need to go to the post office after lunch," increases the odds that you'll actually do it. You're getting yourself to acknowledge the need for action—and that can make all the difference."

Chapter Summary

- With enough practice, your brain will pick up on the cues that predict certain outcomes without consciously thinking about it.
- Once our habits become automatic, we stop paying attention to what we are doing.
- The process of behavior change always starts with awareness. You need to be aware of your habits before you can change them.
- Pointing-and-Calling raises your level of awareness from a non-conscious habit to a more conscious level by verbalizing your actions.
- The Habits Scorecard is a simple exercise you can use to become

more aware of your behavior.

Chapter 5 - The Best Way To Start A New Habit

"IN 2001, RESEARCHERS in Great Britain began working with 248 people to build better exercise habits over the course of two weeks. The subjects were divided into three groups. The first group was the control group. They were simply asked to track how often they exercised. The second group was the "motivation" group. They were asked not only to track their workouts but also to read some material on the benefits of exercise. The researchers also explained to the group how exercise could reduce the risk of coronary heart disease and improve heart health. Finally, there was the third group. These subjects received the same presentation as the second group, which ensured that they had equal levels of motivation. However, they were also asked to formulate a plan for when and where they would exercise over the following week. Specifically, each member of the third group completed the following sentence: "During the next week, I will partake in at least 20 minutes of vigorous exercise on [DAY] at [TIME] in [PLACE]." In the first and second groups, 35 to 38 percent of people exercised at least once per week. (Interestingly, the motivational presentation given to the second group seemed to have no meaningful impact on behavior.) But 91 percent of the third group exercised at least once per week—more than double the normal rate."

"The simple way to apply this strategy to your habits is to fill out this sentence: I will (BEHAVIOR) at [TIME] in [LOCATION]."

"If you aren't sure when to start your habit, try the first day of the week, month, or year. People are more likely to take action at those times because hope is usually higher. If we have hope, we have a reason to take action. A fresh start feels motivating."

"habit stacking allows you to create a set of simple rules that guide your future behavior. It's like you always have a game plan for which action should come next. Once you get comfortable with this approach, you can develop general habit stacks to guide you whenever the situation is appropriate"

"No matter how you use this strategy, the secret to creating a successful habit stack is selecting the right cue to kick things off. Unlike an implementation intention, which specifically states the time and location for a given behavior, habit stacking implicitly has the time and location built into it. When and where you choose to insert a habit into your daily routine can make a big difference. If you're trying to add meditation into your morning routine but mornings are chaotic and four kids keep running into the room, then that may be the wrong place and time. Consider when you are most likely to be successful. Don't ask yourself to do a habit when you're likely to be occupied with something else."

Chapter Summary

- The 1st Law of Behavior Change is make it obvious.
- The two most common cues are time and location.
- Creating an implementation intention is a strategy you can use to pair a new habit with a specific time and location.
- The implementation intention formula is: I will (BEHAVIOR] at (TIME] in [LOCATION).
- Habit stacking is a strategy you can use to pair a new habit with a current habit.
- The habit stacking formula is: After (CURRENT HABIT), I will [NEW HABIT].

Chapter 6 - Motivation Is Overrated; Environment Often Matters More

"People often choose products not because of *what* they are, but because of *where* they are. If I walk into the kitchen and see a plate of cookies on the counter, I'll pick up half a dozen and start eating, even if I hadn't been thinking about them beforehand and didn't necessarily feel hungry. If the communal table at the office is always filled with doughnuts and bagels, it's going to be hard not to grab one every now and then. Your habits change depending on the room you are in and the cues in front of you."

"Every habit is context dependent."

"Every living being has its own methods for sensing and understanding the world. Eagles have remarkable long-distance vision. Snakes can smell by "tasting the air" with their highly sensitive tongues. Sharks can detect small amounts of electricity and vibrations in the water caused by nearby fish. Even bacteria have chemoreceptors—tiny sensory cells that allow them to detect toxic chemicals in their environment. In humans, perception is directed by the sensory nervous system. We perceive the world through sight, sound, smell, touch, and taste. But we also have other ways of sensing stimuli. Some are conscious, but many are nonconscious. For instance, you can "notice" when the temperature drops before a storm, or when the pain in your gut rises during a stomachache, or when you fall off balance while walking on rocky ground. Receptors in your body pick up on a wide range of internal stimuli, such as the amount of salt in your blood or the need to drink when thirsty. The most powerful of all human sensory abilities, however, is vision. The human body has about eleven million sensory receptors. Approximately ten million of those are dedicated to sight. Some experts estimate that half of the brain's resources are used on vision. Given that we are more dependent on vision than on any other sense, it should come as no surprise that visual cues are the greatest catalyst of our behavior. For this reason, a small change in what you see can lead to a big shift in what you do. As a result, you can imagine how important it is to live and work in environments that are filled with productive cues and devoid of

unproductive ones."

"In one study, scientists instructed insomniacs to get into bed only when they were tired. If they couldn't fall asleep, they were told to sit in a different room until they became sleepy. Over time, subjects began to associate the context of their bed with the action of sleeping, and it became easier to quickly fall asleep when they climbed in bed. Their brains learned that sleeping—not browsing on their phones, not watching television, not staring at the clock—was the only action that happened in that room."

"Whenever possible, avoid mixing the context of one habit with another. When you start mixing contexts, you'll start mixing habits—and the easier ones will usually win out. This is one reason why the versatility of modern technology is both a strength and a weakness."

"You can use your phone for all sorts of tasks, which makes it a powerful device. But when you can use your phone to do nearly anything, it becomes hard to associate it with one task. You want to be productive, but you're also conditioned to browse social media, check email, and play video games whenever you open your phone. It's a mishmash of cues."

Chapter Summary

- Small changes in context can lead to large changes in behavior over time.
- Every habit is initiated by a cue. We are more likely to notice cues that stand out.
- Make the cues of good habits obvious in your environment.
- Gradually, your habits become associated not with a single trigger but with the entire context surrounding the behavior. The context becomes the cue.
- It is easier to build new habits in a new environment because you are not fighting against old cues.

Chapter 7 - The Secret To Self-Control

"IN 1971, as the Vietnam War was heading into its sixteenth year, congressmen Robert Steele from Connecticut and Morgan Murphy from Illinois made a discovery that stunned the American public. While visiting the troops, they had learned that over 15 percent of U.S. soldiers stationed there were heroin addicts. Follow-up research revealed that 35 percent of service members in Vietnam had tried heroin and as many as 20 percent were addicted—the problem was even worse than they had initially thought. The discovery led to a flurry of activity in Washington, including the creation of the Special Action Office of Drug Abuse Prevention under President Nixon to promote prevention and rehabilitation and to track addicted service members when they returned home. Lee Robins was one of the researchers in charge. In a finding that

completely upended the accepted beliefs about addiction, Robins found that when soldiers who had been heroin users returned home, only 5 percent of them became re-addicted within a year, and just 12 percent relapsed within three years. In other words, approximately nine out of ten soldiers who used heroin in Vietnam eliminated their addiction nearly overnight. This finding contradicted the prevailing view at the time, which considered heroin addiction to be a permanent and irreversible condition. Instead, Robins revealed that addictions could spontaneously dissolve if there was a radical change in the environment. In Vietnam, soldiers spent all day surrounded by cues triggering heroin use: it was easy to access, they were engulfed by the constant stress of war, they built friendships with fellow soldiers who were also heroin users, and they were thousands of miles from home. Once a soldier returned to the United States, though, he found himself in an environment devoid of those triggers. When the context changed, so did the habit. Compare this situation to that of a typical drug user. Someone becomes addicted at home or with friends, goes to a clinic to get clean—which is devoid of all the environmental stimuli that prompt their habit—then returns to their old neighborhood with all of their previous cues that caused them to get addicted in the first place. It's no wonder that usually you see numbers that are the exact opposite of those in the Vietnam study. Typically, 90 percent of heroin users become re-addicted once they return home from rehab. The Vietnam studies ran counter to many of our cultural beliefs about bad habits because it challenged the conventional association of unhealthy behavior as a moral weakness. If you're overweight, a smoker, or an addict, you've been told your entire life that it is because you lack self-control—maybe even that you're a bad person. The idea that a little bit of discipline would solve all our problems is deeply embedded in our culture. Recent research, however, shows something different. When scientists analyze people who appear to have tremendous self-control, it turns out those individuals aren't all that different from those who are struggling. Instead, "disciplined" people are better at structuring their lives in a way that *does not require* heroic willpower and self-control. In other words, they spend less time in tempting situations. The people with the best self-control are typically the ones who need to use it the least. It's easier to practice self-restraint when you don't have to use it very often. So, yes, perseverance, grit, and willpower are essential to success, but the way to improve these qualities is not by wishing you were a more disciplined person, but by creating a more disciplined environment."

"Showing pictures of blackened lungs to smokers leads to higher levels of anxiety, which drives many people to reach for a cigarette. If you're not careful about cues, You can cause the very behavior you want to stop."

"Once you *notice* something, you begin to *want* it. This process is happening all the time—often without us realizing it. Scientists have found that showing addicts a picture of cocaine for just thirty-three milliseconds stimulates the reward pathway in the brain and sparks desire. This speed is too fast for the brain to consciously register—the addicts couldn't even tell you what they had

seen—but they craved the drug all the same.”

“Instead of summoning a new dose of willpower whenever you want to do the right thing, your energy would be better spent optimizing your environment. This is the secret to self-control. Make the cues of your good habits obvious and the cues of your bad habits invisible.”

Chapter Summary

- The inversion of the 1st Law of Behavior Change is make it invisible.
- Once a habit is formed, it is unlikely to be forgotten.
- People with high self-control tend to spend less time in tempting situations. It's easier to avoid temptation than resist it.
- One of the most practical ways to eliminate a bad habit is to reduce exposure to the cue that causes it.
- Self-control is a short-term strategy, not a long-term one.

The 1st Law	Make It Obvious
1.1	Fill out the Habits Scorecard. Write down your current habits to become aware of them.
1.2	Use implementation intentions: “I will [BEHAVIOR] at [TIME] in [LOCATION].”
1.3	Use habit stacking: “After [CURRENT HABIT], I will [NEW HABIT].”
1.4	Design your environment. Make the cues of good habits obvious and visible.

Inversion of the 1st Law	Make It Invisible
1.5	Reduce exposure. Remove the cues of your bad habits from your environment.

The 2nd Law: Make It Attractive

Chapter 8 - How To Make A Habit Irresistible

“We have the brains of our ancestors but temptations they never had to face.”

“Scientists can track the precise moment a craving occurs by measuring a neurotransmitter called dopamine. The importance of dopamine became apparent in 1954 when the neuroscientists James Olds and Peter Milner ran an experiment that revealed the neurological processes behind craving and desire. By implanting electrodes in the brains of rats, the researchers blocked the release of dopamine. To the surprise of the scientists, the rats lost all will to

live. They wouldn't eat. They wouldn't have sex. They didn't crave anything. Within a few days, the animals died of thirst. In follow-up studies, other scientists also inhibited the dopamine-releasing parts of the brain, but this time, they squirted little droplets of sugar into the mouths of the dopamine-depleted rats. Their little rat faces lit up with pleasurable grins from the tasty substance. Even though dopamine was blocked, they liked the sugar just as much as before; they just didn't want it anymore. The ability to experience pleasure remained, but without dopamine, desire died. And without desire, action stopped."

"When it comes to habits, the key takeaway is this: dopamine is released not only when you *experience* pleasure, but also when you *anticipate* it. Gambling addicts have a dopamine spike right before they place a bet, not after they win. Cocaine addicts get a surge of dopamine when they see the powder, not after they take it. Whenever you predict that an opportunity will be rewarding, your levels of dopamine spike in anticipation. And whenever dopamine rises, so does your motivation to act. It is the anticipation of a reward—not the fulfillment of it—that gets us to take action."

THE DOPAMINE SPIKE

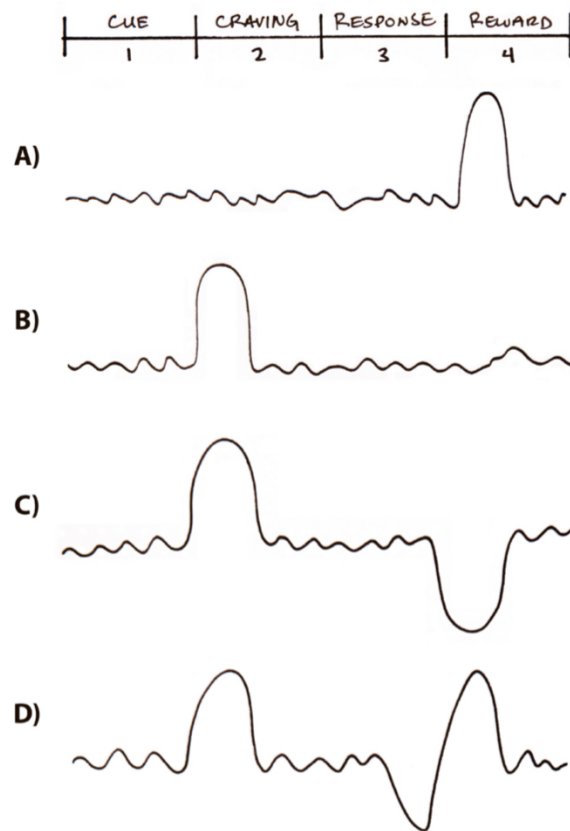


FIGURE 9: Before a habit is learned (A), dopamine is released when the reward is experienced for the first time. The next time around (B), dopamine rises before taking action, immediately after a cue is recognized. This spike leads to a feeling of desire and a craving to take action whenever the cue is spotted. Once a habit is learned, dopamine will not rise when a reward is experienced because you already expect the reward. However, if you see a cue and expect a reward, but do not get one, then dopamine will drop in disappointment (C). The sensitivity of the dopamine response can clearly be seen when a reward is provided late (D). First, the cue is identified and dopamine rises as a craving builds. Next, a response is taken but the reward does not come as quickly as expected and dopamine begins to drop. Finally, when the reward comes a little later than you had hoped, dopamine spikes again. It is as if the brain is saying, "See! I knew I was right. Don't forget to repeat this action next time."

"Temptation bundling is one way to apply a psychology theory known as Premack's Principle. Named after the work of professor David Premack, the principle states that "more probable behaviors will reinforce less probable behaviors." In other words, even if you don't really want to process overdue work emails, you'll become conditioned to do it if it means you get to do something you really want to do along the way."

The habit stacking + temptation bundling formula is:

1. After (CURRENT HABIT), I will [HABIT I NEED].
2. After (HABIT I NEED), I will [HABIT I WANT].

Chapter Summary

- The 2nd Law of Behavior Change is make it attractive.
- The more attractive an opportunity is, the more likely it is to become habit-forming.
- Habits are a dopamine-driven feedback loop. When dopamine rises, so does our motivation to act.
= It is the anticipation of a reward—not the fulfillment of it—that gets us to take action. The greater the anticipation, the greater the dopamine spike.
- Temptation bundling is one way to make your habits more attractive. The strategy is to pair an action you want to do with an action you need to do.

Chapter 9 - The Role Of Family And Friends In Shaping Your Habits

"Humans are herd animals. We want to fit in, to bond with others, and to earn the respect and approval of our peers. Such inclinations are essential to our survival. For most of our evolutionary history, our ancestors lived in tribes. Becoming separated from the tribe—or worse, being cast out—was a death sentence. "The lone wolf dies, but the pack survives.""

"We don't choose our earliest habits, we imitate them. We follow the script handed down by our friends and family, our church or school, our local community and society at large."

Join a culture where (1) your desired behavior is the normal behavior and (2) you already have something in common with the group.

"The normal behavior of the tribe often overpowers the desired behavior of the individual. For example, one study found that when a chimpanzee learns an effective way to crack nuts open as a member of one group and then switches to a new group that uses a less effective strategy, it will avoid using the superior nut cracking method just to blend in with the rest of the chimps. Humans are similar. There is tremendous internal pressure to comply with the norms of the group. The reward of being accepted is often greater than the reward of winning an argument, looking smart, or finding truth. Most days, we'd rather be wrong with the crowd than be right by ourselves. The human mind knows how to get along with others. It wants to get along with others. This is our natural mode. You can override it—you can choose to ignore the group or to stop caring what other people think—but it takes work. Running against the

grain of your culture requires extra effort. When changing your habits means challenging the tribe, change is unattractive. When changing your habits means fitting in with the tribe, change is very attractive."

Chapter Summary

- The culture we live in determines which behaviors are attractive to us.
- We tend to adopt habits that are praised and approved of by our culture because we have a strong desire to fit in and belong to the tribe.
- We tend to imitate the habits of three social groups: the close (family and friends), the many (the tribe), and the powerful (those with status and prestige).
- One of the most effective things you can do to build better habits is to join a culture where (1) your desired behavior is the normal behavior and (2) you already have something in common with the group.
- The normal behavior of the tribe often overpowers the desired behavior of the individual. Most days, we'd rather be wrong with the crowd than be right by ourselves.
- If a behavior can get us approval, respect, and praise, we find it attractive.

Chapter 10 - How To Find And Fix The Causes Of Your Bad Habits

"Life feels reactive, but it is actually predictive. All day long, you are making your best guess of how to act given what you've just seen and what has worked for you in the past. You are endlessly predicting what will happen in the next moment. Our behavior is heavily dependent on these predictions. Put another way, our behavior is heavily dependent on how we interpret the events that happen to us, not necessarily the objective reality of the events themselves. Two people can look at the same cigarette, and one feels the urge to smoke while the other is repulsed by the smell. The same cue can spark a good habit or a bad habit depending on your prediction. The cause of your habits is actually the prediction that precedes them."

"I once heard a story about a man who uses a wheelchair. When asked if it was difficult being confined, he responded, "I'm not confined to my wheelchair—I am liberated by it. If it wasn't for my wheel-chair, I would be bed-bound and never able to leave my house." This shift in perspective completely transformed how he lived each day."

Chapter Summary

- The inversion of the 2nd Law of Behavior Change is make it unattractive.
- Every behavior has a surface level craving and a deeper underlying

motive.

- Your habits are modern-day solutions to ancient desires.
- The cause of your habits is actually the prediction that precedes them. The prediction leads to a feeling.

The 2nd Law	Make It Attractive
2.1	Use temptation bundling. Pair an action you want to do with an action you need to do.
2.2	Join a culture where your desired behavior is the normal behavior.
2.3	Create a motivation ritual. Do something you enjoy immediately before a difficult habit.

Inversion of the 2nd Law	Make It Unattractive
2.4	Reframe your mindset. Highlight the benefits of avoiding your bad habits.

The 3rd Law: Make It Easy

Chapter 11 - Walk Slowly, But Never Backward

"If motion doesn't lead to results, why do we do it? Sometimes we do it because we actually need to plan or learn more. But more often than not, we do it because motion allows us to feel like we're making progress without running the risk of failure. Most of us are experts at avoiding criticism. It doesn't feel good to fail or to be judged publicly, so we tend to avoid situations where that might happen. And that's the biggest reason why you slip into motion rather than taking action: you want to delay failure."

"Motion makes you feel like you're getting things done. But really, you're just preparing to get something done. When preparation becomes a form of procrastination, you need to change something. You don't want to merely be planning. You want to be practicing."

"Habit formation is the process by which a behavior becomes progressively more automatic through repetition. The more you repeat an activity, the more the structure of your brain changes to become efficient at that activity. Neuroscientists call this *long-term potentiation*, which refers to the strengthening of connections between neurons in the brain based on recent patterns of activity. With each repetition, cell-to-cell signaling improves and the neural connections tighten. First described by neuropsychologist Donald Hebb in 1949, this phenomenon is commonly known as Hebb's Law: "Neurons that

fire together wire together."

Chapter Summary

- The 3rd Law of Behavior Change is make it easy.
- The most effective form of learning is practice, not planning.
- Focus on taking action, not being in motion.
- Habit formation is the process by which a behavior becomes progressively more automatic through repetition.
- The amount of time you have been performing a habit is not as important as the number of times you have performed it.

Chapter 12 - The Law Of Least Effort

"Every action requires a certain amount of energy. The more energy required, the less likely it is to occur. If your goal is to do a hundred push-ups per day, that's a lot of energy! In the beginning, when you're motivated and excited, you can muster the strength to get started. But after a few days, such a massive effort feels exhausting. Meanwhile, sticking to the habit of doing one push-up per day requires almost no energy to get started. And the less energy a habit requires, the more likely it is to occur. Look at any behavior that fills up much of your life and you'll see that it can be performed with very low levels of motivation. Habits like scrolling on our phones, checking email, and watching television steal so much of our time because they can be performed almost without effort. They are remarkably convenient."

"Habits are easier to build when they fit into the flow of your life."

"You are more likely to go to the gym if it is on your way to work because stopping doesn't add much friction to your lifestyle. By comparison, if the gym is off the path of your normal commute—even by just a few blocks—now you're going "out of your way" to get there."

[Inversion of "least effort" principle]

"If you find yourself watching too much television, for example, then unplug it after each use. Only plug it back in if you can say out loud the name of the show you want to watch. This setup creates just enough friction to prevent mindless viewing. If that doesn't do it, you can take it a step further. Unplug the television and take the batteries out of the remote after each use, so it takes an extra ten seconds to turn it back on. And if you're really hard-core, move the television out of the living room and into a closet after each use. You can be sure you'll only take it out when you really want to watch something. The greater the friction, the less likely the habit. Whenever possible, I leave my phone in a different room until lunch. When it's right next to me, I'll check it all morning for no reason at all. But when it is in another room, I rarely think about it. And the friction is high enough that I won't go get it without a reason. As a

result, I get three to four hours each morning when I can work without interruption."

Chapter Summary

- Human behavior follows the Law of Least Effort. We will naturally gravitate toward the option that requires the least amount of work.
- Create an environment where doing the right thing is as easy as possible.
- Reduce the friction associated with good behaviors. When friction is low, habits are easy.
- Increase the friction associated with bad behaviors. When friction is high, habits are difficult.
- Prime your environment to make future actions easier.

Chapter 13 - How To Stop Procrastinating By Using The Two-Minute Rule

"Even when you know you should start small, it's easy to start too big. When you dream about making a change, excitement inevitably takes over and you end up trying to do too much too soon. The most effective way I know to counteract this tendency is to use the Two-Minute Rule, which states, "When you start a new habit, it should take less than two minutes to do.""

"The idea is to make your habits as easy as possible to start. Anyone can meditate for one minute, read one page, or put one item of clothing away. And, as we have just discussed, this is a powerful strategy because once you've started doing the right thing, it is much easier to continue doing it. A new habit should not feel like a challenge. The actions that *follow* can be challenging, but the first two minutes should be easy. What you want is a "gateway habit" that naturally leads you down a more productive path."

"If the Two-Minute Rule feels forced, try this: do it for two minutes and then stop. Go for a run, but you must stop after two minutes. Start meditating, but you must stop after two minutes. Study Arabic, but you must stop after two minutes. It's not a strategy for starting, it's the whole thing. Your habit can only last one hundred and twenty seconds."

[On journaling]

"Nearly everyone can benefit from getting their thoughts out of their head and onto paper, but most people give up after a few days or avoid it entirely because journaling feels like a chore.* The secret is to always stay below the point where it feels like work. Greg McKeown, a leadership consultant from the United Kingdom, built a daily journaling habit by specifically writing less than he felt like. He always stopped journaling before it seemed like a hassle. Ernest Hemingway believed in similar advice for any kind of writing. "The best way is

to always stop when you are going good," he said."

Chapter Summary

- Habits can be completed in a few seconds but continue to impact your behavior for minutes or hours afterward.
- Many habits occur at decisive moments—choices that are like a fork in the road—and either send you in the direction of a productive day or an unproductive one.
- The Two-Minute Rule states, "When you start a new habit, it should take less than two minutes to do."
- The more you ritualize the beginning of a process, the more likely it becomes that you can slip into the state of deep focus that is required to do great things.
- Standardize before you optimize. You can't improve a habit that doesn't exist.

Chapter 14 - How To Make Good Habits Inevitable And Bad Habits Impossible

"A commitment device is a choice you make in the present that controls your actions in the future. It is a way to lock in future behavior, bind you to good habits, and restrict you from bad ones. When Victor Hugo shut his clothes away so he could focus on writing, he was creating a commitment device."

"This is also referred to as a "Ulysses pact" or a "Ulysses contract." Named after Ulysses, the hero of *The Odyssey*, who told his sailors to tie him to the mast of the ship so that he could hear the enchanting song of the Sirens but wouldn't be able to steer the ship toward them and crash on the rocks. Ulysses realized the benefits of locking in your future actions while your mind is in the right place rather than waiting to see where your desires take you in the moment."

Chapter Summary

- The inversion of the 3rd Law of Behavior Change is *make it difficult*.
- A commitment device is a choice you make in the present that locks in better behavior in the future.
- The ultimate way to lock in future behavior is to automate your habits.
- Onetime choices—like buying a better mattress or enrolling in an automatic savings plan—are single actions that automate your future habits and deliver increasing returns over time.
- Using technology to automate your habits is the most reliable and effective way to guarantee the right behavior.

The 3rd Law	Make It Easy
3.1	Reduce friction. Decrease the number of steps between you and your good habits.
3.2	Prime the environment. Prepare your environment to make future actions easier.
3.3	Master the decisive moment. Optimize the small choices that deliver outsized impact.
3.4	Use the Two-Minute Rule. Downscale your habits until they can be done in two minutes or less.
3.5	Automate your habits. Invest in technology and onetime purchases that lock in future behavior.

Inversion of the 3rd Law	Make It Difficult
3.6	Increase friction. Increase the number of steps between you and your bad habits.
3.7	Use a commitment device. Restrict your future choices to the ones that benefit you.

The 4th Law: Make It Satisfying

Chapter 15 - The Cardinal Rule Of Behavior Change

"We are more likely to repeat a behavior when the experience is satisfying. This is entirely logical. Feelings of pleasure—even minor ones like washing your hands with soap that smells nice and lathers well—are signals that tell the brain: "This feels good. Do this again, next time." Pleasure teaches your brain that a behavior is worth remembering and repeating."

"Conversely, if an experience is not satisfying, we have little reason to repeat it. In my research, I came across the story of a woman who had a narcissistic relative who drove her nuts. In an attempt to spend less time with this egomaniac, she acted as dull and as boring as possible whenever he was around. Within a few encounters, *he* started avoiding *her* because he found her so uninteresting."

"In modern society, many of the choices you make today will *not* benefit you immediately. If you do a good job at work, you'll get a paycheck in a few weeks. If you exercise today, perhaps you won't be overweight next year. If you save money now, maybe you'll have enough for retirement decades from now. You live in what scientists call a *delayed-return environment* because you can work for years before your actions deliver the intended payoff. The human brain did not evolve for life in a delayed-return environment. The earliest remains of modern humans, known as *Homo sapiens sapiens*, are approximately two hundred thousand years old. These were the first humans to have a brain

relatively similar to ours. In particular, the neocortex—the newest part of the brain and the region responsible for higher functions like language—was roughly the same size two hundred thousand years ago as today. You are walking around with the same hardware as your Paleolithic ancestors."

"A reward that is *certain* right now is typically worth more than one that is merely *possible* in the future. But occasionally, our bias toward instant gratification causes problems."

"Immediate reinforcement can be especially helpful when dealing with *habits of avoidance*, which are behaviors you want to stop doing. It can be challenging to stick with habits like "no frivolous purchases" or "no alcohol this month" because nothing happens when you skip happy hour drinks or don't buy that pair of shoes. It can be hard to feel satisfied when there is no action in the first place. All you're doing is resisting temptation, and there isn't much satisfying about that. One solution is to turn the situation on its head. You want to make avoidance visible. Open a savings account and label it for something you want—maybe "Leather Jacket." Whenever you pass on a purchase, put the same amount of money in the account. Skip your morning latte? Transfer \$5. Pass on another month of Netflix? Move \$10 over. It's like creating a loyalty program for yourself."

Chapter Summary

- The 4th Law of Behavior Change is *make it satisfying*.
- We are more likely to repeat a behavior when the experience is satisfying.
- The human brain evolved to prioritize immediate rewards over delayed rewards.
- The Cardinal Rule of Behavior Change: *What is immediately rewarded is repeated. What is immediately punished is avoided.*
- To get a habit to stick you need to feel immediately successful—even if it's in a small way.
- The first three laws of behavior change—*make it obvious*, *make it attractive*, and *make it easy*—increase the odds that a behavior will be performed this time. The fourth law of behavior change—*make it satisfying*—increases the odds that a behavior will be repeated next time.

Chapter 16 - How To Stick With Good Habits Every Day

[On habit tracking: atomichabits.com/tracker]

"Recording your last action creates a trigger that can initiate your next one. Habit tracking naturally builds a series of visual cues like the streak of X's on your calendar or the list of meals in your food log. When you look at the

calendar and see your streak, you'll be reminded to act again. Research has shown that people who track their progress on goals like losing weight, quitting smoking, and lowering blood pressure are all more likely to improve than those who don't. One study of more than sixteen hundred people found that those who kept a daily food log lost twice as much weight as those who did not. The mere act of tracking a behavior can spark the urge to change it."

[My rule for the following is closer to, "Don't miss three days in a row."]

"If I miss one day, I try to get back into it as quickly as possible. Missing one workout happens, but I'm not going to miss two in a row. Maybe I'll eat an entire pizza, but I'll follow it up with a healthy meal. I can't be perfect, but I can avoid a second lapse. As soon as one streak ends, I get started on the next one. The first mistake is never the one that ruins you. It is the spiral of repeated mistakes that follows. Missing once is an accident. Missing twice is the start of a new habit. This is a distinguishing feature between winners and losers. Anyone can have a bad performance, a bad workout, or a bad day at work. But when successful people fail, they rebound quickly. The breaking of a habit doesn't matter if the reclaiming of it is fast."

Chapter Summary

- One of the most satisfying feelings is the feeling of making progress.
- A habit tracker is a simple way to measure whether you did a habit—like marking an X on a calendar.
- Habit trackers and other visual forms of measurement can make your habits satisfying by providing clear evidence of your progress.
- Don't break the chain. Try to keep your habit streak alive.
- Never miss twice. If you miss one day, try to get back on track as quickly as possible.
- Just because you can measure something doesn't mean it's the most important thing.

Chapter 17 - How An Accountability Partner Can Change Everything

"Just as we are more likely to repeat an experience when the ending is satisfying, we are also more likely to avoid an experience when the ending is painful. Pain is an effective teacher. If a failure is painful, it gets fixed. If a failure is relatively painless, it gets ignored. The more immediate and more costly a mistake is, the faster you will learn from it."

"We repeat bad habits because they serve us in some way, and that makes them hard to abandon. The best way I know to overcome this predicament is to increase the speed of the punishment associated with the behavior. There can't be a gap between the action and the consequences."

"In general, the more local, tangible, concrete, and immediate the consequence, the more likely it is to influence individual behavior. The more global, intangible, vague, and delayed the consequence, the less likely it is to influence individual behavior."

"Just as governments use laws to hold citizens accountable, you can create a habit contract to hold yourself accountable. A habit contract is a verbal or written agreement in which you state your commitment to a particular habit and the punishment that will occur if you don't follow through. Then you find one or two people to act as your accountability partners and sign off on the contract with you."

[You can see the actual Habit Contracts used by Bryan Harris and get a blank template at atomichabits.com/contract.]

Chapter Summary

- The inversion of the 4th Law of Behavior Change is *make it unsatisfying*.
- We are less likely to repeat a bad habit if it is painful or unsatisfying.
- An accountability partner can create an immediate cost to inaction. We care deeply about what others think of us, and we do not want others to have a lesser opinion of us.
- A habit contract can be used to add a social cost to any behavior. It makes the costs of violating your promises public and painful.
- Knowing that someone else is watching you can be a powerful motivator.

The 4th Law	Make It Satisfying
4.1	Use reinforcement. Give yourself an immediate reward when you complete your habit.
4.2	Make "doing nothing" enjoyable. When avoiding a bad habit, design a way to see the benefits.
4.3	Use a habit tracker. Keep track of your habit streak and "don't break the chain."
4.4	Never miss twice. When you forget to do a habit, make sure you get back on track immediately.

Inversion of the 4th Law	Make It Unsatisfying
4.5	Get an accountability partner. Ask someone to watch your behavior.
4.6	Create a habit contract. Make the costs of your bad habits public and painful.

Advanced Tactics: How To Go From Being Merely Good To Being Truly Great

Chapter 18 - The Truth About Talent (When Genes Matter And When They Don't)

What feels like fun to me, but work to others? The mark of whether you are made for a task is not whether you love it but whether you can handle the pain of the task easier than most people. When are you enjoying yourself while other people are complaining? The work that hurts you less than it hurts others is the work you were made to do.

What makes me lose track of time? Flow is the mental state you enter when you are so focused on the task at hand that the rest of the world fades away. This blend of happiness and peak performance is what athletes and performers experience when they are "in the zone." It is nearly impossible to experience a flow state and not find the task satisfying at least to some degree.

Where do I get greater returns than the average person? We are continually comparing ourselves to those around us, and a behavior is more likely to be satisfying when the comparison is in our favor. When I started writing at jamesclear.com, my email list grew very quickly. I wasn't quite sure what I was doing well, but I knew that results seemed to be coming taster for me than for some of my colleagues, which motivated me to keep writing.

What comes naturally to me? For just a moment, ignore what you have been taught. Ignore what society has told you. Ignore what others expect of you: Look inside yourself and ask, "What feels natural to me? When have I felt alive? When have I felt like the real me?" No internal judgments or people-pleasing. No second-guessing or self-criticism. Just feelings of engagement and enjoyment. Whenever you feel authentic and genuine, you are headed in the right direction.

"Boiling water will soften a potato but harden an egg. You can't control whether you're a potato or an egg, but you can decide to play a game where it's better to be hard or soft. If you can find a more favorable environment, you can transform the situation from one where the odds are against you to one where they are in your favor."

Chapter Summary

- The secret to maximizing your odds of success is to choose the right field of competition.
- Pick the right habit and progress is easy. Pick the wrong habit and life is a struggle.
- Genes cannot be easily changed, which means they provide a powerful advantage in favorable circumstances and a serious disadvantage in unfavorable circumstances.
- Habits are easier when they align with your natural abilities. Choose the habits that best suit you.
- Play a game that favors your strengths. If you can't find a game that favors you, create one.
- Genes do not eliminate the need for hard work. They clarify it. They tell us *what* to work hard on.

Chapter 19 - The Goldilocks Rule: How To Stay Motivated In Life And Work

"The Goldilocks Rule states that humans experience peak motivation when working on tasks that are right on the edge of their current abilities. Not too hard. Not too easy. Just right."

"A flow state is the experience of being "in the zone" and fully immersed in an activity. Scientists have tried to quantify this feeling. They found that to achieve a state of flow, a task must be roughly 4 percent beyond your current ability. In real life it's typically not feasible to quantify the difficulty of an action in this way, but the core idea of the Goldilocks Rule remains: working on challenges of just manageable difficulty—something on the perimeter of your ability—seems crucial for maintaining motivation."

"Mastery requires practice. But the more you practice something, the more boring and routine it becomes. Once the beginner gains have been made and we learn what to expect, our interest starts to fade. Sometimes it happens even faster than that. All you have to do is hit the gym a few days in a row or publish a couple of blog posts on time and letting one day slip doesn't feel like much. Things are going well. It's easy to rationalize taking a day off because you're in a good place."

"I can guarantee that if you manage to start a habit and keep sticking to it, there will be days when you feel like quitting. When you start a business, there will be days when you don't feel like showing up. When you're at the gym, there will be sets that you don't feel like finishing. When it's time to write, there will be days that you don't feel like typing. But stepping up when it's annoying or painful or draining to do so, that's what makes the difference between a

professional and an amateur. Professionals stick to the schedule; amateurs let life get in the way. Professionals know what is important to them and work toward it with purpose; amateurs get pulled off course by the urgencies of life."

Chapter Summary

- The Goldilocks Rule states that humans experience peak motivation when working on tasks that are right on the edge of their current abilities.
- The greatest threat to success is not failure but boredom.
- As habits become routine, they become less interesting and less satisfying. We get bored.
- Anyone can work hard when they feel motivated. It's the ability to keep going when work isn't exciting that makes the difference.
- Professionals stick to the schedule; amateurs let life get in the way.

Chapter 20 - The Downside Of Creating Good Habits

"the benefits of habits come at a cost. At first, each repetition develops fluency, speed, and skill. But then, as a habit becomes automatic, you become less sensitive to feedback. You fall into mindless repetition. It becomes easier to let mistakes slide. When you can do it "good enough" on autopilot, you stop thinking about how to do it better."

"some research has shown that once a skill has been mastered there is usually a slight *decline* in performance over time. Usually, this minor dip in performance is no cause for worry. You don't need a system to continuously improve how well you brush your teeth or tie your shoes or make your morning cup of tea. With habits like these, good enough is usually good enough. The less energy you spend on trivial choices, the more you can spend it on what really matters. However, when you want to maximize your potential and achieve elite levels of performance, you need a more nuanced approach. You can't repeat the same things blindly and expect to become exceptional. Habits are necessary, but not sufficient for mastery. What you need is a combination of automatic habits and deliberate practice."

[On identity]

"The more you let a single belief define you, the less capable you are of adapting when life challenges you. If you tie everything up in being the point guard or the partner at the firm or whatever else, then the loss of that facet of your life will wreck you. If you're a vegan and then develop a health condition that forces you to change your diet, you'll have an identity crisis on your hands. When you cling too tightly to one identity, you become brittle. Lose that one thing and you lose yourself."

[Shift it]

- "I'm an athlete" becomes "I'm the type of person who is mentally tough and loves a physical challenge."
- "I'm a great soldier" transforms into "I'm the type of person who is disciplined, reliable, and great on a team."
- "I'm the CEO" translates to "I'm the type of person who builds and creates things."

Chapter Summary

- The upside of habits is that we can do things without thinking. The downside is that we stop paying attention to little errors.
- Habits + Deliberate Practice = Mastery
- Reflection and review is a process that allows you to remain conscious of your performance over time.
- The tighter we cling to an identity, the harder it becomes to grow beyond it.

Conclusion - The Secret To Results That Last

"Can one tiny change transform your life? It's unlikely you would say so. But what if you made another? And another? And another? At some point, you will have to admit that your life was transformed by one small change. The holy grail of habit change is not a single 1 percent improvement, but a thousand of them. It's a bunch of atomic habits stacking up, each one a fundamental unit of the overall system."

"Success is not a goal to reach or a finish line to cross. It is a system to improve, an endless process to refine."

Bonus Chapters

How to Apply These Ideas to Business

"For many products, "making it attractive" comes down to explaining the benefits in a clear and compelling way."

"products are often more attractive when they seem relevant to the customer's life. If you're a freelance writer, it is more powerful to read a sales page with the title, "Exactly How to Double Your Income as a Freelance Writer" than to read, "How to Double Your Income." It's the same pitch, but the first one feels like it's made for you."

"Humans are heavily influenced by the crowd. If you can show a customer that other people like them use your product—people in their zip code, from their

hometown, on their team, etc.—they will be more likely to find it attractive themselves.”

“Customers need to feel immediately successful—even if it’s just in some small way—each time they use a product or service. At a minimum, the product should solve the problem”

“The danger of making too big a promise is that you’ll get people to buy once, but they won’t have a reason to buy again. Think: massive discounts that aren’t followed with great experiences or the sales team making a promise that the product team can’t deliver on. Huge expectations might trigger a single sale, but you’ll never create a buying habit.”

“That “almost” feeling tricks your brain into predicting the reward is now closer than before. With a little more work, you might be able to get it. After a near-miss, the reward system in your brain will light up with anticipation.”

How to Apply These Ideas to Parenting

“Most people read *Atomic Habits* with the intention of working on their own habits. But when you’re considering how to apply the ideas to your children, you’re now shaping someone else’s habits.”

“habits should be small and easy to do. Even if your real goal is to actually get your child to spend an hour working on their homework, start by creating habits stacks that prime the environment to make doing homework easier.”

“you can use habit stacks as a way to incentivize the desired behavior. For example: *After I practice piano for 10 minutes, I will play video games.*”

“one of the best ways to motivate your children to act a certain way is to act that way yourself. Humans are master imitators.”

“as children age, they start to pick up habits not only from their parents, but also from others in their life. And the parents of any teenager can tell you that it often feels like they are avoiding imitation: Do one thing, and your child does the exact opposite. As children grow up, the social influence of their parents tends to decrease, and the social influence of their peers tends to increase.”

“Two of the biggest influences parents have on their children over time are (1) the genes they pass along to their kids and (2) the social environments they select for their kids. In other words, your children’s habits are heavily influenced by their peers, but you can influence the peers they hang around. You can choose which neighborhood you live in, which school you send them to, which extracurricular activities you expose them to, and more... and these environments are where they meet their peers.”

"If you want your kids to find certain habits attractive, put them in environments and groups where their peers will also be doing those habits."

"So often, parents criticize the very behavior they are hoping their children will exhibit. When an introverted child joins the family for dinner, they say something like, "Well, look who decided to join us." Such comments make it *unsatisfying* to do the very thing you were hoping they would do. Don't criticize the behavior you want to see. As a result, I think it is effective for many parents to keep this philosophy in mind: **Praise the good, ignore the bad.**"

"Criticism, for whatever reason, seems to come naturally."

"Whenever possible, you want to use positive reinforcement rather than negative reinforcement. One creative way I heard of doing this is by creating a "token" system or an allowance system with your kids. But the key is that you only add to the allowance or tokens when your child does something good, rather than subtracting from it when your child does something bad. The typical allowance is taken away as a punishment when a child breaks the rules. But it might be more effective to consider how you can incentivize good habits by adding to it. For example, if the child chooses to read a book for an hour instead of watch television, they get another token. Or they can earn tokens by doing chores or earning good grades or completing other valuable habits."

[A very brief commentary: I have for many years before reading Atomic Habits spoken to my clients about what I call 'the one percent principle'. Using this framework (before understanding Clear's version of it) always provides relief to my clients. The framing allows them to find accomplishment in even the littlest change. All small changes lead to good. All. And so often people are denigrated for not making their change big enough. This must change—the smaller the change, done consistently enough, the greater the end result. Period. A good book to read following this is Robert Greene's Mastery. Atomic Habits sets the scene of developing good habits, Mastery teaches you how to become a Master, learning how others throughout history have honed their craft, and teaching you to do the same.]

These notes were collected by psychotherapist and author Emil Barna in 2025 in his efforts to assist with professional development and further education for himself and those who read them. You can find out more about Emil by visiting www.barnacc.com