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Harnessing Your Habits

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1

Be curious
Be a self-improvement scientist

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Five Big Ideas ...about habits




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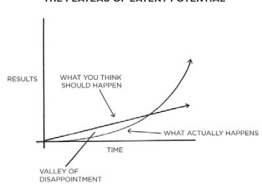
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Idea 1

- Habits are the compound interest of self-improvement



THE PLATEAU OF LATENT POTENTIAL



RESULTS


TIME

VALLEY OF DISAPPOINTMENT

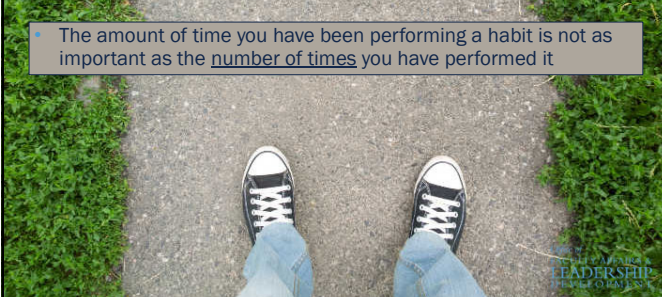
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8

Walk Slowly, but Never Backward



- The amount of time you have been performing a habit is not as important as the number of times you have performed it

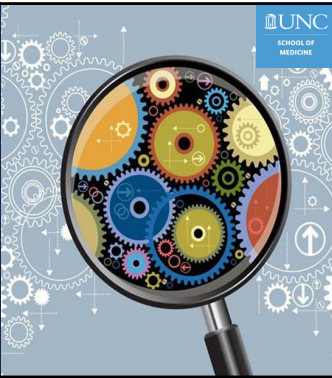


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9

Idea 2

- If you want better results, forget about setting goals.
- Focus on your system instead.

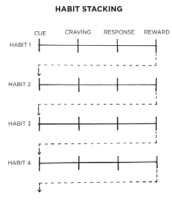


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10

How To Start a New Habit

- Habit Stack – find a current habit and stack a new one on top

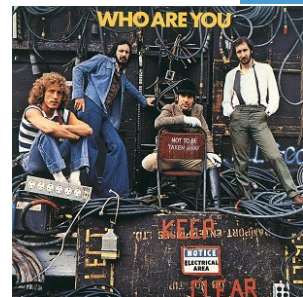


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Idea 3


- 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



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How to Find and Fix Bad Habits




- Every habit has a craving and deeper underlying motive
 - The cause of the habit is prediction that precedes them → feeling
 - Habits are attractive when we associate them with positive feelings
 - Habits are unattractive when we associate them with negative feelings

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13

Idea 4

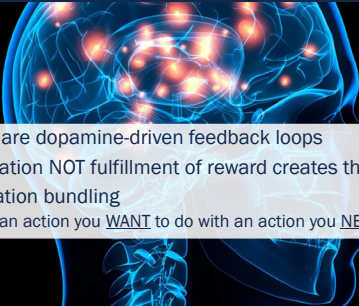
- Four Laws of Behavior Change:
 - Make it obvious
 - Make it attractive
 - Make it easy
 - Make it satisfying



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How to Make a Habit Irresistible




- Habits are dopamine-driven feedback loops
- Anticipation NOT fulfillment of reward creates the most dopamine
- Temptation bundling
 - Pair an action you WANT to do with an action you NEED to do

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2-Minute Rule

- When you start a new habit, it should take less than two minutes to do



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How to Stop a Bad Habit

- Once a habit is formed, it is unlikely to be forgotten
- Most practical way to eliminate a bad habit is to reduce exposure to the cue that causes it
- Self-control is a short-term strategy but not a long-term one




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Idea 5

- Environment is the invisible hand that shapes human behavior



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Environment Beats Motivation

- Environment matters more than motivation
- Every habit is initiated by a cue
- We notice cues that stand out
- Easier to build new habits in a new environment
 - You're not fighting against old cues




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Create Friction

- Increase friction associated with bad behaviors
- Prime your environment to make future actions easier



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Let's Put it All Together With Some (Real) Examples

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Example: Starting a Good Habit

- Situation: I don't exercise.
- Past History:
 - I tried to set goals = run a half marathon
 - I would achieve the goal and then stop exercising
 - I told myself my goal would be to exercise 5 days a week for 1 hour a day to "get in shape"
 - I would sign up for a gym membership
 - I would start out achieving the goal and then stop within 1-2 months
 - I was VERY tired of this cycle

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What Was Wrong With My Approach?

- Situation: I don't exercise.
- Past History:
 - I tried to set goals = run a half marathon
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I focused on goals – and not a system
I focused on what I wanted to achieve and not who I wanted to become
My environment didn't work for my needs
I didn't follow the laws of behavior change – I did not make it easy, satisfying, obvious or attractive

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How Did I Change?

- Focused on my system and environment
 - Peloton bike at home, in the morning before kids wake up
- Focused on who I wish to become:
 - I am a person who exercises a little bit every day
- Focused on the 4 Rules of Behavior Change:
 - Make it Easy: 5 minutes/day
 - Make it Obvious: Lay out clothes at night
 - Make it Attractive: I added a candle to the room, uncluttered, bought nice towels
 - Make it Satisfying: I get to drink my coffee afterward

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Example: Stopping a Bad Habit

- Situation: I doom scroll on twitter before going to bed
- Past History:
 - When getting into bed, I would check my phone
 - I would click the twitter app on my home page and start scrolling
 - I would scroll longer than I intended
 - I would go to bed late

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What Was Wrong With My Approach?

- Situation: I doom scroll on twitter before going to bed
- Past History:
 - When getting into bed, I would check my phone
 - I would click the twitter app on my home page and start scrolling
 - I would scroll longer than I intended
 - I would go to bed late
 - I would not have time to relax

I didn't understand the WHY - mine was because my thoughts were racing before bed

My cue was my phone next to my nightstand

Virtually no friction with twitter on my home screen as an app

No benefits

Virtually zero accountability

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How Did I Change?

- Focused on my system and environment
 - Phone at bedside, twitter on home screen - BAD cues
- Focused on who I wish to become:
 - I am a person who reads before bed
- Focused on the 4 Rules of Behavior Change:
 - Invisible: Phone in drawer
 - Attractive: Benefits- I get to read fiction, clears my racing thoughts
 - Difficult: Screen time for 15 minutes (turned off after dinner)
 - Satisfying: My husband has my passcode (!)

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Who has a habit they want to start?

Any brave volunteers?




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Make it Obvious



- What behavior?
- When?
- What location?
- Current habits near that time/location?

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Make it Attractive



- What do you enjoy doing (or experiencing) that you can pair with this new habit?

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Make it Easy

- What environment will make this easier?
- What action can you take in your environment?
- How many minutes a day will you commit?

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Make it Satisfying

- How will you reward yourself?
- How will you track your habit?

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Who has a habit they want to stop?

Any other brave volunteers?

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33




Make it Invisible

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- What in your environment reminds you of your bad habit?

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Make it Attractive

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- What are the benefits of avoiding your bad habit?

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Make it Difficult

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- What are some ways that you can increase the number of steps between yourself and your bad habit?

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Make it Satisfying

- How will you hold yourself accountable?
 - Accountability partner
 - Habit contract
 - Making costs public and painful
 - Other ideas?



<https://gretchenrubin.com/quiz/the-four-tendencies-quiz/>

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Make “Not Yet” Your New Mantra

not yet



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Progress, Not Perfection




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40



41
