

You've decided: you won't take cigarettes anymore! Or maybe you won't have junk food! For a few weeks, things go smoothly. You're pleased with yourself. However, then, at some point, the craving abruptly overwhelms you – and, soon enough, you're back to your former habits.

Seems familiar? If that is the case, you are familiar with the power of habits.

However, where does the power of habits emanate from? As you'll discover in these book chapters, habits go deep into the brains of humans and psyche and impact our lives in various manners. Also, although they make our lives very much easier –just consider if you had to work out how to open a door each time you came across one – habits can as well bring about issues and even destroy lives

Fortunately, by knowing how habits function, you can start to defeat their power. Therefore, let's explore the world of habits!

## Chapter 1 - Habits are easy cue-routine-reward loops that save energy.

A group of researchers at MIT during the year 1990s were observing mice in order to know how habits are developed in the brain. The mice had to look for a means to get to a piece of chocolate that'd been put at the edge of a T-shaped maze. By making use of special tools, the brain activity of the mice could be observed by the researchers as they smelled their way to the chocolate.

At first, when the mice were placed in the maze, their brain activity spiked. The mice could perceive the chocolate and they started looking for it. When the researchers did the experiment again, they discovered something fascinating.

As the mice progressively understood where the chocolate was placed and memorized how to reach there keep straight, and then turn left – their brain activity reduced.

This process of changing a series of actions to an automatic habit is called “chunking,” and it lays the foundation of every habit formation. Its evolutionary part is obvious and vital: it lets the brain to save energy and do normal tasks well.

Therefore, even a difficult activity that needs attention at first, such as looking for a piece of chocolate in a maze or backing out of the driveway, ultimately turns into an easy habit. As a matter of fact, as stated by a 2006 paper that was conducted by a researcher at Duke University, as much as 40% of the things we do every day are based on habit.

Generally, any habit can be split into a three-part loop:

First of all, you perceive an external cue –for instance, your alarm clock sounding. This forms a whole spike in your brain activity as your brain determines which habit is right for the condition.

Afterward, there is the routine, which is the activity you’re accustomed to doing when encountered with this specific cue. You go into the bathroom and then brush your teeth with your brain nearly on autopilot.

Lastly, you receive a reward –which is a feeling of success and, in this situation, you get a reward of a minty-fresh tingling sensation in your mouth. Your whole brain activity increases once again as your brain marks the successful attainment of the activity and strengthens the connection between the cue and the routine.

Habits are very resilient. In some situations, people that have huge brain damage can still stick to their former habits. Think of Eugene, a man with extreme brain damage as a result of encephalitis. When he was told to indicate the door that leads to the kitchen from his living room, he couldn’t do that. However, when, he was asked what he would do if he became hungry, he went directly into the kitchen and brought down a jar of nuts from one of the cabinets.

He was able to do this since learning and maintaining habits occur in the basal ganglia, which is a little neurological structure deep-rooted in the brain. Even though the remaining part of the brain is damaged, the basal ganglia can work properly.

Unluckily, this resilience entails that, even if you effectively quit a bad habit, such as smoking, you will constantly be at risk of going back to the habit.

## Chapter 2 - Habits stick since they form a craving.

Think of this illustration: each afternoon for the last year, you've purchased from the cafeteria at your work and eaten a delicious, sugar-laden chocolate-chip cookie. Name it as only a reward for your hard day at work.

Unluckily, as a few of your friends mentioned, you've begun to add weight. Therefore, you chose to quit the habit. However, how do you think you'll feel that first afternoon, going past the cafeteria without indulging? Chances are, you will either eat "only one more cookie" or you'll go home in a clearly cranky mood.

Quitting a bad habit is difficult since you form a craving for the reward at the end of the habit loop. A research that was conducted from the 1990s by Wolfram Schultz, the neuroscientist reveals how this functions at the level of the brain. Schultz was observing the brain activity of a macaque monkey called Julio, who was learning to do numerous activities. In an experiment, Julio was put in front of a screen on a chair. Anytime some colored shapes were revealed on the screen, Julio's work was to pull a lever. Anytime he did that, a drop blackberry juice (Julio liked blackberry juice) would drip down on his lips via a tube.

initially, Julio didn't really concentrate on the screen. However, when he occurred to pull the lever at the appropriate time; hence eliciting the blackberry-juice reward, his brain activity spiked, revealing a strong pleasure reaction.

As Julio progressively understood the link between viewing the shapes shown on the screen, pulling the lever and receiving a drop of the blackberry juice, he didn't just stare at the screen; however, Schultz realized that, once the shapes came on, there was a spike in Julio's brain activity related to when he really got the reward. Meaning, his brain had started waiting for the reward. This expectation is the neurological foundation of craving and assists clarify the reason why habits are really powerful.

Then, Schultz changed the experiment. In this new experiment, as Julio pulled the lever, either no juice drip down or it would come out in a diluted form. Schultz could now see in Julio's brain neurological patterns related to desire and disappointment. Julio became absolutely down when he didn't receive the reward, similar to how you might if you skipped your favorite end-of-the-day cookie.

Luckily, that craving functions for creating good habits too. For example, a 2002 study that was conducted from New Mexico State University revealed that people who succeed to exercise really crave something from the exercise, maybe an endorphin rush in the brain, a sense of achievement or the reward they give themselves after exercising. What solidifies the habit is this craving; just cues and rewards are not sufficient.

Due to the power of habits, it shouldn't be surprising that firms work hard to know and form that kind of cravings in consumers. An inventor of this method is Claude Hopkins, the man who promoted Pepsodent toothpaste when numerous other toothpaste brands had become unsuccessful. He gave a reward that formed craving: which are, the cool, tingling feeling that we've come to suppose the toothpaste to possess. That feeling doesn't just "proved" that the product worked in users' minds; however, it also became a tangible reward that they start to crave.

## Chapter 3 - For you to change a habit, replace the routine a different thing and believe in the change.

As anybody attempting to quit cigarettes will say to you, when the craving for nicotine hits, it's difficult to resist. That's is the reason why the golden rule for giving up on any habit is this: don't attempt to ignore the craving; change it. Meaning, you have to keep the same cues and rewards; however, change the routine that happens according to the craving.

Various studies on ex-smokers have revealed that, by knowing the cues and rewards around their smoking habit and changing the routine with something that has a related reward, like

doing some push-ups, eating a bit of Nicorette or basically resting for a few minutes, the probabilities of remaining smoke-free increases greatly.

Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), is one organization that makes use of this tactic to great effect, which may have assisted as much as ten million alcoholics attain abstinence.

AA questions participants to write down precisely what they crave from drinking. Normally, reasons such as relaxation and companionship are very more significant than real intoxication. Then, AA offers new routines that fix those cravings, like going for meetings and discussing with sponsors for companionship. The concept here is to change drinking with something that is less detrimental.

But, research on the member of AA reveals that even though this approach works effectively generally, doing that alone is not sufficient. During the early 2000s, a group of researchers at California's Alcohol Research Group observed a different pattern in their interviews with the members of the AA. A common reply was that the habit-replacement approach did miracles; however, once a stressful incident happened, the former habit was basically really strong to resist, irrespective of how long the respondent had been part of the program.

For instance, one alcoholic that is recovering had been sober for several years and his mother called to tell him she had cancer. After ending the call, he left his place of work and went straight to a bar, and then, according to his own words, was "really very drunk for the following two years."

More research has shown that those who resist relapse and stay sober usually depend on belief. This is the reason why spirituality and God appear importantly in AA beliefs. However, it's not essentially the religious aspect itself that assists people to remain sober. Also, trusting in God assists participants to trust the likelihood of change for themselves, which allows them to be stronger even when met with stressful life situations.

**Chapter 4 - One can accomplish change by concentrating on keystone habits and accomplishing small victories.**

In 1987, when the previous government bureaucrat Paul O'Neill was made the CEO of the ailing aluminum company Alcoa, investors were uncertain. Also, O'Neill didn't make the situation better when, during an investor meeting in a classy luxury hotel in Manhattan, he stated that, instead of concentrating on profits and incomes, he had the intention to make the workplace safety his number-one priority. One of the investors called his clients straight away and he told his client, "The board chose a crazy hippie in control and he's going to ruin the company."

O'Neill attempted to clarify his reasoning to his lukewarm investors. He stated that no amount of talk would decrease injury incidences at Alcoa. Definitely, the majority of the CEOs asserted to care about workplace safety. However, empty words would never bring about the formation of a company-wide habit, which is what is needed for actual change.

O'Neill understood that there were habits in organizations. Also, he was aware that altering an organization's direction is a situation of changing its habits. Also, he knew that not every habit is the same. Some habits, called the keystone habits, are more significant than others since sticking to them forms positive effects that extend into other aspects.

By maintaining that the safety of employees should be the first priority, managers and workers would need to contemplate on how the process of manufacturing could be safer and how safety recommendations could be best communicated to everybody. The outcome would be an extremely streamlined, and therefore profitable, production organization.

In spite of the investors' initial skepticism, O'Neill's method shown to be a big success. In 2000, during the period when O'Neill retired, Alcoa's yearly net income had increased five times.

Keystone habits can assist people to change, as well. For example, research shows that doctors have a difficult time making obese people make a big change in their way of life. But, when patients concentrate on growing one keystone habit, like having a thorough food journal, other positive habits begin to develop too.

Keystone habits operate by offering small victories—meaning, early victories that are reasonably easy to accomplish. Cultivating a keystone habit assists you trust that development is possible in other aspects of life, as well, which can initiate a cascade of positive change.

## Chapter 5 - The most significant keystone habit is Willpower.

During the year 1960s, researchers at Stanford performed what would turn out into a really popular study. A big group of four-year-olds kids was brought, one after the one, into a room. There had a table with a marshmallow on it in the room. A researcher offered each kid an option: the first option was to eat the marshmallow now and the second option was to wait a few minutes and get two marshmallows instead. Then, the researcher went out of the room for 15 minutes. Just nearly 30% of the children succeeded not to eat the marshmallow when the researcher was not there.

However, this is a fascinating aspect. Years after, when, the researchers trailed down the kids that participated in the research, who were now adults, they discovered that the children who had shown the greatest willpower and waited the complete 15 minutes had gotten the best grades in school, were more famous averagely and were less likely to have drug addictions. It appeared that Willpower was a keystone habit that could be used in other aspects of life as well.

Additional current studies have revealed similar outcomes. For example, a study that was conducted in 2005 among eighth-graders revealed that students showing high levels of willpower got better grades on average and were more likely to attend selective schools.

Therefore, willpower is an important habit in life. But, as you might have realized if you've ever attempted to begin exercising more, willpower can be extremely unpredictable. At times, going to the gym is a breeze; on some other days, leaving the sofa is close to impossible. What is the reason for that?

As a matter of fact, willpower is really just like a muscle: it can exhaust. If you drain it by focusing on, for instance, a tiresome spreadsheet at work, you might not have any more willpower when you reach home. However, the analogy goes even more: by doing habits that need resolution –for instance, following a strict diet – you can really increase your willpower. Name it a willpower exercise.

Other determinants as well can affect your willpower. For instance, Starbucks discovered that, on most days, all of its workers had the willpower to smile and be happy, irrespective of how they felt. However, when things became stressful – for instance when a client started shouting–

they would lose their temper soon. According to research, company executives decided that if baristas mentally got ready for unpleasant circumstances and prepared how to defeat them, they could gather sufficient willpower to stick with the plan even when they are under pressure.

To assist them, Starbucks formed the aptly named LATTE approach, which describes a set of steps to take when in demanding circumstances: Listening to the client, Acknowledging their criticism, Taking action, Thanking the client, and, finally, Explaining the reason why the problem occurred happened. By repeating this tactic continuously, Starbucks baristas learn precisely what to do should in case stressful circumstances occur and can remain cool.

Other studies have revealed that a lack of autonomy as well severely affects willpower. If people do a thing because they are requested to do it instead of by choice, their willpower muscle will become exhausted much faster.

## Chapter 6 - Organizational habits can be risky; however, they can be altered by a crisis.

During the year 1987, in November, a commuter at the King's Cross station in London went to meet a ticket collector and said he'd only witnessed a piece of burning tissue at one of the building's escalators. Instead of looking into the issue or just informing the department in charge of fire safety, the ticket collector didn't do anything. He basically went back to his workstation, assuming it was another person's duty.

This was maybe not really surprising. Responsibilities in managing the London underground were split into numerous clear-cut areas, and, do to that, workers had created an organizational habit of remaining within departmental bounds. Over the decades, an elaborate, ordered system of bosses and sub-bosses, each extremely defensive of his authority, had appeared. The approximately 20,000 workers of the London Underground didn't know how to intrude on each other's territory.



Beneath the surface, the majority of the organizations are just like this: battlefields whereby people clamor for power and rewards. Therefore, in order to maintain peace, we form specific habits, like minding our own business.

Immediately after the ticket collector went back to work, as expected, a big fire broke out into the ticket hall. However, nobody there understood how to make use of the sprinkler system or had the power to make use of the fire extinguishers. The rescuers, who were ultimately called in by numerous staff at the station after long attempts of failures to take action, reported passengers really severely burned that when their skin was touched it came off. Eventually, 31 people died.

The failure at the core of this disaster was that, in spite of its difficult system of responsibility distribution, no worker or department at the London Underground had overview accountability for the safety of passengers.

However, even that kind of disaster can have a silver lining: disasters provide an exceptional opportunity to improve organizational habits by giving a sense of emergency.

This is the reason why good leaders usually actively lengthen a sense of crisis or even intensify it. While looking into the King's Cross station fire issue, Desmond Fennel, a special investigator discovered that a lot of possibly lifesaving alterations had been suggested years before; however, none of it had been put in place. When Fennel stumbled upon resistance to his recommendations, as well, he changed the entire investigation into a media event – a crisis that allowed him to carry out the changes. At the moment, all station has a manager whose key duty is to ensure passenger safety.

## Chapter 7 - Companies make the most of the habits in their marketing.

Imagine yourself going into your local supermarket. What's the initial thing you will meet? In every odds, it's fresh fruits and vegetables, arranged in lush piles. If you think of this for a

moment, it doesn't make a lot of sense. As fruit and veggies have a tendency to be soft and are spoilt easily by other the other things put in the trolley, they should be put closer to the registers. However, a long time ago marketers discovered that, if we start our shopping by putting in fresh and healthy food in our trolley, we're very likely to purchase unhealthier foods, such as snacks and cookies, as we carry on to shop.

This might look really apparent. However, retailers have discovered far subtler methods to sway customers' buying habits. For instance, this is an astonishing reality: the majority of the people automatically turn right when going into a store. This is the reason why retailers place their most profitable products on the right side of the entrance.

But, as refined as these approaches are, they have one huge disadvantage; all of them are one-size-fits-all and don't consider the differences in the way a specific customer buys products. But, over the past few decades, progressively advanced technology and data collection have made it likely to target customers with wonderful accuracy. The American retailer Target is of the true experts of this game, which provides millions of shoppers yearly and gathers terabytes of data about them.

During the early 2000s, the company chose to make use of the complete force of its data to target a specific part of the population long known to be one of the most profitable, those are the new parents. But, in order to have an edge on its rivals, Target intended to do beyond the market to new parents; it wanted to engage pregnant parents before they even gave birth. In order to achieve this, it starts to know how pregnant women buy things.

Eventually, Target's analysis worked really effectively that it marketed to a pregnant teenage girl who hadn't informed her family members yet about her issue. Target gave her coupons that are baby-related, provoking her father to visit the local Target manager angrily: he said: "She's still a high school student." "Are you attempting to encourage her to become pregnant?!" When the truth was revealed, it was the embarrassed father's turn to make an apology.

However, Target immediately understood that people hated being watched. In order for its baby coupons to be effective, it looked for a smart method to bury them among random and dissimilar offers for things such as lawnmowers and wine glasses; the proposals had to look like the related, untargeted ones.

Certainly, when attempting to sell something that is new, companies will try their best to make it look familiar. For instance, radio DJs can assure a new song becomes common by playing it in between two current hit songs. New habits or products are very likely to be acknowledged if they don't look new.

Target had many flacks for its invasive method to marketing; however, that doesn't signify that it wasn't a great success. Mostly as a result of to work with targeting pregnant women, the company's incomes increased from \$44 billion in 2002 to \$65 billion in the year 2009.

## Chapter 8 - Movements are produced from strong bonds new habits and peer pressure.

During the year 1955, Rosa Parks a black woman didn't give up her bus seat for a white man in Montgomery, Alabama. They arrested and charged her for that, and the occurrences that came after made her a civil-rights icon.

Fascinatingly, her situation, although it's become the most popular, was not exceptional neither was it the first. A lot of other people had arrested already due to the same reason. Therefore, what made Parks's arrest trigger a bus boycott that remained for more than a year?

Firstly, Rosa Parks was particularly admired in society and had a remarkably broad set of friends. She was part of several clubs and societies and was closely related to various types of people, like professors and field hands.

For example, at the local NAACP chapter, she worked as the secretary and was profoundly part of a youth organization at a Lutheran church near where she stayed and used her free time offering families that are poor with dressmaking services, all while still looking for time to make gown amendments for young debutantes from rich white families. As a matter of fact, she was really active in her society that her husband at times would mention that she ate at potlucks more frequently than at home.

Parks possessed what is referred to as strong ties in sociology studies—which is, direct relationships with a lot of people from various social parts of her community. These ties didn't

only set her free from the jail; however, they also spread the word of her arrest all through Montgomery's social strata; therefore, initiating the bus boycott.

However, only her friends could not have continued a long boycott. Moving to peer pressure. Additionally, to strengthen ties, social circles also have weak ties, which are acquaintances instead of friends. Peer pressure is usually exerted through weak ties. When a person's bigger connection of friends and acquaintances support a movement, it is more difficult to opt-out.

Ultimately, dedication to the boycott started decreasing in the black society, as city officials started passing new carpooling guidelines to make life without buses extremely hard. This is when the last aspect was included: a speech said by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. encouraging nonviolence and telling participants to accept and forgive their persecutors. From his speech, people started to develop new habits, like individually planning church meetings and peaceful protests. The movement was a self-propelling force.

## Chapter 9 - We are accountable for changing our habits.

Brian Thomas strangled his wife to death one night in the year of 2008. Worried, he quickly surrendered himself, turned himself in and was accused of murder. His justification? He was going through something that scientists call sleep terrors.

Research has revealed that different from sleepwalking, whereby people might leave their beds and begin acting out desires; however, when a person has sleep terrors, the brain efficiently shuts down, leaving just the most primitive neurological areas working.

Because he was in this condition, Thomas assumed he was strangling a thief who was assaulting his wife. The defense claimed in court that the moment Thomas assumed a person was harming his wife, it initiated an automatic reaction— an effort to keep her safe. Meaning, he followed a habit.

About the same period, the casino company Harrah's, sued Angie Bachman for half a million dollars in unresolved gambling debts. She was sued after she had already gambled away her house as well as her million-dollar property.

In court, Bachman claimed that she as well was basically following a habit. Gambling came with a good feeling; therefore, when Harrah's gave her enticing deals for free trips to the casino, she couldn't refrain from. (Bear in mind that Harrah's was aware that she was an obsessive gambler who had already bankrupted.)

Eventually, Thomas was found not guilty and a lot of people, as well as the trial judge, showed extremer sympathy for him. Conversely, Bachman did not win her case and was the victim of great public ridicule.

Thomas, as well as Bachman, could both reasonably assert that: "It wasn't me but was my habit!" Therefore, what is the reason why only one of them was not found guilty?

Basically, as soon as we know of a detrimental habit, it is now our duty to fix it and change it. Thomas wasn't aware that he would cause pain on anyone in his sleep. But, Bachman, was aware that she had a gambling habit and could have evaded Harrah's proposals by taking part in an exclusive program that would've forbidden gambling companies from advertising to her.

## The Power of Habit: Why We Do What We Do in Life and Business by Charles Duhigg Book Review

Abiding by habits is not just a significant aspect of our lives; however, it is also a significant aspect of organizations and companies. Every habit has a cue-routine-reward loop, and the simplest method to change this is to replace another thing for the routine while at the same time keeping the cue and reward. In life, attaining long-lasting change is hard; however, it can be accomplished by concentrating on significant keystone habits like willpower.

Lay your bed each morning.

In these book chapters, you realized that not every habit are the same; however, some are more significant than others. One of such keystone habit that you can effortlessly use is to begin every day by laying your bed. Research has revealed that this can improve your overall well-being as well as improve your general productivity.

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