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"Our life is what our thoughts make it." Marcus Aurelius

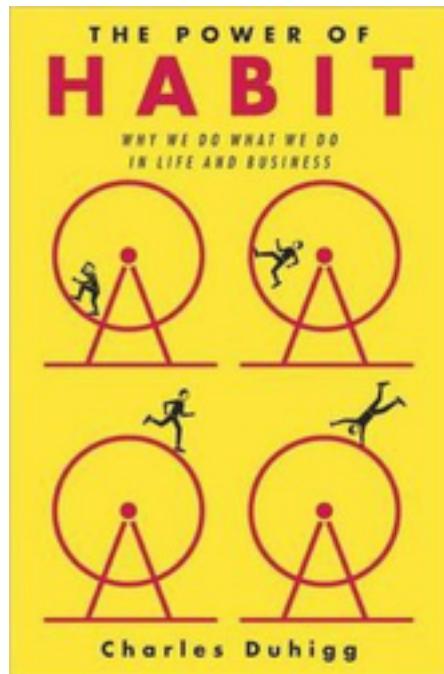
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TOPIC THIS ISSUE:

HABITS FOR GROWTH



THE POWER OF HABITS BY: CHARLES DUHIGG



When you woke up this morning, what did you do first? Did you hop in the shower, check your email or grab a doughnut from the kitchen counter? Did you brush your teeth before or after you towed off? Which route did you drive to work? When you got home, did you put on your sneakers and go for a run, or pour yourself a drink and eat dinner in front of the TV?

"All our life, so far as it has definite form, is but a mass of habits," William James wrote in 1892. Most of the choices we make each day may feel like the products of well-considered decision making, but they're not. They're habits. And though each habit means relatively little

on its own, over time, the meals we order, whether we save or spend, how often we exercise, and the way we organize our thoughts and work routines have enormous impacts on our health, productivity, financial security and happiness. One paper published by a Duke University researcher in 2006 found that more than 40 percent of the actions people performed each day weren't actual decisions, but habits.

James — like countless others, from Aristotle to Oprah — spent much of his life trying to understand why habits exist. But only in the past two decades have scientists and marketers really begun understanding how habits work — and, more important, how they change. At one point, we all consciously decided how much to eat and what to focus on when we got to the once, how often to have a drink or when to go for a jog. Then we stopped making a choice, and the behavior became automatic. It's a natural consequence of our neurology. And by understanding how it happens, you can rebuild those patterns in whichever way you choose.

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The Automatic Routine of ‘Chunking’

This process — in which the brain converts a sequence of actions into an automatic routine — is known as “**chunking**,” and it’s at the root of how habits form. There are dozens — if not hundreds — of behavioral chunks that we rely on every day. Some are simple: You automatically put toothpaste on your toothbrush before sticking it in your mouth. Some, such as getting dressed or making the kids’ lunch, are more complex.

Habits, scientists say, emerge because the brain is constantly looking for ways to save effort. Left to its own devices, the brain will try to make almost any routine into a habit, because habits allow our minds to ramp down more often. This effort-saving instinct is a huge advantage. An efficient brain allows us to stop thinking constantly about basic behaviors, such as walking and choosing what to eat, so we can devote mental energy to inventing spears, irrigation systems and, eventually, airplanes and video games.

The process within our brains is a three-step loop. First, there is a cue, a trigger that tells your brain to go into automatic mode and which habit to use. Then there is the **routine**, which can be physical, mental or emotional. Finally, there is a **reward**, which helps your brain figure out if this particular loop is worth remembering for the future. Over time, this loop — cue, routine, reward; cue, routine, reward — becomes more and more automatic. The cue and reward become intertwined until a powerful sense of anticipation and craving emerges. Eventually, a habit is born.

Habits aren’t destiny. Habits can be ignored, changed, or replaced. But the reason the discovery of the habit loop is so important is that it reveals a basic truth: When a habit emerges, the brain stops fully participating in decision making. It stops working so hard, or diverts focus to other tasks. So unless you deliberately fight a habit — unless you find new routines — the pattern will unfold automatically.

According to Ann Graybiel, a scientist at MIT who oversaw many of the basal ganglia experiments, “*Habits never really disappear. They’re encoded into the structures of our brain ... The problem is that your brain can’t tell the difference between bad and good habits, and so if you have a bad one, it’s always lurking there, waiting for the right cues and rewards.*”

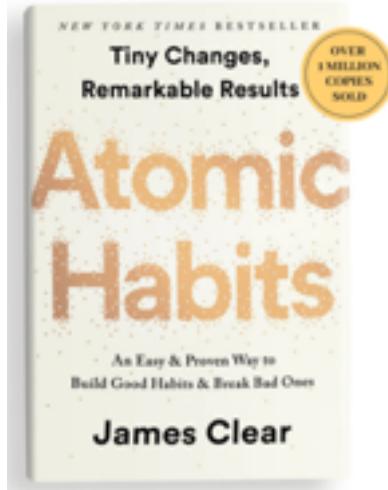
Without habit loops, our brains would shut down, overwhelmed by the minutiae of daily life.



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WHAT TINY CHANGES MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE

BY: JAMES CLEAR



"It is so easy to overestimate the importance of one defining moment and underestimate the value of making small improvements on a daily basis," writes James Clear in *Atomic Habits*.

Why? Well, because of Hollywood and media and everything that's so frighteningly bad with this world. When you see a movie about an artist, you don't really see him tirelessly working on his painting or poem for months and months, making small improvements to it day in day out. Oh no! What you see is

him falling down in a trance at a certain moment (usually induced by some unimportant and trivial event) and having a revelatory vision, which suddenly makes his work worthwhile.

"Too often, we convince ourselves that massive success requires massive action," Clear goes on. "Whether it is losing weight, building a business, writing a book, winning a championship, or achieving any other goal, we put pressure on ourselves to make some earth-shattering improvement that everyone will talk about."

But it doesn't work that way! Or, better yet, as Robert Maurer revealed in his guide to kaizen, it *can* work that way, but only sometimes; continuous improvement beats radical innovation 9 times out of ten!

And it's pure and simple logic: even though improving by 1% isn't particularly notable or even noticeable, in the long run, it is very, very meaningful.

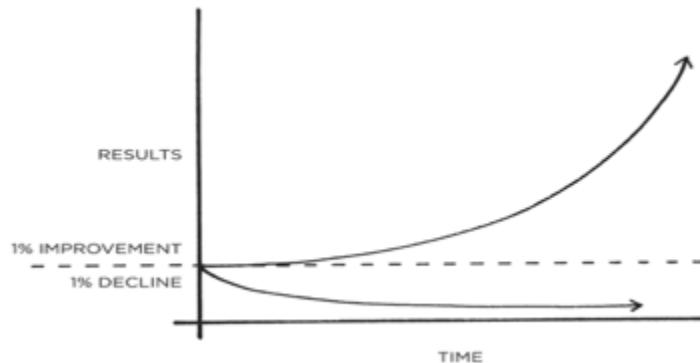
Clear provides the math:

- 1% worse every day for one year: $0.99^{365} = 00.03$
- 1% better every day for one year: $1.01^{365} = 37.78$



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Or to visualize that in a graph provided, once again, by Clear:



The Surprising Power of Atomic Habits

Now, what James Clear is actually talking about when he is talking about small improvements is something much bigger, something, which actually makes you who you are and defines your identity. Yes, habits, the bane of your existence.

Clear neatly defines habits as “**the compound interest of self-improvement.**” Namely, your habits work similarly to money: the same way money multiplies through compound interest; the effects of your habits multiply as you repeat them. You’ll notice no difference in terms of your physical condition if you spend 20 minutes of your morning working out; but do that for a few months, and suddenly you’ll spot the outline of that coveted six-pack.

Eating a single pizza will not make you fat or unhealthy; but eating pizza every day for a few months will definitely have negative effects. The value of good habits and the cost of bad ones becomes apparent – and strikingly, too – only after a year, a few years, or even a decade.

So, improving 1 percent every day is not merely a good strategy: it’s the best one you’ll ever hear from anyone. Especially if you think of your habits as being part of a system; hence the title of Clear’s book. It’s not “atomic” as in A-bomb powerful, earth-shattering events that will change everything in an instant, but “atomic” as in tiny, minuscule clogs of a result-oriented machine:

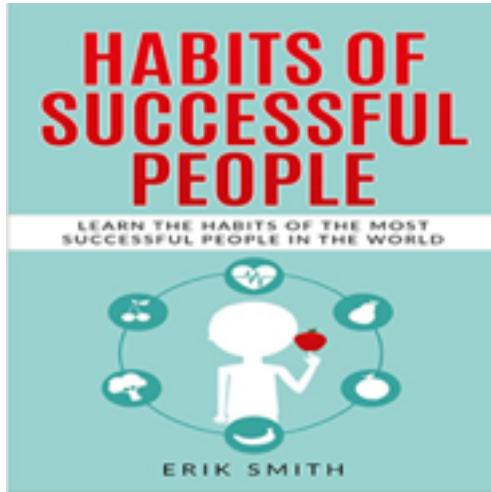
An atomic habit refers to a tiny change, a marginal gain, a 1 percent improvement. But atomic habits are not just any old habits, however small. They are little habits that are part of a larger system. Just as atoms are the building blocks of molecules, atomic habits are the building blocks of remarkable results.



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THE 7 HABITS OF SUCCESSFUL PEOPLE YOU NEED TO ADOPT

BY: CHEYENNE DIAZ



I've always been fascinated by the mindset of the high achievers: their discipline, their failures, the determination in their eyes in the face of difficulties, their focus, and the profoundness of their priorities. These are all things we can replicate if we study how they live their lives. However, in order

to reach our goals the way they did, we must first develop the **habits of successful people**.

How Can I Become Highly Successful?

If you want to be successful, you'll need to be willing to make a few changes. Face it: if you had the recipe for success, your life would play out like an award-winning film. In order to become successful across every spectrum of life, you'll need to implement some of these **habits of highly successful individuals**.

What Are The Habits Of A Successful Person?

Success is an individual pursuit because everyone defines success in a different way. But there are a few surefire habits that can help you reach your goals, no matter what they are.

Here are 7 habits of successful people you need to adopt:

1. Be purpose-oriented

A purpose gives direction to life. Without it, you end up living by somebody else's standards, or just follow the crowd and never live up to your full potential. But, hey! You're an individual. What's more, **you have powers within you waiting to be unlocked**. Any vision you create in your mind's eye today can be the life you live. To get there, though, you should have a clearly defined purpose — one that you follow day after day. If you haven't done this yet, now is the time. In fact, **you'll need to be purpose-oriented** in order to be able to develop all the other habits of successful people.

Describe your life purpose, include details about every



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aspect of your life. Be sure you want these things and aren't just doing what others expect you to do.

2. Do what successful people do first thing in the morning

How you begin your day is crucial. **If you fill your morning with successful habits, you'll see progress every single day.**

To begin, wake up a bit earlier than you have to. This can improve your whole day if you also dedicate this extra time to some healthy, productive and positive behaviors.

One of the main habits of successful people is having a **powerful morning routine**. They plan their mornings the night before, then wake up with determination, ready to kick-start another great day that will get them closer to their goals. What they do at that time, however, is **equally important**. **They first make their beds and welcome the day with a few positive affirmations**. Some include their daily workout now, as they don't usually find time for it later on in the day. Plus, they eat a healthy breakfast to keep them energetic until the evening. It's also important to **set some time aside for your spiritual and mental well-being**. The health benefits of meditation are tremendous. Then, perhaps read from an inspirational book to feed your mind with positive thoughts. Make sure you breathe deeply, too—just let go of any tension before you continue with your day.

3. Embrace failure and try again every time

To change your habits, you'll need to change your mindset.

Something you'll need to accept early on (in order to form the habits of successful people), is that **failure is not just part of the process, it's a stepping stone**. You need it to form the mental patterns of a winner and continue trying until you finally reach all your goals. **Most people avoid trying new things, as there's always a chance of failure**. However, that's exactly why they don't make any changes and continue living the same life that makes them miserable. Instead—**know that failure is powerful and that you can benefit from it**. **Learn from it every time you make a mistake**. Analyze exactly why that happened. Then, make a plan on what to do next time to perform better.

4. Create the ideal daily routine

If you start your mornings energetically, great! Keep it energetic until the evening. Don't worry; you can do so with the right daily schedule.

Your successful habits should be combined in a certain way, and it's best if you have fixed time slots for everything. However, don't be in a hurry to create the ideal day just yet. Test a few versions first. **See when you're most productive in the day and save your most important work for then**. Take breaks and use them to stretch, take a daily walk, drink water, talk to a loved one, or check your to-do list. That's the healthy type of multitasking.

Your whole day can be an example of success *if* you manage to structure it effectively. Plan what time you'll start your wind-down process in the evening. Use the time before bed to declutter, prepare for tomorrow, let go of the stress that followed you at

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work, and **smile for doing your best.** If that sometimes feels a bit overwhelming, remind yourself that it's what successful people do.

5. Take risks

Want to build successful habits? Well, **you'll need to become a risk-taker.**

All high-achievers learned how to take risks, accept uncertainty, embrace change, go out of their comfort zones, and do something (even when the situation looked hopeless). Often, you might hear from others that your goals are impossible. Remember though, *you are your best motivator* and shouldn't let others interfere with your vision.

Impossible is just a limitation you set for yourself—you can easily remove it and be unstoppable. Change your habits by taking risks often.

6. Build confidence in your abilities

You won't make it without confidence. **Confidence is one of the top qualities of winners in any field.** The truth is, you need to believe in yourself and your abilities long before you're successful. That's why you should let go of the doubts and fears and just keep telling yourself you can do it until you actually start making things happen. Confidence is not just one of the habits of successful people; it's an attitude of life that should support everything you do. In fact, it's proven to be a bigger success trait than talent itself.

7. Let go of the past

Last but not least, if you want to do what successful people do, **you need a clear mind. A clear mind will help you make good decisions, focus on work, build discipline, and keep your vision in mind.** To make that happen, you need to leave the past and anything connected to it behind.

Why?

It's harmful to your mindset and behavior in the present. You can't build the habits of successful people if you're constantly comparing your current life to your past, or reminding yourself of painful situations from back when you were less confident and less responsible. By looking in the past, you're basically reliving it all over again, and taking a step back in your personal development.

Once you let go, you make room for so much more. You can finally change your habits more easily and let positive transformation into your life. You can breathe freely, enjoy life, take action to reach your goals, and form a better mindset.

Successful habits are the foundation of a well-lived life.

