

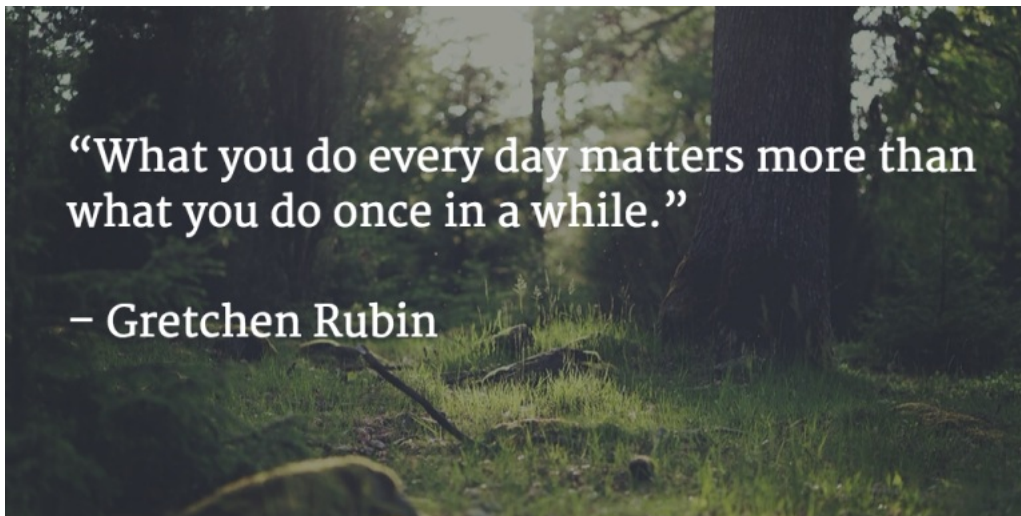
Better Than Before Summary

 fourminutebooks.com/better-than-before-summary

1-Sentence-Summary: *Better Than Before breaks down the latest research on how to break bad habits and develop good ones, in order to help you find your habit tendency and give you a few simple tools to start improving your own habits.*

Read in: 4 minutes

Favorite quote from the author:



It's that time of the year again. Do you know how many people stick to their New Year's Resolutions? 8%. A depressing figure, considering half of all Americans make them every year. But sticking to new habits is hard, just like breaking bad ones. Plus, everyone is different. What works for John doesn't necessarily work for Gina.

Better Than Before takes this into account with **the habit tendency framework**. It is author Gretchen Rubin's, third book after *Happier At Home* and *The Happiness Project*. For *Better Than Before*, she also developed a quiz to help you find your own habit tendency. The framework ended up being so popular, she wrote another book about it: *The Four Tendencies*.

There are 4 distinctive types, **based on how people respond to inner and outer expectations**:

1. Upholders, who respond well to both.
2. Questioners, who respond well to inner expectations, but not to outer ones.
3. Obligers, who respond well to outer expectations, but not to inner ones.
4. Rebels, who resist all expectations.

Upholders win the habit lottery, as new habits come easy to them, as long as there's a strict set of rules they can follow. Take away the structure though, and they start to struggle.

For example it might be easy for them to cook healthy food, if they plan their meals in advance, but when deciding in the moment they get lost and choose a frozen pizza.

Questioners naturally doubt the effect good or bad habits have, which is why they're data-driven. If they want to eat better, they should take a close look at all the ingredients of their food, research why every single one is good or bad, and look at studies who proved the effects.

Obligers will find themselves often trying to please people, because they put other expectations above their own. Getting an accountability buddy (or coach) who cooks with them or asks them what they ate every day will help them eat better.

Rebels desire authenticity and the freedom to choose. If you're a rebel you'd be best off ditching your calendar altogether, and instead telling yourself: I cook a healthy meal for myself today, because I want to.

After explaining this framework, Gretchen starts to give you simple tools to create better habits. Most of them try to minimize the need for willpower, to get your habits on autopilot as quickly as possible.

If you want to exercise regularly, for example, **put every workout on your calendar**. Eliminate the need to decide whether you feel good enough after work, and just go if it's on there.

Your calendar also serves as a **habit tracker**. For example it's much easier to eat healthier when you know what you're starting with, so keep a food journal for a week, weigh yourself every day, or download an app like coach.me.

Gretchen learned from fellow habits researcher Wendy Wood that a **major change** can help us create new habits. Wood did a study where 36% of all participants, who were successful in improving their diet, had recently moved. Big changes like marriage, moving, divorce, or children moving out can be a great opportunity to pick up new habits, and say goodbye to old ones.

Similarly to tracking your habits and using a calendar, **making good habits easy to do and bad ones hard**, will help you.

For example you could just leave your running shoes in the middle of the hallway. When you almost fall over them, you're more likely to put them on and get out the door.

Another way to make things easier is to **make them more fun**. 66% more people took the stairs, when Swedish researchers turned them into a piano, making music as you walked up.

Conversely, less people buy ice cream (about half as many) when the lid of the cafeteria ice cream cooler is closed, as opposed to when it's already open, and the ice cream is easier to grab.

"Out of sight, out of mind.", was already true for Odysseus, when he tied himself to his ship, in order to avoid the sirens' deadly temptation. You too should **remove temptations**, wherever possible.

For example I sometimes hide my phone under a couch pillow when I write. When I do so, I tend to forget about it and only pick it up when I really want to use it. When I leave it right next to me, I pick it up every couple minutes, just to check if there's something new.

Another good way to make sure you stick to your good habits is to bundle them. This can work in two ways.

One is called **habit stacking** and simply means you make a commitment to always do certain habits together. For example you can say: "**After** I close my laptop in the evening, **I will** floss my teeth." A morning routine works this way too. For example the Miracle Morning includes 6 habits: silence, affirmations, visualization, exercise, reading and writing.

A different approach is called **temptation bundling**, and it pairs your joys with your struggles. Kathy Milkman, who coined the term, struggled with going to the gym, but loved listening to audiobooks.

By creating a rule to only listen to audiobooks in the gym, she bundled the temptation with a good habit, ending up exercising 5 times a week, just to finish *The Hunger Games*.

Finally, don't forget to give yourself a **treat** for your good behavior every now and then, but make sure it's spontaneous, and not a planned reward, as you'll end up jumping through hoops just for the reward and not the good habit itself.

So start establishing some rules, making some commitments, and designing your environment to make positive change as easy as possible!

Better Than Before Review

I love this book! When coach.me teamed up with Gretchen Rubin early in 2015 when she published *Better Than Before*, us coaches all got a copy of it and a lot of us went through her quiz to find our habit tendency. I'm an upholder and I've taken a lot of my clients through the quiz since. All of them found it helpful to know their tendency and had a-ha moments when finding out about it.

She even inspired me to create my own quiz to help people find out how they best break bad habits.

I've been jumping around in the book but want to finish it entirely soon. This summary on Blinkist did a great job of highlighting the most important points. Whichever you choose to read first, I hope it will help you become *Better Than Before*.

Who would I recommend the Better Than Before summary to?

The 18 year old who's just about to start college at a new location, the 48 year old secretary who feels like she's just pleasing her boss, and anyone who doesn't know their habit tendency yet.

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