

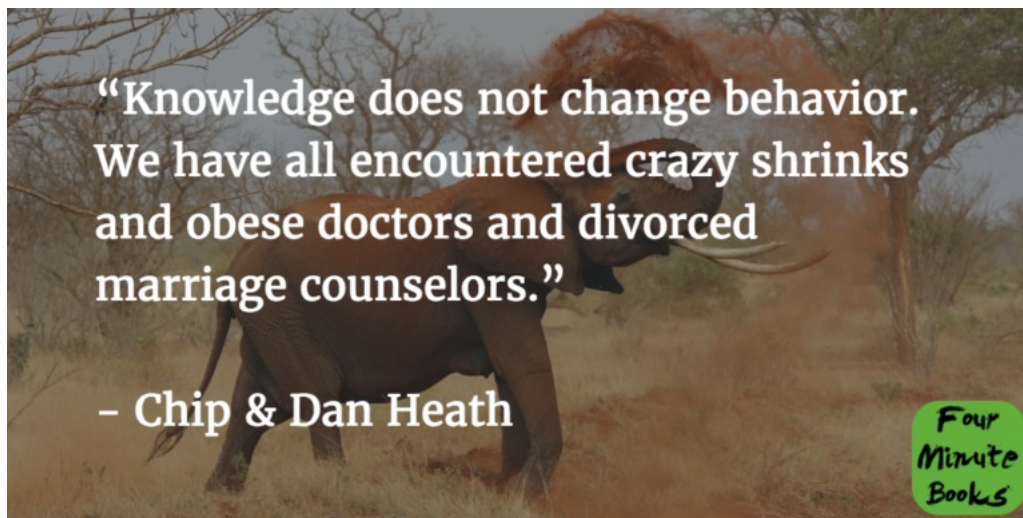
Switch Summary

 fourminutebooks.com/switch-summary

1-Sentence-Summary: *Switch is about how you can lead and encourage changes of human behavior, both in yourself and in your organization, by focusing on the three forces that influence it: the rider, the elephant and the path.*

Read in: 4 minutes

Favorite quote from the author:



After *Made To Stick*, Chip and Dan Heath tackled the issue of how to change human behavior, an important question, especially for leaders in organizations, but also for individuals, who suffer from their bad habits.

In order to address the problem, they look at three driving forces behind behavior change: the rational side, the emotional side and the environment in which the change is supposed to happen.

You might have heard the analogy of your brain as a rational rider, sitting on top of an emotional, stubborn elephant, trying to direct it, which makes it easier to understand how your brain's rational and emotional side work together. Originally introduced by Jonathan Haidt in *The Happiness Hypothesis*, the Heath brothers pick it up and use it as the common thread of *Switch*.

Here are 3 ways for you to influence the rider, the elephant and the path they're on:

1. Focus on one specific, critical aspect of the change, so the rider doesn't have to decide.
2. Get the elephant moving with a powerful emotion.
3. Make the path of change easy to follow, because human behavior is highly situational.

Ready to tame the elephant and harness the power of habit change? Let's go!

Lesson 1: Focus all your energy on one specific, critical aspect of the change you want to make, so you don't have to decide.

The rider of the elephant is your neocortex, the newest, most rational part of your brain. It loves to think, to ponder and to look at all angles of a situation. This is very helpful when analyzing complex problems, but changing your behavior often isn't one of them.

If you want to eat better, it'd probably easiest to start by having your coffee without sugar. But if your rider hears the vague goal "eat healthier," it instantly goes into analyzing overdrive, thinking of hundreds of possible options – and ending up paralyzed.

This is just human nature. **What we think is a resistance to change is actually just a lack of clarity on what to do next.**

In order to avoid this, look at which small moves are the most critical and come up with a set of clear instructions for those. For example, when researchers tried to get people from West Virginia to eat better, they told them one simple thing: "Buy 1% milk, instead of whole milk." This was easy enough to do, and ended up doubling the consumption of 1% milk.

Some more ideas for eating healthy would be:

- Eat salad for lunch every weekday.
- Only eat out on weekends.
- Never drink soda.

Lesson 2: Get your inner elephant going by evoking a powerful emotional response.

With the rider taken care of, now we have to get the elephant moving. However, unlike the rider, the elephant cares little about logical arguments and rational reasoning. It's a stubborn, emotional creature, and those are best swayed by powerful feelings.

For example, manager Jon Stegner was frustrated with his company's purchasing process, he found it to be highly inefficient. But to get the board to act fast, he knew he couldn't throw slides and charts at them, in hopes of a quick decision. Instead, he counted how many different gloves the company ordered and collected one pair of each. He then set up a meeting and piled up a mountain of 424 different pairs of gloves on the conference table, making it clear to every board member within seconds that their purchasing behavior was crazy – and being charged with re-designing it.

When you want to quit smoking, telling yourself you'll save money and be healthier is a weak argument. But taking a picture of your ugly, yellow teeth and looking at that every day, that's an entirely different playing field.

Both positive and negative emotions can get the elephant to move. **Negative emotions work better with obvious problems**, as shock and outrage give us a sense of urgency, like in Stegner's case. **If the problem is more complex and there's no clear solution, focus on positive emotions**, which will broaden your vision and make you more creative in tackling it.

Lesson 3: Make the path of change as easy to follow as possible, because human behavior depends more on the situation than you think.

Lastly, even the best rider-elephant team can have a tough time on an uphill, steep, winding path. The environment in which you're trying to change matters – more than you think.

One of the biggest cognitive biases is the so-called fundamental attribution error. It says that we overestimate how much people's innate character traits determine their behavior, as opposed to their environment. The truth is that human behavior is very fluid, and it highly depends on the situation.

Therefore, **the easier it is to follow through with your change in any given situation, the more likely you'll be to pull it off.**

For example, in a study students ranked their peers by how generous they were, yielding a group of "saints" and a group of "jerks." Half of both groups were then sent a vague letter, asking them to "bring food to a popular spot on campus." As a result, 8% of the saints donated, while none of the jerks did. However, when they sent a very specific letter to the other half of both groups, asking for a can of beans and giving them a map to the spot, 25% of even the jerk group donated – outgunning the saints 3:1 in the vague condition.

This shows that the situational conditions influence our behavior a lot more than our innate tendencies. So if you want to stop having sugar in your coffee, just don't buy any in the first place.

Wherever you can, design your environment to make it a pleasant, downhill stroll for your rider and elephant.

Switch Review

I love that they used one analogy throughout *Switch*, which made it very easy to follow along. Definitely one of the best books out there on behavioral change. Powerful read for managers too!

[Read full summary on Blinkist >>](#)

[Free Preview >>](#)

[Learn more about the author >>](#)

What else can you learn from the blinks?

- What the bright spots are and why finding them is important
- How a destination postcard can help you convince both the rider and the elephant
- Why your elephant becomes more powerful with every small hill it climbs
- How to match changes with peoples' identities
- What action triggers are and how they can give you a "free ride" on your elephant towards change
- Why you should show people the path has already been taken before

Who would I recommend the Switch summary to?

The 25 year old semi-entrepreneur, who keeps overanalyzing and thus gets slowed down in his progress, the 72 year old grandpa, who's too stubborn to finally turn on his hearing aid, and anyone who feels like their friends pressure them into negative behavior.