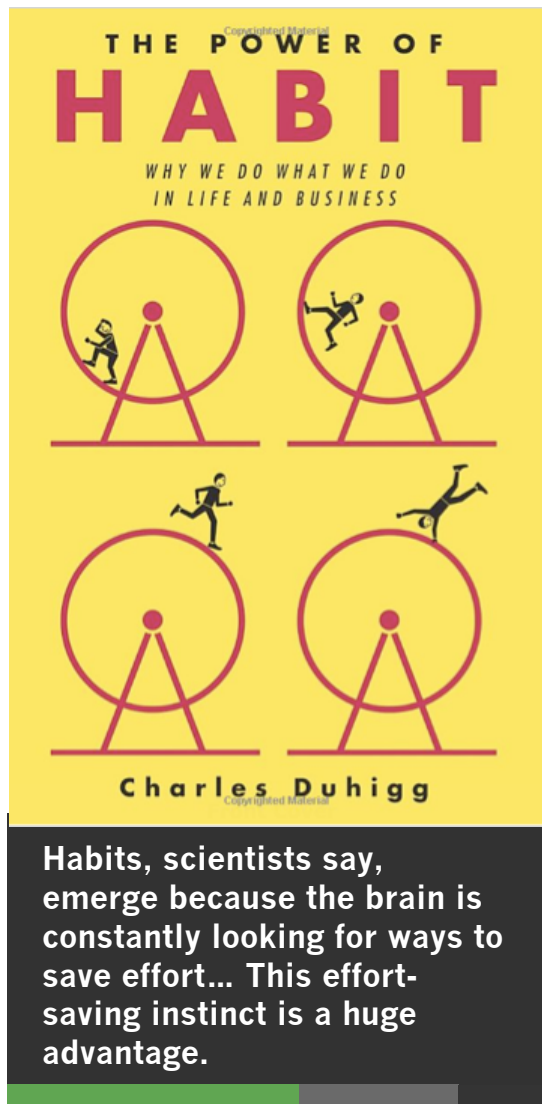


# Why We Do What We Do in Life and Business

# Charles Duhigg

New York: Random House (2012).





Pages 2-5 are quotes taken directly from the book.

“Champions don’t do extraordinary things,” Tony Dungy would explain. “They do ordinary things, but they do them without thinking, too fast for the other team to react. They follow the habits they’ve learned.”

1. “All our life, so far as it has definite form, is but a mass of habits,” William James.  
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... William James—like countless others, from Aristotle to Oprah—spent much of his life trying to understand why habits exist.
2. Habits can be changed, if we understand how they work.  
...once you see everything as a bunch of habits, it’s like someone gave you a flashlight and a crowbar and you can get to work.”
3. We understand how to make people eat less, exercise more, work more efficiently, and live healthier lives. Transforming a habit isn’t necessarily easy or quick. It isn’t always simple. But it is possible. And now we understand how.
4. **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.**
5. 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.
6. Habits never really disappear. ...it would be awful if we had to relearn how to drive after every vacation... 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.”  
Once we develop a routine of sitting on the couch, rather than running, or snacking whenever we pass a doughnut box, those patterns always remain inside our heads.  
...cues can be almost anything, from a visual trigger such as a candy bar or a television commercial to a certain place, a time of day, an emotion, a sequence of thoughts, or the company of particular people.
7. “Champions don’t do extraordinary things,” Tony Dungy would explain. “They do ordinary things, but they do them without thinking, too fast for the other team to react. They follow the habits they’ve learned.”

8. To change a habit, you must keep the old cue, and deliver the old reward, but insert a new routine. That's the rule... Almost any behavior can be transformed if the cue and reward stay the same.  
... the Golden Rule of habit change: AA succeeds because it helps alcoholics use the same cues, and get the same reward, but it shifts the routine.
9. Asking patients to describe what triggers their habitual behavior is called awareness training...  
"Most people's habits have occurred for so long they don't pay attention to what causes it anymore."
10. ...once you're aware of how your habit works, once you recognize the cues and rewards, you're halfway to changing it...
11. ...they learned that replacement habits only become durable new behaviors when they are accompanied by something else.  
...belief seems critical. You don't have to believe in God, but you do need the capacity to believe that things will get better.
12. "Self-discipline has a bigger effect on academic performance than does intellectual talent."  
...the best way to strengthen willpower and give students a leg up, studies indicate, is to make it into a habit.
13. They discovered that the four-year-olds who could delay gratification the longest ended up with the best grades and with SAT scores 210 points higher, on average, than everyone else.
14. By the 1980s, a theory emerged that became generally accepted: Willpower is a learnable skill, something that can be taught the same way kids learn to do math and say "thank you."  
Willpower isn't just a skill. It's a muscle, like the muscles in your arms or legs, and it gets tired as it works harder, so there's less power left over for other things."
15. **That's why signing up kids for piano lessons or sports is so important. It has nothing to do with creating a good musician or a five-year-old soccer star... When you learn to force yourself to practice for an hour or run fifteen laps, you start building self-regulatory strength. A five-year-old who can follow the ball for ten minutes becomes a sixth grader who can start his homework on time.**
16. ...entry-level workers—all face a common problem... many will fail because they lack self-discipline... "For a lot of employees, Starbucks is their first professional experience... So we try to figure out how to give our employees the self-discipline they didn't learn in high school."
17. Recovering from a hip or knee surgery is incredibly arduous.  
The patients who had written plans in their booklets had started walking almost twice as fast as the ones who had not. They had started getting in and out of their chairs, unassisted, almost three times as fast. They were putting on their shoes, doing the laundry, and making themselves meals quicker than the patients who hadn't scribbled out goals ahead of time.  
...she saw that many of the plans had something in common: They focused on how patients would handle a specific moment of anticipated pain.  
...patients' plans were built around inflection points when they knew their pain—and thus the temptation to quit—would be strongest. The patients were telling themselves how they were going to make it over the hump.
18. ...the key difference was the sense of control they had over their experience. "We've found this again and again," Muraven told me. "When people are asked to do something that takes self-control, if they think they are doing it for personal reasons—if they feel like it's a choice or something they enjoy because it helps someone else—it's much less taxing. If they feel like they have no autonomy, if they're just following orders, their willpower muscles get tired much faster.  
...when the students were treated like cogs, rather than people, it took a lot more willpower.  
Giving employees a sense of control improved how much self-discipline they brought to their jobs.

"Self-discipline has a bigger effect on academic performance than does intellectual talent."

Once you're aware of how your habit works, once you recognize the cues and rewards, you're halfway to changing it...

19. ***There are no organizations without institutional habits. There are only places where they are deliberately designed, and places where they are created without forethought, so they often grow from rivalries or fear.*** (emphasis added).

20. An Evolutionary Theory of Economic Change was first published in 1982...

Or, put in language that people use outside of theoretical economics, it may seem like most organizations make rational choices based on deliberate decision making, but that's not really how companies operate at all.

Instead, firms are guided by long-held organizational habits, patterns that often emerge from thousands of employees' independent decisions.

And these habits have more profound impacts than anyone previously understood.

...because without them, most companies would never get any work done. Routines provide the hundreds of unwritten rules that companies need to operate.

They allow workers to experiment with new ideas without having to ask for permission at every step. They provide a kind of "organizational memory,"

Routines reduce uncertainty...

21. Good leaders seize crises to remake organizational habits.

...wise executives seek out moments of crisis—or create the perception of crisis—and cultivate the sense that something must change, until everyone is finally ready to overhaul the patterns they live with each day.

22. A series of experiments convinced marketers that if they managed to understand a particular shopper's habits, they could get them to buy almost anything.

...each person's habits were different. The habits were unique to each person.

23. ...how do you keep track of their preferences and shopping patterns? You collect data. Enormous, almost inconceivably large amounts of data.

24. "It used to be that companies only knew what their customers wanted them to know," said Tom Davenport, one of the leading researchers on how businesses use data and analytics. "That world is far behind us. You'd be shocked how much information is out there—and every company buys it, because it's the only way to survive."

25. Why do some people suddenly change their shopping routines?

Habits reigned supreme. Except when they didn't.

Andreasen wanted to know why these people had deviated from their usual patterns. What he discovered has become a pillar of modern marketing theory: People's buying habits are more likely to change when they go through a major life event.

That's why signing up kids for piano lessons or sports is so important.

It has nothing to do with creating a good musician or a five-year-old soccer star...

When you learn to force yourself to practice for an hour or run fifteen laps, you start building self-regulatory strength.

A five-year-old who can follow the ball for ten minutes becomes a sixth grader who can start his homework on time.



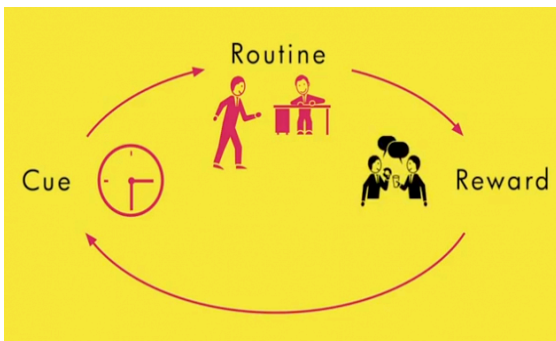
## On a playground, peer pressure is dangerous. In adult life, it's how business gets done and communities self-organize.

Consumers going through major life events often don't notice, or care, that their shopping patterns have shifted. However, retailers notice, and they care quite a bit.

Having a baby. There's almost no greater upheaval for most customers than the arrival of a child. As a result, new parents' habits are more flexible at that moment than at almost any other period in an adult's life. So for companies, pregnant women are gold mines.

26. To a new parent, easy matters most of all.
27. To market a new habit—be it groceries or aerobics—you must understand how to make the novel seem familiar.
28. In fact, in landing a job, Granovetter discovered, weak-tie acquaintances were often more important than strong-tie friends because weak ties give us access to social networks where we don't otherwise belong.  
...our weak-tie acquaintances—the people we bump into every six months—are the ones who tell us about jobs we would otherwise never hear about.
29. **The habits of peer pressure... often spread through weak ties.**  
**In other words, if you don't give the caller looking for a job a helping hand, he might complain to his tennis partner, who might mention those grumblings to someone in the locker room who you were hoping to attract as a client, who is now less likely to return your call because you have a reputation for not being a team player. On a playground, peer pressure is dangerous. In adult life, it's how business gets done and communities self-organize.**
30. "Historically, in neuroscience, we've said that people with brain damage lose some of their free will," said Habib. "But when a pathological gambler sees a casino, it seems very similar. It seems like they're acting without choice."
31. "Some thinkers," Aristotle wrote in *Nicomachean Ethics*, "hold that it is by nature that people become good, others that it is by habit, and others that it is by instruction." For Aristotle, habits reigned supreme. The behaviors that occur unthinkingly are the evidence of our truest selves, he said. So "just as a piece of land has to be prepared beforehand if it is to nourish the seed, so the mind of the pupil has to be prepared in its habits if it is to enjoy and dislike the right things."
32. But every habit, no matter its complexity, is malleable... However, to modify a habit, you must decide to change it. You must consciously accept the hard work of identifying the cues and rewards that drive the habits' routines, and find alternatives. You must know you have control and be self-conscious enough to use it—and every chapter in this book is devoted to illustrating a different aspect of why that control is real.
33. "All our life," William James told us in the prologue, "so far as it has definite form, is but a mass of habits—practical, emotional, and intellectual—systematically organized for our weal or woe, and bearing us irresistibly toward our destiny, whatever the latter may be." •  
Later, he would famously write that the will to believe is the most important ingredient in creating belief in change. And that one of the most important methods for creating that belief was habits. Habits, he noted, are what allow us to "do a thing with difficulty the first time, but soon do it more and more easily, and finally, with sufficient practice, do it semi-mechanically, or with hardly any consciousness at all."
34. If you believe you can change—if you make it a habit—the change becomes real. This is the real power of habit: the insight that your habits are what you choose them to be. Once that choice occurs—and becomes automatic—it's not only real, it starts to seem inevitable, the thing, as James wrote, that bears "us irresistibly toward our destiny, whatever the latter may be."
35. The difficult thing about studying the science of habits is that most people, when they hear about this field of research, want to know the secret formula for quickly changing any habit.  
The problem is that there isn't one formula for changing habits. There are thousands.

### The Power of Habit



# The Power of Habit

## Why We Do What We Do in Life and Business

by Charles Duhigg  
New York: Random House (2012).

Habits are all around us. They are so ingrained that we no longer recognize their cues...

We have habits as individuals. And corporations and organizations and the entire society all have habits.

Some habits are very good habits – and that is good.

Some habits are bad habits, and that can be bad to fully destructive.

We can choose to change our habits.

But it takes attention—and work – over the long haul.

(A word about this book – this is a very good book by an exceptional storyteller, Charles Duhigg)

### • Some of the Stories

- 1) The Army Major who stopped a riot (before it formed)
- 2) Coach Tony Dungy, who tried to turn his players into habitual actors (reactors)
- 3) Mandy, the girl who could not stop biting her fingernails
- 4) Alcoa – and the brilliant single focus that changed everything for the better
- 5) Michael Phelps and his lifelong habits
- 6) Starbucks, and their habit changing training successes
- 7) (Focus on employee training; to focus on customer service)
- 8) The Rhode Island Hospital
- 9) The on-paper exercise to help those recovering from hip or knee replacement surgery
- 10) The fire in the Underground – and insight into organizational idiocy stupidity
- 11) The World War II challenge regarding meat
- 12) Target identifies the expecting mothers
- 13) The creation of a hit song
- 14) Two similar movements: the Montgomery Bus Boycott and Saddleback Valley Community Church
- 15) The man who killed his wife (while he was asleep)
- 16) The woman who bankrupted her family because she was unable to keep from gambling
- 17) And, the author who ate a cookie every single day...until he formed a new habit

### • The Habit Loop

- 1) First, there is a cue, a trigger
- 2) -- Then there is the routine, which can be physical or mental or emotional.
- 3) -- 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.

- **Some takeaways**

- 1) Habits own you (and own an organization)
- 2) Habits will not change on their own
- 3) You cannot change a habit easily
- 4) Willpower can be exhausting
- 5) But, the will power muscle can be developed
- 6) You need a lot of help: like, peer pressure; checklists; written goals
- 7) You need to practice advanced decision making
- 8) If you succeed, the “bad habit” still lurks (maybe forever)
- 9) And, people do better when they (feel like they) have some level of control...
- 10) A crisis can play a really useful role in helping you (or an organization) change from a bad habit to a good habit. Take advantage of a crisis!

**The book:**

- **Part One -- The Habits of Individuals**

- 1) The Habit Loop – How Habits Work
- 2) The Craving Brain – How to Create New Habits
- 3) The Golden Rule of Change – Why Transformation Occurs  
*(The Golden Rule of Change: Keep the old cue; deliver the old reward; insert a new routine)*

- **Part Two – The Habits of Successful Organizations**

- 4) Keystone Habits, or the Ballad of Paul O’Neill – Which Habits Matter Most
- 5) Starbucks and the Habit of Success – When Willpower becomes automatic
- 6) The Power of a Crisis – How Leaders create habits through accident and design
- 7) How Target knows what you want before you do – when companies predict (and manipulate) habits

- **Part Three -- The Habits of Societies**

- 8) Saddleback Church and the Montgomery Bus Boycott – How Movements Happen
- 9) The Neurology of Free Will – Are we Responsible for our Habits?

- **Appendix: A Reader’s Guide to Using these Ideas**

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