



Small + Keystone
HABITS
= Big Results

*10 Power Habits that take 5 Minutes
Per Day & Guarantee Rapid Results*

AKASH KARIA

SMALL HABITS + KEYSTONE HABITS = BIG RESULTS

**10 Power Habits That Take 5 Minutes Per Day & Guarantee Rapid
Results**

AKASH KARIA

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[Akash Karia](#)

#1 Bestselling Author of “How Successful People Think Differently”

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TABLE OF CONETNS



Intro

Radically Transform Your Life

Chapter One

The Dreaded 'E' Word

Chapter Two

The Simple Habit that Can Transform Your Health

Chapter Three

Water: The Essence of Life

Chapter Four

How to Get a Good Night's Sleep Tonight

Chapter Five

The Amazing Benefits of Socializing with Friends

Chapter Six

How to Cultivate an Attitude of Gratitude

Chapter Seven

How to Exercise Your Mind

Chapter Eight

The Power of Serving Others

Chapter Nine

Laughing and Playing Keeps the Doctor Away

Chapter Ten

How to Change Your Financial Destiny

Summary Wrap Up

INTRO

RADICALLY TRANSFORM YOUR LIFE



Have you ever noticed how, generally, in life, one thing leads to another?

You head to the pub determined to have only one drink, but end up staying for three or four and some fried fatty food to top it all off.

Wouldn't it be great to harness this "chain reaction" to serve your life instead?

To be able to get healthier?

To get more productive?

To get happier?

To be more successful?

The good news is that habits often cause chain reactions. Creating a good habit is just as easy as creating one that is destructive. The amazing thing is that you can change your life, become healthier, happier, and develop good habits in less than five minutes a day by harnessing the power of keystone habits!

WHAT ARE KEYSTONE HABITS?

Although some things in life take willpower, the truth is that your life is probably already full of keystone habits, even though they may not be ones you want to continue or pursue. In their simplest form, keystone habits are habits and behaviors that you adopt that automatically lead to changes in other behaviors. In other words, they are habits that create a chain of behaviors or actions, for the most part, on an unconscious level.

Think about the last time you went for a walk. You probably had a glass of water afterwards. Perhaps did a little stretching? Perhaps you even felt like having a healthy breakfast after you worked up a healthy appetite. Unconsciously, by creating one habit –the keystone habit of a quick five-minute walk – you experienced a chain of healthy events that all supported and promoted your ultimate goal of achieving health and well-being.

The concept of keystone habits was popularized by New York Times bestselling author Charles Duhigg in his book *The Power of Habit*. He recognized that certain habits in our lives have the power to change other behaviors without any extra willpower being required; and that by consciously developing these habits, people can change their lives with minimal effort.

This book is designed to help you harness the power of these keystone habits to change your life in simple yet profound ways to improve health, wealth, relationships, and well-being.

These habits are simple to develop and apply. Once you understand the techniques covered in this book, you will be able to make spectacular changes in your life with a minimum amount of willpower.

KEYSTONE HABITS

Keystone habits are habits that have the power to transform other areas of your life without necessarily paying attention to those areas. For example, people who have developed the keystone habit of exercise sleep better, eat healthier food, have more patience, and spend less money.

Now that you've understood the concept of keystone habits, let's dive into the second concept that forms the premise for this book: small habits.

WHAT ARE SMALL HABITS?

Have you ever noticed how quickly small habits develop?

Think about the small things you do every day that make your life easier.

For example, you adopt the small habit of laying out your shoes and tracksuit the night before, and this makes going for a run in the morning easier and more likely.

Small habits are those habits that are easy to create, take very little time, and make bigger habits easier to adopt. Some examples of small habits include exercising for five minutes, writing just two lines in your journal, or drinking one glass of water in the morning.

By the way, just to give credit where it's due. This concept is not new. I knew about it intuitively, but first read about it in an article by B.J. Fogg (www.bjfogg.com) who refers to these habits as small habits. Bestselling author Stephen Guise (<http://viewBook.at/minihabits>) also talks about this concept in his book, though he refers to them as minihabits. However, the concept is the same and I'd like to acknowledge these two gentlemen for their work.

Instituting small habits is an easier way of developing successful long-term habits than trying to introduce a completely new lifestyle. As you'll see later on in the book, eventually these small habits do lead to you adopting the bigger habits anyway. It's just that when you start with small habits, your probability of making lasting change is much higher than if you tried to make a radical lifestyle change from the outset.

SMALL HABITS

Small habits are behavioral patterns that take very little time and that form part of your daily routine on an unconscious basis. Adopting small habits makes it easier to create lasting habits than trying to make big changes in your life from the outset.

USE SMALL HABITS TO MAKE MASSIVE CHANGES

The great thing about small habits is that they are easy to create and take very little time. That makes them a powerful tool to help you create new keystone habits that have the power to transform your life.

If you spend just a few minutes a day developing keystone habits such as exercising, food journaling, or drinking a glass of water, these keystone habits go on to help you transform other areas of your life, without any extra attention being required.

Chapter One

The Dreaded ‘E’ Word



Let us start with the one everyone rolls their eyes at.

The dreaded “E” word.

Yes.

Exercise.

Let’s face it. We all make those New Year’s resolutions to get more exercise, join a gym and get fit, and for some of us, this resolution is forgotten before everyone is finished yelling “Happy New Year!” We all have the best of intentions and yet, when it comes to finding the time to get to the gym or go for that walk, there is always something else that seems more important.

But exercise is vitally important and it happens to be one of the most important keystone habits. Here are some of the benefits of exercise as a keystone habit:

- In one study James Prochaska, a University of Rhode Island researcher, (www.bit.ly/duke-research) found that, “When people start habitually exercising, even as infrequently as once a week, they start changing other, unrelated patterns in their lives, often unknowingly.”
- This study found that people who did a small amount of exercise on a daily basis ate better and slept better.
- They were more patient with their friends, family, and colleagues.
- They had healthier lifestyles.
- They even spent less money on credit cards.
- Another study (www.bit.ly/keystone-exercise) confirmed that those who got more exercise lived healthier lives, were less likely to smoke, often stopped smoking, and

suffered from less stress.

Now, I know that you intuitively know all this! Most people know “exercising is good,” but what they don’t realize is just how important it is, not just for your health but also for everything else in your life. Our habits and actions are not isolated. Each habit affects other behaviors, which means that it can take just one habit (a good one, or – as you’ve probably seen too often – a bad one) to change your destiny!

As you read this book and understand the true impact of these keystone habits (as well as learning the steps to implement them in your life) I hope to take you from “knowing” to “doing.”

Why am I emphasizing all the benefits of these keystone habits throughout this book (even though you already know they are “good for you”)?

I’m doing it to light a fire under you. I’m doing it so that you can’t wait to start implementing these habits in your life. I’m doing it so that it ignites you and causes you to say, “I’ve been neglecting this area of my life, and it took this book as a reminder to kick me and get me to realize that!” I’m doing it so that understanding the true benefits of these keystone habits will make you want to adopt them and make a real difference in your life.

You’re smart enough by now to understand that there are no “secrets” to life. You already know most of everything you need to know about achieving success. As much as we’d like to complicate things and figure out algorithms for success, success in any endeavor boils down to basic habits and behaviors. Habits and behaviors you are already aware of! But sometimes it takes a sentence or a paragraph or a book to cause you to start taking action on them. And that is the purpose of this book...

Even if one chapter in this book makes you want to get up, stop reading, and start DOING, implementing any one of these habits – then I consider that this book will have served its ultimate purpose.

OK, rant over! Now moving on...

The bottom line is that we all know we should be getting more exercise and that exercise is healthy.

However, when it comes to *actually* exercising, most of us feel like we were born with no willpower.

What if you I told you that developing an exercise routine that can change your life is not as difficult as you might think?

Creating a healthy exercise routine is not really about using massive amounts of willpower. It is about setting goals that are realistic and achievable.

USE SMALL HABITS TO GET STARTED

Imagine you are trying to get a novice to run her first half marathon. No matter how much willpower she has, no matter how determined she is to complete the event, the chances of her succeeding are miniscule. It takes months to train for an event like a half marathon.

But what if you got her to go for a short jog through the local park? Just a ten-minute jog. If she enjoyed the outing then she would probably go again tomorrow. She may even jog a little farther. And in a few months' time, after having developed the daily habit of jogging, she may be ready to take on that half marathon.

When it comes to the decision to get more exercise, you are setting goals that are similar to running that half marathon with very little training! You make a decision to buy a gym contract and decide to spend an hour at the gym every day. Well, you might stick to that for a day or two, but chances are you won't be able to continue to meet that commitment in the long term.

If, however, you make a commitment to go jogging for a few minutes a day or add a few sit-ups to your daily routine before bed, then you are far more likely to stick to your decision and to create a habit that offers you long-term results. The key is to start small. Small habits (starting small) lead to long-term success. When you combine the principle of small habits with keystone habits, you'll begin to see massive changes in your life.

HOW TO IMPLEMENT HABITUAL EXERCISE INTO YOUR DAILY ROUTINE

1 - COMMIT TO A SMALL HABIT OF EXERCISING

People are motivated by two things: pleasure and pain.

We do those things that give us pleasure and avoid things that cause us pain.

The other important principle to keep in mind about human behavior is that our brains work on immediate results. We know exercise will be good for us in the long run but for *right now*, it is easier to choose something that gives us an immediate reward. When we are rewarded, we repeat the behavior, and the repetition causes that behavior to become a habit (an activity you do automatically without thinking about it).

That is why a decision to go to the gym for an hour seldom works.

However, when you choose to add small habits to your life instead, then those habits are easier to create and tend to multiply.

For example, let's say you add a few jumping jacks to your daily routine while you wait for the kettle to boil. By the end of the day, you may have done fifty jumping jacks! You begin to feel good about yourself. The reward kicks in and instead of doing fifty, tomorrow you end up doing seventy. Small habits multiply!

When your exercise routine becomes a habit then the keystone habit principle begins to transform other areas of your life too. You unconsciously make changes to other areas of your life.

When you exercise, your circulation improves. This means your body is getting more oxygen and more nutrients go to your cells. You feel more energetic. Your body feels healthier. You begin to make smarter decisions. You eat healthier food. You are more productive at work. Your mood improves. You get better sleep and you even spend less on your credit cards because your identity shifts and you start seeing yourself as a smarter decision maker.

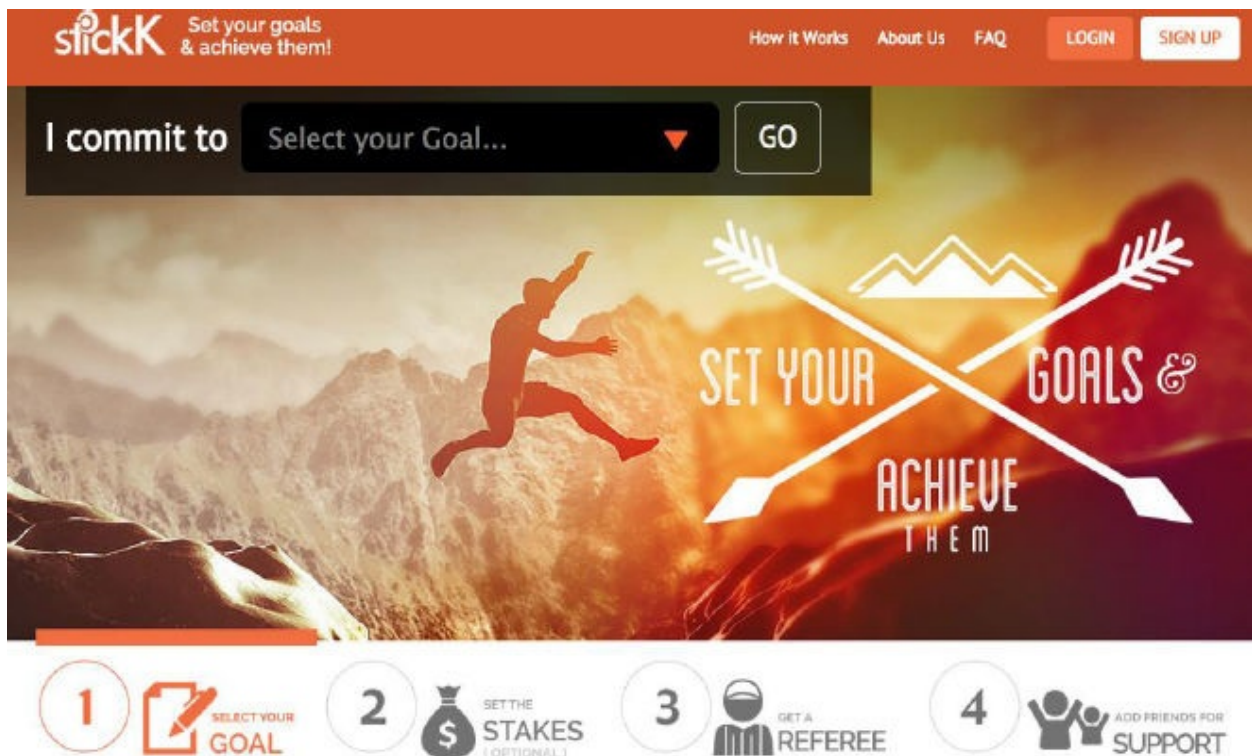
The key is to start with small habits.

Decide to jog for a few minutes a day, or to add a few pushups to your daily routine.

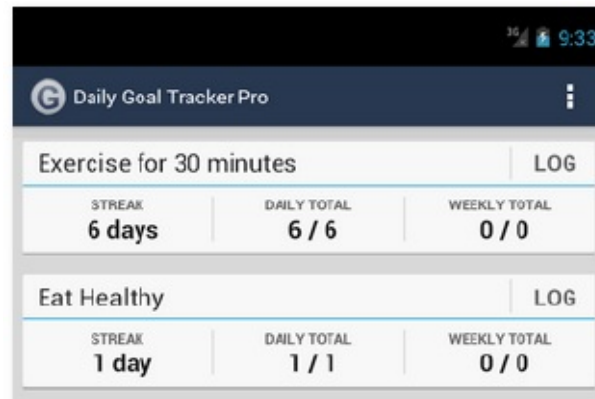
Remember it is far easier to develop small habits than it is to make major lifestyle changes. You are far more likely to succeed by adding a minute or two of exercise to your routine than you are if you try to commit to an hour of gym a day. Set goals that are so small that it is impossible to fail.

If you need help setting your small goals, then download one of these awesome apps to help you work towards your dreams:

- Stickk (www.stickk.com) – The fear of losing money is a great motivator, and this app takes advantage of that fear by getting you to commit to a contract and place your money on the line. The Stickk app (and website) allows you to set goals and then place a money value on achieving that goal. Should you fail to achieve that goal, you lose the money you put at stake! Having something of real value depend on the outcome is a great way to stay motivated to achieve your goal.



- Alternatively, share you can use the Goalmaster app for Android (www.bit.ly/goal-master). What is Goalmaster? It's an app that "will give you goal reminders, enable you to log reminders, calculate your stats and share your goals and results on Facebook. It also comes with motivational quotes to keep you going." – via The Next Web (www.bit.ly/next-web)



2 - FIND A SMALL AMOUNT OF TIME

The biggest excuse we offer when it comes to exercise is that we don't have the time.

That is only partially true.

While most of us would struggle to find an hour a day to commit to a gym appointment, the truth is that a large portion of our day is spent waiting. We wait for the kettle to boil. We wait for the microwave. We wait for ads to finish so that we can watch our favorite TV sitcom. There are many times throughout the day where we spend a few minutes at a time waiting.

What if you spent that time doing some sort of quick exercise?

How many times do you make coffee every day? Four or five?

Choose something you do often during the day and then use that as a cue. If you associate a quick exercise routine with a cue like making coffee, then it becomes easier to create the exercise habit. Each time you make coffee, exercise! This becomes part of your routine and the more you link a good habit to a cue, the more you will experience the benefits of the keystone habit.

If you chose to do jumping jacks for the two minutes it took the kettle to boil and you did that four or five times a day, you'd be feeling pretty good about yourself by the end of the day.

So the first key is to identify the times you can add a small amount of exercise (even one or two pushups) to your daily routine.

Take a day or two and pay attention to your routine.

Where are you most often waiting for something? Could you implement a few minutes of exercise while you wait? And what kind of exercise would suit those situations? It is no good planning to do jumping jacks while you brush your teeth – unless you intend swallowing your toothbrush!

You could, however, use some sort of weights to improve leg strength while you are watching television. Perhaps you could go for a walk during the ads.

By paying attention to your routine and when you spend time waiting for things, you will be able to identify numerous opportunities to add a few minutes of exercise to your daily routine.

3 - MAKE A LIST OF ITEMS AVAILABLE TO YOU

Most of us have a water bottle in the refrigerator. A quart of water weighs just over two pounds.

Why not do some arm exercises with a filled water bottle while you wait for the kettle to boil?

Get a backpack, fill it with clothing, and use it as leg weights while you watch the ads on television.

4 - HAVE FUN

The most important step to creating habits that stick is to ensure you get a reward.

When you feel good about something, you do it over and over again with very little willpower required. So turn your new exercise routine into a game and see how many water bottle lifts you can do in that time. Aim to beat your own records.

The brain loves games and before you know it, you will be well on your way to building the body strength you desire while having fun at the same time.

Now, wait a minute – why haven't I suggested you join the gym?

You could join the gym – and if you're someone who's motivated by the thought of exercise, you probably already have!

However, if you are someone who struggles to exercise because you don't have the time (read: excuses), then it's better to start to form the *habit* of exercising at home (read: convenience).

Once exercise becomes a daily habit and you find yourself *wanting* to go to the gym, then that is the right time to do so.

5 - REWARD YOURSELF

The final step to creating successful habits is to remember that the human mind is motivated by pleasure and reward. So when you find you have successfully completed your exercise habit for the day, remember to reward yourself with something you enjoy. Go watch a movie, buy yourself that book you've been meaning to, or have an evening out with friends. This reward will help cement the habit for the long term.

IN A NUTSHELL

The key to implementing the exercise habit in your life is to:

- Set a goal for a small habit: For example, “exercise five minutes every day.”
- Tie the goal to a cue: For example, “work out for five minutes while waiting for my morning coffee.”
- Make a list of the items you could use during these times. Be creative. What is at your disposal during these times?
- Have fun.

CHALLENGE #1

Choose something about your fitness you would like to improve. Identify the times you could spend doing a few minutes of exercise. Add five minutes of exercise to your daily routine and watch how your life begins to change.

Chapter Two

The Simple Habit that Can Transform Your Health



Do you really know what you are eating and drinking each day?

We spend so much of our lives doing things automatically that most people are shocked when they begin to write a food journal. As with exercise, food journaling can have amazing benefits if you turn it into a habit.

In a study of keystone habits (www.bit.ly/duke-research), James Prochaska, a University of Rhode Island researcher, found that individuals who made a habit of carrying a food journal and noting what they ate had some truly unexpected results. They began to make healthier food choices. They recognized instances where they could avoid snacking on unhealthy foods by planning for snack times in advance. They began to plan healthier dinners and these advantages spilled over into other areas of their lives.

Like exercise, learning to record what you eat makes you aware of eating habits, patterns, and triggers. On a conscious and subconscious level this will lead to you making better choices. You will begin to eat better, your health will improve, you will sleep better, and your mood will improve.

There are many good reasons why food journaling is important:

FOOD JOURNALING HELPS TO TRIGGER MEMORY

The brain is an amazing organ, and the memory is designed to record events and occurrences. Sadly, the conscious memory only notes the conscious events that occur. Since eating is often an unconscious habit, chances are that your memory of what you ate will be inaccurate.

Remember to make notes about what you ate, as well as keep a record of the portions. Don't be afraid of being honest. No one else is going to read your journal and the more honest you are, the more you can begin to recognize patterns in your life. (Do you eat when you are stressed? Bored? Angry? Happy?) By making notes of your intake, you can begin to take responsibility for your eating habits.

The small habit of making notes before you eat, while you are waiting for your food to arrive, for example, also gives you an opportunity to think before you eat. Since much of what we eat and drink each day is done on an unconscious basis, this small habit can help you really realize what you are eating and whether you actually want to eat that particular snack or meal.

FOOD JOURNALING CAN HELP YOU RECOGNIZE PATTERNS

A lot of what we eat every day is habitual. You do not realize how many cups of coffee you drink or how much you really snack, until you sit down with a pen and paper and actually make notes.

If you had to list what you have eaten today, then chances are you could name a few things. However, if you begin to really think about it and make a list, you may be surprised by the results.

The truth is that a lot of what we eat every day is habitual. I was horrified to find that I was consuming more than five cups of coffee a day and it took writing a journal to make this discovery. Now I know why I couldn't sleep at night! It took a food journal to unravel the mystery of my insomnia.

You will most likely find that the act of food journaling will help you to increase your awareness of *what* you are eating and *how much* you are eating and drinking every day. You will be able to spot the junk food that is creeping into your life and undermining your fitness goals. You will also be able to raise your awareness of *when* you are eating junk food, what your triggers are, and how to you can start to implement strategies to eat healthier.

HOW TO IMPLEMENT FOOD JOURNALING INTO YOUR ROUTINE

1 - COMMIT TO A SMALL HABIT OF JOURNALING

Like exercise, the easiest way to implement a food journal into your routine is by creating a small habit. For example, tell yourself that right before/after you eat, you will spend just thirty seconds recording what you ate.

Make it as easy as possible to make notes about what you are eating. Write down your consumption in bullet point form. Perhaps keep your food journal on your mobile phone so that the act of journaling is as painless and quick as possible.

You are really just making a list of your intake to help monitor what you are eating. You are not making a comprehensive dietary assessment. The smaller the habit, the easier it will be to implement, so start small and you will have the greatest chances of success.

2 - IDENTIFY A CUE IN YOUR ROUTINE

Like anything in life, consistent food journaling requires that you turn journaling into a habit rather than something you have to remember to do every day. The most powerful habits are ones you perform on a daily basis, automatically. These habits are generally based on a particular cue.

Think about what you do when you wake up in the morning. If you are like most people, you stumble out of bed, stagger to the kitchen, switch on the kettle or coffeepot, and make a cup of coffee. This is a habitual routine. The act of waking up is a cue to get the coffee going. The coffee is the reward.

Another example: I always check my mail when I get to my desk. Whether I have been out for lunch or out for a meeting, when I sit down at my desk, I check my mail.

Jotting down what I am about to eat just before I put the first spoonful of food into my mouth was a great way to turn food journaling into a habit for me.

Choose an established habit of your own as a cue to jot down your daily consumption of food.

3 - KEEP YOUR JOURNAL IN A CONVENIENT LOCATION

For the most part, humans are lazy.

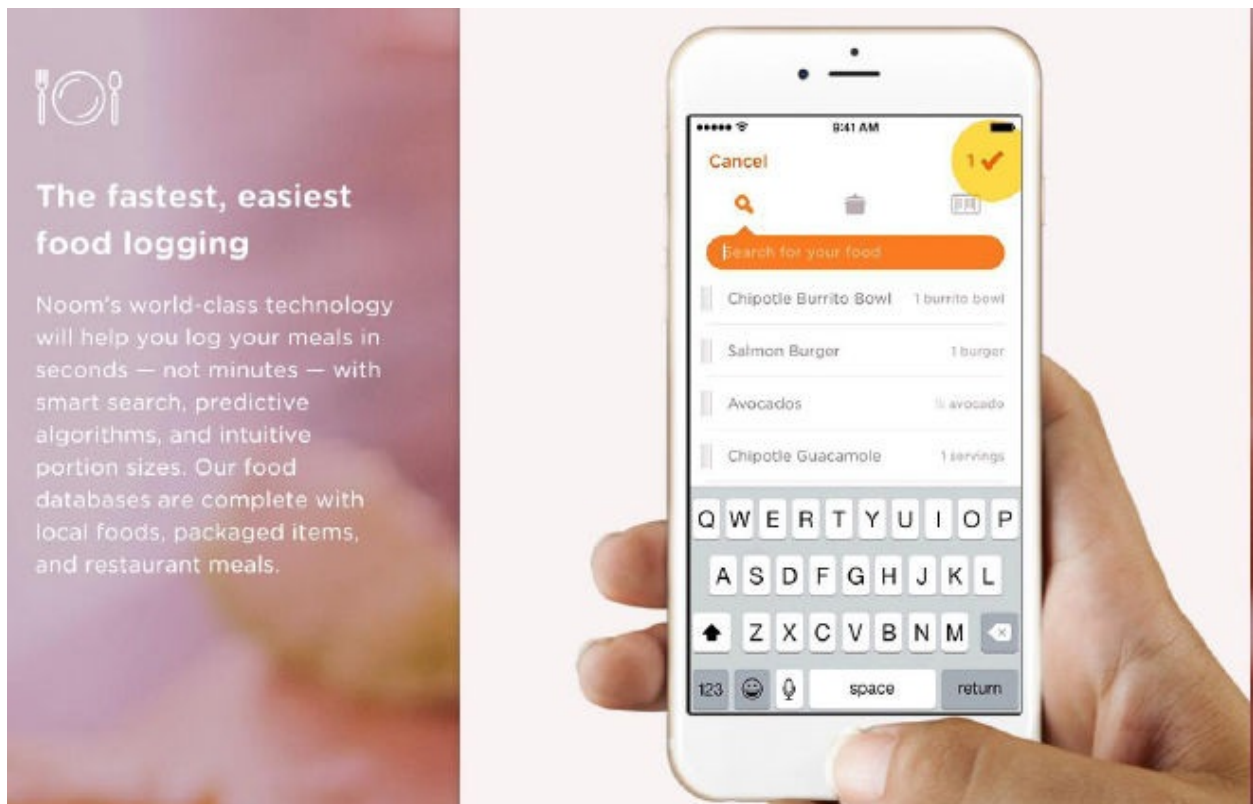
If you leave your journal in the basement locked in the safe, chances are you won't want to fetch it every night to complete your entries.

The key to any habit is simplicity and convenience.

Keep your journal in your purse or in your pocket if you prefer writing notes. Link the journal to events in your life. Journal when you are waiting for your food order. Journal each time you get the elevator. Make sure you link your journal to convenient things to help you remember to write it all down. And don't forget the pen!

If you prefer to go digital, why not choose your mobile for journaling?

There are a number of apps that you can download for your smartphone that make the act of food journaling really easy. For example, Noom Coach (<http://us.noom.com/coach>) offers you a simple, easy way to select your food from a list and save it to your daily consumption. It is packed with intelligent tools to make tracking your consumption as easy as possible.



4 - AT THE END OF THIRTY DAYS, REVIEW YOUR JOURNAL

Remember that the object of creating a food journal is to spot patterns and analyze what you are really eating. It is therefore important not only to write your journal but also to take the time to read what you have written.

Once you have created the habit of journaling, take the time to read your journal. Wait a few weeks, and then take a look at your journal. Wait until the habit is formed.

I don't mean to imply that you need to do a statistical Excel analysis on your daily dietary intake, but spend some time at the end of each month just taking a look at your eating habits. Take the time to recognize your patterns so that you can identify where you could improve.

If you notice that you tend to snack on candies in the afternoon because the candy machine is the only convenient food at the office, then you can begin to keep a healthier snack around for those particular times. Take an apple to work. Keep a healthy snack in the car.

Don't get too involved in analyzing your diary though. The keystone habit of food journaling will automatically begin to change other areas of your life without you even consciously realizing (that's the great part about keystone habits!). When you begin to record what you eat, your brain automatically become aware of your habits and patterns, which will lead to you making healthier choices (again, without even trying). That, in turn, leads to more energy, more productivity, better mood, and a host of other benefits.

IN A NUTSHELL

Food journaling is a keystone habit that can make you healthier, happier, and more productive. The key to implementing it is to:

- Set a goal for a small habit: Spend just thirty seconds before/after a meal recording what you ate.
- Make it as painless as possible to implement the habit. Keep your pen and journal handy, or use a food journaling app.
- Commit to keeping a food journal for the next thirty days.
- At the end of a month, review your journal to identify negative eating patterns that you can improve.

CHALLENGE #2

Make a decision to take action today.

Food journaling is a powerful keystone habit that will lead to many other knock-on benefits in your life. Research shows that the act of food journaling often leads to better eating habits, healthier lifestyle choices, improved exercise routines, and increased productivity without even necessarily trying.

Get yourself a food diary and choose a cue that makes sense to you. Keep your food diary for the next thirty days and then set aside one afternoon to review how the mere act of food journaling changes what you eat in general.

Chapter Three

Water: The Essence of Life



We all know that we need to drink water to be healthy and perform at our peak.

Your energy levels depend on you drinking sufficient water. You need water to flush the toxins from your body.

You even need water to think clearly!

If you have ever been for a surgical procedure then you know how hard it is not to drink anything for eight hours. By the time you go into surgery, you are almost ready to bribe the nurse for an ounce of water.

When you wake up, your body is dehydrated. You haven't had anything to drink for eight hours and this affects a number of physical systems within your body. Research shows that drinking water first thing in the morning does more than merely quench your thirst.

Research proves that drinking water:

- **Boosts your metabolism** – In a study published in the Journal of Endocrinology (www.bit.ly/water-research), Dr. Michael Boschmann found that “Drinking 500 ml of water increased metabolic rate by 30%.” In fact, it can fire up your metabolism for up to 90 minutes after drinking the water. This means you burn more calories, and that’s good news if you’re like most people (overweight and unhappy).
- **Helps to flush toxins from your body** – According to WebMD (www.webmd.com), water flushes the kidneys, which are responsible for removing toxins from the body. Toxins can make you feel tired and fatigued. They can affect how well you think as well as damage the body in the long run. With fewer toxins, you feel healthier, have more energy, and get better rest.
- **Energizes your muscles** – According to Dr. Steven Guest (www.webmd.com), “When muscle cells don’t have adequate fluids, they don’t work as well and performance can suffer.”

On the opposite side, when your cells have more energy, your body is healthier and you have more energy to enjoy life. You are more likely to exercise, to eat healthier meals, and to work towards your goals. You'll suddenly find yourself being more productive and wanting to get more done, without even realizing why (well, now you know!).

- **Improves your brain, memory, and cognitive function** – “The brain is one of the most important organs in your body to keep fueled. It is approximately 85 percent water and brain function depends on having abundant access to water.” Dr. Corinne Allen, founder of the Advanced Learning and Development Institute, found that “the brain cells need two times more energy than other cells in the body. Water provides this energy more effectively than any other substance.”

The brain plays a vital role in how you feel and how well the body works. By improving brain function, you are able to make better decisions. Your moods improve. You feel better about yourself and your family. You are more inclined to exercise and you perform better at work.

HOW TO IMPLEMENT WATER HABIT INTO YOUR LIFE

1 - CREATE THE SMALL HABIT OF DRINKING ONE GLASS OF WATER

Add water to your daily routine. The truth is that most of us are dehydrated and we do not drink enough water.

Decide to add the small habit of drinking water to your daily routine. Place a glass on your desk at work to remind you. Keep a bottle of water in the refrigerator and make a commitment to ensure it is always handy.

We are innately lazy and by keeping water handy you have a far better chance of drinking sufficient water on a daily basis.

2 - PREPARE BEFOREHAND

Unlike exercise and journaling, creating the keystone habit of drinking water is very simple. The key to developing this habit is to be prepared. Get a 16-ounce glass and fill it with

water. Place it beside your bed before you go to sleep each night. Be sure to use a glass with a lid or cover your glass. You don't want critters getting into your glass overnight!

When you wake up, before you do anything else, drink the glass of water.

3 - MAKE IT PLEASANT

If you do not enjoy drinking water, add a teaspoon or two of pure lemon juice. Lemon juice is extremely healthy and will add flavor to your water.

I used to struggle to drink enough water until I tried this. The truth is, I never realized how thirsty I was when I woke up until I tried this. That water goes down like a treat first thing in the morning and of all the keystone habits, this one is really one of the easiest habits to create. Some days I drink three glasses of water in the morning! 😊

My father is a master at this, by the way (good job, Dad!). He's managed to stay in perfect health simply by making sure he always stays fully hydrated. During our last family health checkup, my father was given the thumbs-up from the doctor.

The doctor credits my father's great health to the fact that Dad consumes more than a liter of water every day upon waking up (and another liter right before bed).

Now, you don't have to start by consuming a liter every morning! The key is to start small. Remember, small habits = successful habits. So start with at *least* one glass every morning.

4 - EXTEND THE HABIT

Once you have developed the habit of drinking water first thing in the morning, why not extend the habit? Take a bottle of water to work with you. Keep a bottle in the car. Make sure you drink at least eight glasses of water every day and see the difference it makes to keep your body hydrated.

But don't go overboard. Remember, the beauty of a keystone habit is to create small habits that cause huge changes in your life. Once you have ingrained the habit of drinking a glass of water when you wake up, most of the other changes mentioned previously will follow naturally, without any effort on your part.

IN A NUTSHELL

Approximately 60% of your body is made up of water.

Your brain – the most powerful supercomputer on the planet – is 75% water.

It's not a stretch to say that water is life! So, if you want to feel more alive, start with these steps: • Commit to the small habit of drinking at least one glass of water first thing each the morning.

- Make the habit as easy as possible: Keep a glass of water next to your bed each night so you can drink it when you wake up.
- Make the habit pleasant: If you require more “taste” in your water, experiment with adding honey or a teaspoon of lemon juice to it.

Extend the habit: Take a bottle of water with you to work and keep it on your desk (remember that “out of sight = out of mind”).

CHALLENGE #3

Start tonight. Place a glass of water next to your bed, ready for when you wake up in the morning. When you wake up, drink the glass of water before you do anything else. Do this every day for thirty days.

When you do this you will have more energy throughout your day. You will have the ability to think more clearly to make better decisions. You will feel better, your kidneys will be able to flush the toxins from the body, and you will feel healthier. How you start your day determines how the rest of it will pan out, so start with a good habit that makes you feel alive and energized!

Chapter Four

How to Get a Good Night's Sleep Tonight



If you have children who have missed their naptime, then you know how devastating a lack of sleep can be. Children who are overtired complain, cry, refuse to listen to reason, and are downright impossible.

Children who get enough sleep can be molded like clay in your hands. Okay, so perhaps that last part is an exaggeration! But children who have had enough sleep are (generally) a pleasure to work with.

Think about the last time you had a late night and burned the candle at both ends. When you woke up, you probably had less energy and felt fatigued. If you're anything like me, you probably woke up in a foul mood and lacked clarity of thought.

Sleep plays a huge role in how you feel, how motivated you are, and how well you can remember and think.

The bottom line is that the body is built to get at least eight hours of sleep a night. Feel-good hormones such as dopamine, melatonin, and serotonin are produced while you sleep. Your immune cells are produced while you sleep. Various physical processes require that time to function at healthy levels. Getting enough rest at night is crucial for your mental and physical well-being.

Research shows that getting at least eight hours of peaceful sleep a night results in the following effects in your life:

- **Sleep improves mood:** According to Harvard Medical School (www.bit.ly/sleep-harvard), "Sleep and mood are closely connected; poor or inadequate sleep can cause irritability and stress, while healthy sleep can enhance well-being."
- **Sleep increases exercise:** In a study published in the Journal of Adolescent Health (www.bit.ly/sleep-journal), researchers found that "high exercise levels are related to favorable sleep patterns and psychological functioning in adolescents"

- **Sleep improves memory and cognitive ability:** According to Harvard Medical School (www.bit.ly/harvard-memory), “exercise helps memory and thinking through both direct and indirect means.”
- **Sleep improves performance:** Researchers at Amino Acids Studies (www.bit.ly/amino-sleep) found that your ability to perform is directly related to how well you sleep. They also found that people who were fatigued struggle to perform their duties. This becomes a cycle. The better you sleep, the better you feel. You perform well at work and have less stress which means you sleep well. Conversely, when you cannot perform, you are stressed and worried about your lack of performance which means you cannot sleep well. It is vital to ensure you get enough sleep to create the positive cycle in your life.
- **Sleep improves motivation:** In a study published in the Journal of Neuropsychiatry (www.bit.ly/motivation-sleep), researchers found “that motivation affects performance, but it also appears that sleep deprivation can lead to a loss of motivation.”

Think about the last time you were well rested.

Perhaps it was the last time you went on vacation.

Think about the energy you had once you were well rested.

It is quite amazing how much you can pack into a good vacation. The energy seems endless. You wake up in a good mood and have boundless energy. This energy is partly due to the vacation, but a large part of why you feel so good has to do with the fact that you are well rested.

TIPS FOR GETTING ENOUGH SLEEP

1 - CREATE A ROUTINE

Studies show that a consistent routine is often the first step in ensuring you get a good night's rest. According to the Mayo Clinic (www.bit.ly/routine-sleep), individuals who go to bed and get up at the same time each day have a better chance of getting a good night's sleep.

The duration of sleep is important too, so you need to factor in what time you need to get up in the morning. Make sure you get to bed with at least eight hours allowed for healthy sleep.

Decide to go to bed at the same time each night. You may toss and turn the first few nights but you will be surprised how fast your body adapts to a routine. It won't take very long to fall asleep quickly at bedtime. In a study on sleep (www.bit.ly/bed-routine), researchers found that in a bedtime routine "improvements were seen in latency to sleep onset and in number/duration of night waking." In other words, when you have a routine, you are likely to fall asleep faster and you are also less likely to wake up during the night. This means better sleep overall.

2 - PAY ATTENTION TO WHAT YOU EAT

Food can play a big role in how well you sleep, how fast you fall asleep, and whether you stay asleep. Pay attention to what you eat late at night. Avoid the foods that will keep you awake, such as caffeine, sugar, and heavy proteins just before bed.

A number of foods can help to support sleep. A cup of cocoa late at night is great because cocoa is packed with tryptophan, which improves sleep duration and quality.

Also, don't eat a large meal just before bed, but don't go to bed hungry either. Eat your main meal early in the evening and allow a few hours for digestion before it is time for bed.

3 - CREATE THE RIGHT ENVIRONMENT

Your environment can also affect how well you sleep. Remove distractions such as cellphones, laptops, and televisions.

Light plays a role in your ability to get good quality sleep. Behind your eyes are sensors that can sense light, no matter how little. A dark room is the best if you are trying to get enough rest. Remove lights, alarm clocks that may be emitting light while you sleep, and other light sources. Invest in a sleep mask to ensure your body thinks it is dark.

Temperature also plays a role in how well you sleep. You do not sleep well if you are too hot or cold, so make sure your bedroom and bedding are suitable for the climate you are

living in. A comfortable climate is best for sleep and this temperature varies from person to person. So make sure you are comfortable to ensure you sleep well.

4 - HAVE A STRATEGY TO MANAGE STRESS & SWITCH OFF

One of the biggest challenges for some people when it comes to ensuring a good night's rest is to stop thinking. Many individuals struggle to switch off mentally. There are a number of strategies that you can apply to help you relax and fall asleep.

If you are worried about something, make a habit of writing down your concerns early in the evening. The act of writing down concerns can help the brain to let those concerns go at bedtime.

Alternatively, meditation can be a great way to learn to switch off the mind. If your mind is racing and keeping you up at night, then invest in a course on meditation and breathing techniques that allow the body to relax. Practice these before bedtime to help your mind relax so you can improve your quality of sleep.

IN A NUTSHELL

Sleep plays a vital role in recovery, but many of us don't get enough of it. Generally, the optimal amount of sleep (though it varies between individuals) is eight hours. During this time, your brain gets a chance to process and store the day's information and you get a chance to recharge. If you want to wake up recharged and motivated in the morning, then be sure to:

- Get at least eight hours of shuteye.
- Create a consistent routine: Go to bed at the same time each night.
- Pay attention to what you eat: Avoid the foods that keep you up at night.
- Create the right environment: Turn off all lights and electronic devices and ensure that the room is at a comfortable temperature.

Have a strategy to manage stress and calm your mind.

CHALLENGE #4

Make a commitment to start getting eight hours of sleep every night. Create a schedule that works for you and start tonight. Make sure you check your bedroom for distractions and get your room ready for a great night's sleep.

Commit to a schedule for thirty days and see how well you feel after that period. Sleep is a fundamental key to physical and mental health and well-being. Invest time in relaxation and sleep, and experience the benefits in your life.

Sleep is a keystone habit and has the power to transform your life. Take the time to develop this keystone habit and you will be amazed at how your life is transformed in just thirty days.

Chapter Five

The Amazing Benefits of Socializing with Friends



You know how a good night out with friends can really help to recharge your batteries, but did you know socializing is also really good for you? When you think of ways to improve your life and your health, it's unlikely that you will think of having fun and socializing with friends as a habit that is worth cultivating. For some reason, we are taught to feel bad about having fun and spending time with the people we love and doing things we enjoy.

The strange thing is that having fun with the people you love is in fact a keystone habit that has the power to change other areas in your life. More and more research is available on the power of the mind to affect the body physically. The brain is powerful and the chemistry associated with positive moods and having fun has a powerful effect on the physical body. When you have fun, you release stress, you have more energy, and you get a better night's sleep.

It makes sense that when you feel better, when you are having fun, your body feels better. You begin to have more energy, you exercise more, and you begin to feel proud of yourself and the decisions you make. When you socialize you take better care of your appearance. And this is not only logical but there are in fact scientific studies to prove it.

- Socializing has been linked to better mental and physical health and even to decreased death rates. In a review of more than 148 studies (www.bit.ly/friends-research) done on more than 300,000 individuals, scientists found a definite link between individuals who have strong social ties and those who lived longer.
- According to The Guardian (www.bit.ly/guardian-friends), "loneliness is as bad for you as smoking 15 cigarettes a day."

The body has a number of chemical processes that can help to explain how socializing can actually be good for you on a physical level, but the truth is that you know you feel better

after a good night out with friends.

Think about the last time you went to party with friends, or out to dinner with your family or loved ones. You don't need a lesson in chemistry to prove it to you because the effects of that event probably lasted well past the event itself. You told everyone at the office. You laughed about it with other friends.

In fact, the mere act of socializing can create a cycle allowing you to socialize with others in the retelling of the event.

TIPS ON HOW TO IMPLEMENT THE HABIT OF SOCIALIZING INTO YOUR LIFE

It may seem a little absurd to think that you need help adding the habit of socializing into your life, but the truth is that while we all enjoy a good party and very few of us require incentives to have a good time, sometimes life has a habit of passing you by.

While you are busy, stressed, and trying to keep up with the demands of modern life, days turn into weeks and weeks into months, and when you look back, you haven't had time to visit with your family or arrange a night out with friends.

Now that you know how important it is to socialize on a regular basis, like any other habit, you need to make a commitment to incorporate into your life the habit of socializing on a regular basis.

1 – COMMIT TO A SMALL HABIT

Make the decision to reach out and spend time with your friends and family.

Decide to spend just five minutes each day talking to a friend.

Or create a weekly habit of meeting a friend for a thirty-minute lunch each Saturday.

Setting these small social goals ensures that your social life won't be forgotten.

2 - DECIDE WHAT YOU ENJOY AND MAKE ARRANGEMENTS

It sounds simple, but if you really think about, it can sometimes be hard to define what you really enjoy. If you enjoy a variety of things then the process can be even harder. Don't feel you must choose only one thing. If your list includes movies, a night out with friends, and a quiet dinner with family, then include all of them on your list.

Make a list of the friends you have been meaning to call or visit and the things you have been meaning to do with them. Make sure the list includes the things you have been wanting to do rather than the things you "have" to do. Taking cookies to Auntie Milly may be something you have to do, but it doesn't count as "socializing" in this context but rather a duty call.

Once you have a list, create a schedule of the things you would like to do and start making the arrangements.

3 - MAKE A NOTE IN YOUR CALENDAR

Most of us use an electronic calendar of some sort these days to keep track of appointments and things we need to do. Whether you use MS Outlook or Google calendar, the simplest way to ensure you get out regularly is to set a reminder in your calendar right now.

You don't have to try to arrange to go to the movies in two months' time, but a small reminder in your calendar will help you to make the time to go out and enjoy yourself. The old saying that money can't buy you love is true here. Money can't buy you time with friends and you cannot buy that time back once it's gone.

4 - NOTICE THE OTHER CHANGES IN YOUR LIFE

Once you have established the keystone habit, notice how other areas in your life begin to change. When you spend more time with friends you feel happier. When you feel happier, you feel better about yourself and take more pride in your appearance. You have more energy and this means you are more motivated in general.

IN A NUTSHELL

Socializing with friends and having fun is an important keystone habit that leads to greater well-being and productivity.

However, sometimes we can get so busy being busy that life passes us by and we find ourselves not having spent any significant time with those closest to us. This is something I personally struggle with, but the following techniques have helped make socializing a habit in my life:

- Commit to a small habit: This could be calling a friend up once a week for just five minutes or meeting up over lunch for just thirty minutes. No matter how busy you are you can always find time for a small habit.
- Decide what you enjoy and make arrangements.
- Put a reminder in your calendar. If you schedule it, you are more likely to go through with it.

Remember, the goal *isn't* to make you the most sociable and charismatic person around. (If that's your aim, you can check out my book *Small Talk Hacks* here:

www.AkashKaria.com/SmallTalk.) It's to set the foundation for a habit that you might currently be neglecting.

CHALLENGE #5

Make the decision right now to start enjoying your life more, to start socializing and to start having more time with your friends and family. Once you have made the decision, make those arrangements and add the reminders to your calendar.

The benefits of socializing are worth the time so make the decision now, set a date, make the arrangements, and prepare to make fun a regular part of your life.

Chapter Six

How to Cultivate an Attitude of Gratitude



Do you remember a time when you were really stressed about something and then something came along that turned everything around?

Remember the relief and gratitude you felt?

Like a giant weight had lifted from your shoulders?

Stress is one of the leading causes of most of the modern lifestyle diseases we face today – from heart attacks to strokes and diabetes.

So, how do you move away from the stresses of modern life?

The solution can be summed up in one word.

Gratitude.

Gratitude is the ability to take a look at your life and be thankful for and therefore happy about where you are right now.

You might have seen the ads on television that make you, in comparison, feel grateful for what you have. The ones that showcase starving children or injured veterans who need donations. These ads rely on their ability to make you realize how fortunate you are, and because they make you feel grateful for what you have, you are more likely to reach out and help.

Life is about wanting more. Your parents wanted more for you than they had. You want more for yourself and even more for your children. When you get bogged down with trying to improve your own life or the life of your family, it is easy to lose sight of where you are and what you have. This can be detrimental to your mental well-being and it can even affect your physical health.

Now, am I saying that you should take it easy and stop striving for more? To be content with what you already have?

Absolutely not!

In fact, chasing our dreams and wanting more is what gives our lives meaning. People are happiest when they are actively pursuing their dreams. So no, I am not asking you to give up dreaming.

What I am asking you to do is to step back and be thankful for what you do have. People, including myself, have a tendency to usually complain about what we don't have, so I am asking you to shift that around and be grateful for what you do already have. When you are grateful for the blessings in your life, you will be blessed even more.

Once again, like the other keystone habits before, studies show that the act of gratitude can fundamentally change your life. Studies on gratitude show that:

- **Being grateful improves health and mental ability** – In a study by Robert Emmons (www.bit.ly/robert-research), a psychology professor at the University of California, it was found that being grateful can make you healthier. Emmons found that subjects who were grateful felt better about themselves, got more exercise, took better care of themselves, generally ate healthier meals, and even had improved mental alertness.
- **Being grateful makes people happier** – According to Phillip Watkins (www.bit.ly/happy-gratitude), a psychologist at Eastern Washington University in Cheney, people who practice gratitude tend to be happier than those who don't.
- **Being grateful improves sleep quality** – A study published in the Journal of Psychosomatic Research (www.bit.ly/gratitude-sleep) found that people who were grateful fell asleep faster. When you fall asleep faster, you get better sleep, you feel more rested, you have more energy the next day and thus are able to achieve more throughout the day.

Finally, haven't you noticed how people who are grateful tend to be more positive and thus attract more friends and happiness into their lives?

People who always complain and are ungrateful for what they have tend to attract similarly minded people who only end up making each other more miserable.

The benefits of gratitude affect almost all areas of life, as explained above, but what does the term “gratitude” really mean?

According to the definition, gratitude means giving thanks or appreciating something. In terms of the keystone habit it really means being grateful for what you have in life.

HOW TO DEVELOP THE HABIT OF GRATITUDE

Like all habits, creating the habit of being grateful takes some planning and preparation. Habits need to be cultivated and repeated on a regular basis so that they become a natural part of your life.

There are a number of techniques you can use to cultivate the gratitude habit in your own life:

1 – MAKE A DECISION TO BE GRATEFUL

Everything in life begins with a decision. Every habit, every action, begins with your conscious decision to act or not to act as the case may be. It is therefore important that you make the decision to begin to be grateful for what you have. You need to realize that being grateful is a fundamental characteristic of people who are happy and successful. You need to consciously decide to start being grateful and to start cultivating an attitude of gratitude.

2 – COMMIT TO THE SMALL HABIT OF WRITING JUST ONE THING IN YOUR GRATITUDE JOURNAL EACH NIGHT

Creating a gratitude journal is a great way to transform your mood from being stressed to being grateful and happy. When you focus on the future and what is wrong, you get stressed. When you focus on the present and what you are lucky to have, you release stress and appreciate what you have.

It is therefore a good idea to try to include journaling before bed. By relieving the stress, allowing yourself to be comfortable and grateful for where you are, and removing focus from the problems you have, you will find it will be easier to fall asleep.

Set yourself a small goal: It could be to journal just two minutes each day before you begin your day. Or it could be to write down just one thing you are grateful for before you go to bed each night. Whatever small goal you decide to adopt, this simple exercise has the power to transform your life in the same way it has done for hundreds of thousands of others.

3 – DECIDE TO BE GRATEFUL AT THE TIME

Many of us take service for granted. I know I have been guilty of rushing through the store and paying for goods without thanking the cashier. Make a decision to take the first step and start thanking people for their service.

I made a decision to do this for a week. I was amazed at how grateful those people were when I thanked them for their service. Not only does this improve their mood, it also improves yours! Plus, as a bonus, you get even better service the next time you run into those people.

IN A NUTSHELL

Adopting an attitude of gratitude can change your life in powerful ways. You'll be happier, healthier, more sociable as well as more productive. To adopt an attitude of gratitude:

- Realize that you can be both ambitious *and* grateful at the same time. One does not come at the expense of the other.
- Make a conscious decision to be thankful for the abundance you have in your life.
- Commit to the small habit of writing in your journal each night at least one thing you are grateful for.
- Decide to be grateful in the moment.

CHALLENGE #6

Can you find one thing to be grateful for every day? Are you up to the challenge? The benefits far outweigh the one or two minutes you will spend each day finding things to be grateful for. Make a decision and start your gratitude journal today.

Join the 100HappyDays challenge (www.100happydays.com). This is great as a way to ensure you find one thing a day to be happy about. It is really simple. You join the challenge, record your daily happy moment with your camera or phone, and then share the experience on your social media platform. Life is for the living and today is all you have. Make a decision to find and record the things you are grateful for and keep your gratitude journal up to date for at least thirty days.

Chapter Seven

How to Exercise Your Mind



We all know we need exercise to get fit and to stay healthy. We don't often associate reading with exercise. I know I never thought about reading as exercise until I was introduced to the concept of keystone habits. As corny as it sounds, reading is exercise for your mind.

Reading is an important keystone habit, and it has consequences for your well-being that go beyond recognizing words on a page. Like the other keystone habits, the habit of reading has the power to transform other areas of your life. Here is how:

- **Reading reduces stress levels** – Research by Mindlab International at the University of Sussex (www.bit.ly/reading-research) proved that reading for a few minutes a day was one of the most efficient ways to reduce stress, and to relieve tension in the muscles. Reading even effectively reduced the test subject's heart rates. If you read at night, before bed, then a slower heart rate may help you to fall asleep faster and get a better night's rest.
- **Reading improves your level of empathy** – York University researchers (www.bit.ly/reading-empathy) found that subjects who read stories that provided life-changing scenarios had more empathy. This means you have more understanding and appreciation for the situations of others and this in turn makes you a more rounded person, improving your ability to interact and relate to others. See, even without trying to do so, reading makes you a better person!
- **Reading improves your motivation** – Different stories inspire different people, but when you can relate to the story you are reading and the protagonist overcomes obstacles, your own levels of motivation increase. Ohio State University researchers (www.bit.ly/reading-motivation) found that subjects who were inspired by the stories they read were more motivated and more likely to achieve their own personal goals.
- **Reading is training for your brain** – Your brain needs exercise in the form of thinking, imagination, recall, *etc.* Research shows that your brain creates new neural connections, in other words new cells, every time you form a new memory (www.bit.ly/reading-training). Since reading includes meeting characters, being exposed to new scenarios, exploring new places, and creating new experiences, the

brain is encouraged to form new neurons. This means the brain is essentially building new muscles, which means your memory improves and your cognitive ability improves.

You don't necessarily have to read only fiction! Mix in a balance between fiction and non-fiction books. The knowledge you pick up in non-fiction books is powerful. Sometimes, just one idea can be enough to change your life.

As an avid reader myself, it is hard to imagine how some people survive without reading on a daily basis.

However, having seen the research, I realize that I am extremely lucky and blessed to be a reader. If you are not a regular reader, then I urge you to go out and invest in a good book. There is nothing quite as satisfying as becoming immersed in a great book.

If you'd like access to my best of the best list – those books that have literally changed my life – then you can get that list here: www.AkashKaria.com/BestBooks

TIPS TO CREATE THE SMALL HABIT OF READING

1 – SET A SMALL GOAL

Decide to make reading a regular part of your life.

Set just five minutes before bed each night or choose a time that suits you and invest in a book you might enjoy.

If you find yourself often commuting on the train or the bus, then you can make productive use of that time by reading.

Take a book to work and read over your lunch hour or while you are waiting for your food at your local café.

Personally, you'll never find me anywhere without a good book (or my Kindle) in my hands!

Give your brain the workout it deserves and see how reading helps you to relieve the tension and gives you a whole new perspective on any problems you may be facing.

2 – READ SOMETHING YOU ENJOY

The main thing about creating a daily reading habit is to find something you enjoy reading. It is much easier to create a habit you really enjoy than one you don't, so don't choose material that feels like work. Choose something you look forward to each day and give yourself the best chance of success.

If you love action movies, then a great thriller by John Grisham may be just the type of book you are looking for. If you love magic then J.R.R. Tolkien will enthrall you with monsters, magic, and mythical creatures. If you enjoy non-fiction, then authors such as Malcolm Gladwell and Stephen Dubner may be worth checking out.

3 – SET ASIDE SOME TIME EACH DAY

Choose a time that suits your schedule. Again, remember, I am not asking you to read for hours. Just commit to a small habit of at least five minutes each day, without failure, and soon you'll find yourself addicted to reading!

Since reading can decrease heart rate, help to relieve stress, and relax the body, perhaps night is the best time to read (in addition to all those times when you are commuting or simply waiting).

However, take the choice of reading material into account when you select the best time to read. For example, a Stephen King thriller may not be the best choice last thing at night if you want to get any sleep.

IN A NUTSHELL

Reading daily is one of the most important habits you can develop. Not only does it relax you, make you more empathic, and train your brain, it also allows you to learn from the imaginations and knowledge of the world's greatest minds. Just one book or idea at the right time in your life could prove to be the spark that you need to change your life.

I was fortunate that my dad instilled this habit in me at a young age, but if you struggle to read consistently, then the following tips will help:

- Set a small goal: Commit to reading at least five minutes each day.
- Schedule time to read: You could read while commuting, over lunch, or right before you go to bed.
- Read something that you enjoy.

CHALLENGE #7

Make the decision to create the habit of reading daily a part of your life, starting today. Choose the genre that suits you, choose a good book, and make the time to start reading.

Go to [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) now and see what books you would like to read. Stop in at the bookstore on your way home tonight. Take some action today to start building the reading habit. Spend at least five to ten minutes each day reading and make sure you select a time that you can spend reading each day.

Chapter Eight

The Power of Serving Others



I will never forget a story I read a while ago about volunteering. A wise father wanted to teach his children about the gift of giving, so he decided to buy his children hundreds of balloons for their birthday. However, at the end of the party, he took his children to the local senior citizens' home to donate the balloons to the residents there.

The elderly people of course made a huge fuss over the delightful children who were donating their balloons and sharing their occasion. The children received a significant reward emotionally for their donation. In fact, the children had such a good time and felt so good about donating that a few months later, when asked what they wanted for their birthday the following year, the children asked for a cake big enough to take to the seniors' home. That simple donation had the ability to bring out the altruism in the children.

We get an emotional surge of joy when we give. And what could be more valuable than giving of your precious time? It is therefore no surprise that volunteering is in fact another one of the keystone habits that can help you to transform other areas of your life. When you volunteer, you feel better about yourself. The act of volunteering often helps you to see how fortunate you are, thus making it easier to develop the habit of being grateful.

According to the nonprofit website Help Guide (www.helpguide.org), volunteering can also help to improve your self-confidence. When you help others it often gives you a feeling of accomplishment, which makes you feel more confident about what you have to offer the world.

Help Guide also points out that volunteering is an antidote to depression. Most depression is born out of a feeling of social isolation. When you volunteer, you generally have to spend time with other people in a social setting and this act in itself has the power to lift your spirits.

Furthermore, volunteering your time can help you to create new friendships and forge new social relationships. This can in turn support the keystone habit of socializing. When your

social skills improve, your other relationships automatically benefit and these benefits spill over into your work relationships and your relationships at home.

Finally, there is a growing body of research (www.bit.ly/volunteer-benefits) that shows that volunteers are generally healthier and live longer than those who do not volunteer.

Here's how to make volunteering a habit in your life:

1 – SET A SMALL GOAL

There are so many worthwhile causes that need your help. Make the decision to spend just fifteen minutes of your time every month volunteering where you can make a difference. That's it: just fifteen minutes once a month! The truth is that one small act of kindness may be small for you but it may make a huge difference in someone else's life.

A number of apps can help you find the right project or cause.

- VolunteerMatch for iPhone (www.bit.ly/app-volunteer) is a free app that is a great way to find out who could use your help. It makes making a difference simple. Just download the app from iTunes for free. The app allows you to search your area for local volunteering opportunities.
- The Opp-Guide to Community Service for iPhone (www.bit.ly/App-Community) is another great app. Designed for teens, the app is suitable for anyone who is interested in serving the needs of their community. The app lets you browse by category or search for opportunities in your area.

2 – CHOOSE A CAUSE THAT IS CLOSE TO YOUR HEART

Developing the small habit of volunteering is not about scoring points with others but really about serving your own needs to be needed and to be useful. So choose something you feel passionate about. If you love animals, go and speak to your local shelter or vet and see how you can help them. You will be more motivated to continue to volunteer if you really care about the cause.

3 – SET ASIDE THE TIME

Once you have found your cause and located an organization that needs help, make the commitment to help on a regular basis. Sign up for weekly sessions with them. It is far easier to break a vague promise to help than it is to break a predetermined appointment.

Get a friend or family member involved and use the buddy system to help you meet your commitment. The buddy system works on the premise that it is easier to avoid going when you are alone. When you have a buddy who volunteers with you, it is harder to break the commitment. Set yourself up with the greatest possibility to succeed by enlisting with a friend (plus, it's a great way to spend time with your friends!).

IN A NUTSHELL

Volunteering is a keystone habit that will make you happier, healthier, and more confident. Furthermore, helping those less privileged than you makes it easier to practice the attitude of gratitude because it puts into perspective how fortunate you really are.

To adopt this keystone habit into your life:

- Set a goal so small that it's impossible to fail. For example, you could decide to spend just ten minutes each month volunteering.
- To make the volunteering habit sticky, choose a cause that's close to your heart.
- Schedule an appointment beforehand with the organization you want to volunteer at. This way, it's much harder to break the commitment.

CHALLENGE #8

Make the decision to volunteer today by downloading one of the apps mentioned above or by calling your local community office.

Take the time to see what your community needs and how you can help make the lives of the people around you better. Pay attention to how much better you feel, how much more energy you have, and how you begin to thrive once you have developed the keystone habit of volunteering.

Chapter Nine

Laughing and Playing Keeps the Doctor Away



The old saying “laughter is the best medicine” could not be more accurate. Think about the last time you laughed. I mean really laughed, from the core of your being, where you couldn’t control it and you just had to let it out.

It felt good, right?

The amazing thing is that we innately know what is good for us and what is good for our bodies.

We feel good after exercising. We feel good after a great night with friends. We feel good reading a book we love. The list is endless but the truth is a lot of what makes you feel really good is also really good for you both physically and mentally. Laughing and playing are no different.

It is sad that modern society seems to frown on levity. As adults, most people do not see laughing and playing as a necessary part of life but instead as something that belongs in the realm of childhood. This could not be further from the truth. The research on the health benefits of laughter and playing is astounding. It makes you feel better, increases your motivation, and improves your productivity as well as your health!

According to research by the Mayo Clinic (www.bit.ly/laugh-research), laughter has a number of physical health benefits. When you laugh, your intake of oxygen-rich air increases. The increased amount of oxygen in the body then stimulates various organs including the lungs, heart, and muscles. This essentially means that when you laugh, your heart and muscles work more efficiently, which means you have more energy. Not only that, but the simple act of laughing is in fact a physical workout for the body on its own.

Laughter burns calories. It increases heart rate and requires the use of a number of muscles in the body including facial muscles and stomach muscles.

Laughter also improves the immune system. According to studies (www.bit.ly/laugh-research), positive thoughts and laughter cause your body to release chemicals called neuropeptides that encourage the immune system to function at optimal levels. If your immune system is able to ward off attacks, you remain healthy, and this in turn means you can enjoy life and spend less time being ill.

There are of course psychological advantages to laughter as well. According to some studies (www.bit.ly/laugh-happiness), when you laugh with a friend or a loved one, the act increases happiness and intimacy between the two of you.

With all of the physical and mental health benefits that you get from laughing and playing, not to mention the fact that laughing as a keystone habit can help you to become healthier, fitter, and more productive, isn't it time you worked on making laughter a regular part of your life?

Now, it may seem strange to have “laughter” as a habit – but laughing truly is a habit. Once you get into the habit of laughing often, you'll start to see the lighter side of life.

TIPS TO MAKE LAUGHTER A PART OF YOUR LIFE

My best friend has a saying: “It takes a lot of planning to be spontaneous.” It may sound like a contradiction in terms, but the truth is that for most people, a lot of planning is required to ensure you have the time to be spontaneous to enjoy life and to laugh.

Here are some really simple tips to help you add more laughter to your life:

- Subscribe to YouTube channels that appeal to your sense of humor. Literally thousands of new videos are added to sites such as YouTube on a daily basis. If you spend ten minutes a day watching the videos that appeal to you, you will be laughing in no time at all. My favorites: SoFloComedy (www.bit.ly/so-comedy), Ray William Johnson (www.bit.ly/ray-comedy), and John Oliver (www.bit.ly/john-comedy).
- Spend time with children. They can be frustrating but if you really listen then children do have a habit of saying and doing the funniest things.

- Play with your pets. They love you, they want to spend time with you – unless of course you have cats, in which case, get their permission first! Pets are great for the soul and they are often a source of happiness, and laughter.
- Tune into a comedy channel at least once a day. Alternatively, depending on your sense of humor, you can tune into C-Span channel and watch the politicians clowning around! Watch with your friends. You laugh more when you are in the company of good friends.

1 – MAKE A DECISION TO LAUGH AND PLAY MORE

To plan to be spontaneous, to add more laughter and playtime to your daily routine, once again, you first need to make the conscious decision to do so. So decide to take action now. Make a mental list of the things that make you laugh and then see how you can add more of them to your daily routine.

2 – SIGN UP FOR DAILY LAUGHTER

Spend some time searching the channels you enjoy for things that make you laugh. Make sure you subscribe to these channels and switch the notifications on if necessary. Facebook and YouTube will send you daily updates from the channels you subscribe to and this is one of the best ways to ensure that your email contains things that can add a bit of humor to your day.

3 – COMMIT TO SPENDING 5 MINUTES PER DAY DOING SOMETHING THAT YOU ENJOY AND THAT MAKES YOU LAUGH

Set the small goal of spending at least five minutes of your day doing something you love. Even better, if you can, do it with friends (killing two birds with one stone!). Choose a time that suits your schedule. If you choose a time in the morning, such as when you get to work, it could help set the tone for the rest of the day. Be sure to select a time that you can set aside and that you can commit to.

IN A NUTSHELL

Laughter truly is the best medicine.

To make a laughter a daily and conscious habit:

- Make a conscious decision to take things lightly and laugh openly.
- Sign up for laughter: Subscribe to your favorite comedy channels on YouTube and Facebook.

Set the small goal of spending at least five minutes per day watching something funny to relax yourself and laugh a little in the process.

CHALLENGE #9

Make the decision to add laughter to your daily routine starting today. Add those moments to your gratitude journal if you like, or if you took the 100HappyDays challenge, then add the images to that challenge. Many of the keystone habits are complementary and they support one another. The more habits you connect the more chance you have of succeeding in developing these small habits as keystone habits.

Chapter Ten

How to Change Your Financial Destiny



How much do you spend every month and how much do you earn?

If this question makes you feel uncomfortable, then you are like most of the other people I know. Most people don't have a clue what they are earning and spending and logically we know that this can be disastrous.

Personal finance is probably one of the most overlooked and neglected areas of modern life. Money plays a central role in everyone's life and yet the vast majority of people pay little or no attention to the health of their bank account. We spend more time worrying about money than we do actually taking the time to build the "financial muscles" to deal with our money properly.

Like everything else in life, it takes a little time and effort to master the skill of managing your money properly. However, the rewards are well worth the time and effort.

One of the keystone habits that will change your financial destiny is tracking your income and expenses. Yes, it's as simple as that. All your savings, your investments, and other streams of income will automatically begin to fall into place once you start with the keystone habit of tracking your income and expenses.

Many people feel that they don't have the mathematical skill or ability to manage their money properly. Although you may not have the skills to become an accountant, the mathematically challenged no longer have an excuse. With apps available now to help track your income and expenses, no one is left with a valid excuse for not keeping track of their monthly spending.

Here are some apps that make it easy to manage your money.

- LevelMoney (www.levelmoney.com) – This app is marketed as a type of financial GPS that helps you navigate from where you are to where you want to be financially.

LevelMoney works on a simple interface that keeps you up-to-date with your daily, weekly, and monthly spending. It uses short-and long-term goals to help you make ends meet on your budget. But don't let the word "budget" scare you. The LevelMoney system doesn't need you to enter budgets or complicated financial information to begin with. It automatically tracks your cash flow, has options to reinforce positive financial habits, and provides vital insights into your spending and saving with a simple interface anyone can learn to manage.



The mobile money meter

Spend smarter, do more, live better

Level Money automatically updates spendable cash as you make purchases each day, providing a simple, real-time picture of how you're doing in order to stay in the black.

Draw a straight line from everyday decisions to larger achievements and accomplish the things that matter.

The top US banks support connections to Level and the list is expanding all the time!

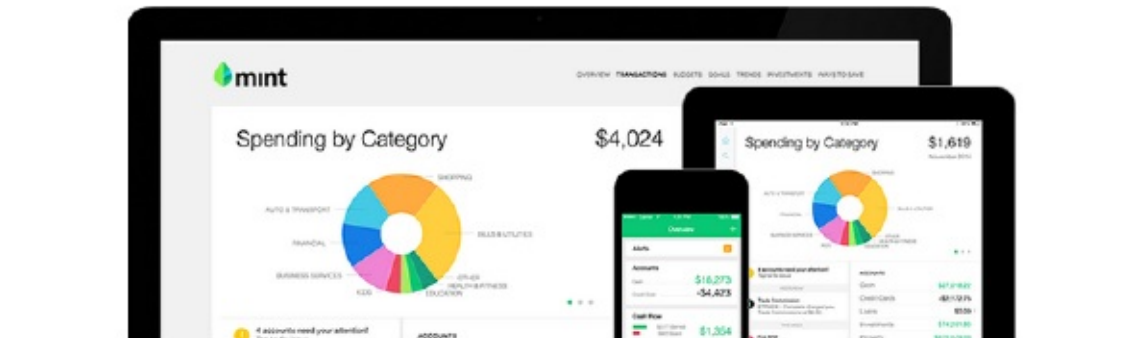
Take a tour

- Mint (www.mint.com) – If you are looking for a way to keep your credit card and online transactions secure and need a great app that will help you keep track of your expenses, then you should consider Mint. Mint began as a security app designed to keep your profiles and information safe, but it has evolved a set of money management tools that are topnotch.

Mint is free to set up and simple to use, and it automatically tracks transactions. It provides you with a whole host of interactive tools such as graphs and pie charts that allow you to track your expenses and income. In just minutes, you will know where your money is going and how to make it go further.

The complete picture in minutes

See all your balances and transactions together. Mint automatically pulls all your financial information into one place, so you can finally get the entire picture.



- TrackEveryCoin (www.trackeverycoin.com) – Finally, Track Every Coin offers you the combination of mobile and Internet to help you track your expenses and income. You can use your mobile phone to track your day-to-day expenses, to keep track of your spending, and to help you split the bills with friends quickly and easily.

The image is an advertisement for the TrackEveryCoin app. It features a blue background with the text 'Now never lose track of your money. HERE'S HOW.' and a 'Sign Up' button. Below the text, there are three smartphones displaying the app's interface, which includes a 'Get it on Mobile' button and a 'Sign up now for FREE!' button. To the right of the smartphones is a laptop displaying a dashboard with a line graph and a pie chart. In the bottom right corner, there is a small graphic of a stack of coins.

Once you have downloaded one of the mentioned apps, be sure to keep track of expenses as they happen. It is easy to forget a dollar here and a dollar there, but these dollars all add up and eat into the money you could be saving for a rainy day, or into your ability to enjoy life now and in the future.

If you have a budget, include it in the app you use to track your spending and stick to the budget.

Finally, work as a team. Get your family involved in the budgeting process and in tracking family expenses. It is easier to stick to something when you have other people all working towards the same goals.

1 – INSTALL A SIMPLE APP

Decide to start spending some time on securing your financial health.

The key to success is to keep it convenient and simple. Download and install an app that makes it simple for you to make notes about your spending. Use an automated app and take the hassle out of actually recording each transaction.

The trick is to keep an eye on your spending, your income, and your budget.

2 – FOCUS ON TRACKING YOUR EXPENSES

The key is to focus on creating the habit of tracking your expenses. Preferably, you should note down all expenses as soon as they happen. The moment you whip out some cash or swipe your credit card, immediately take out your phone and track the expense. In other words, handing the money over/swiping your credit card becomes the cue that triggers the action of recording the expense.

3 – SET THE SMALL HABIT OF REVIEWING EVERY DAY

Set a small goal of reviewing your income and expenses for just two minutes at the end of each day. Reviewing and updating your income and expenses at the end of each day will lead you to become more aware of your spending patterns. That, in turn, will give you the necessary information you need to cut out unnecessary expenses. As you do this, you will start regarding yourself as a responsible individual and start (automatically) making more responsible decisions in other areas of your life.

As you make positive changes in one area of your life, the effects and motivations and benefits will automatically spill over into other, unrelated areas.

IN A NUTSHELL

Tracking your income and your expenses may seem like a very simple and basic thing to do, but it's something that most people don't do. However, doing so has the power to absolutely change your financial life!

Just the very act of recording all your transactions will lead to wiser spending choices and better investments without even forcing yourself to do so.

To implement this keystone habit into your life:

- Make it as convenient as possible: Install a simple app to track your income and expenses.
- Use the cue to trigger to action: The moment you give cash for your purchase or swipe your credit card, immediately record the expense on your app. The more often you do this, the stronger link between the cue and the action becomes.

Set the small habit of spending two minutes at the end of the day reviewing your income and expenses.

CHALLENGE #10

Decide to start tracking your income and expenses and take your financial security and financial future into your own hands. Download the tools and start tracking your income and expenses. Track your expenses for thirty days and watch how your spending habits and your feelings about yourself change as this small habit becomes a keystone habit.

Summary

Wrap Up



The keystone habits covered in this book may sound simple, but don't let that fool you. While complicated tools and techniques may give us intellectual satisfaction, it is the fundamentals that lead to success in life. And these ten fundamental habits that you just learned about have the power to change your life. I don't just say that from a theoretical perspective: Science has proved it, I've seen it in my own life, and I've seen these habits transform the lives of my clients.

I am confident that if you implement these ten habits in your life, then you will begin to see your life change in remarkable ways – in ways that you hadn't even anticipated. Whether you want to be more productive, more motivated, happier, more energetic, more confident or more meaningful, these ten habits will help you get there!

For parents, I truly believe that if we teach our kids these ten habits, then we can come as close as possible to guaranteeing their success in life. It is a true shame that schools don't have a curriculum on habit development – on teaching kids how to implement these great habits into their lives – given how much of our lives are governed by our habits.

Congratulations for having finished reading this book. This may not be the sexiest book you've read, but I can confidently say that it contains the tools that can transform your life. I have given you the tools you need, but I can't implement them for you – only you can! If you've already started to implement some of these tools, I know that you'll have started seeing the results you've been hoping for.

And don't worry – when you try to implement these habits, there will be times you will fail. Days when, no matter how small the habit, you will fail to achieve it. When that happens, don't beat yourself up. Forgive yourself and move on and implement it the next day. The key is to make sure that you don't miss more than two days in a row.

And finally, let me repeat this: Remember, this is not a book that's just meant for reading. It's meant to be acted upon. Choose any one of the challenges in the book and start with that. Then, gradually, add more challenges into your life – add another habit only after you've mastered the first one. The key to success is to set goals so small that you cannot fail. If you find yourself failing often, then make the goal even tinier!

Remember:

Small Habits + Keystone Habits = Big Results!

To your success,

Akash Karia

www.AkashKaria.com

Questions or Comments?

I'd love to hear your thoughts. Email me on: akash.speaker@gmail.com

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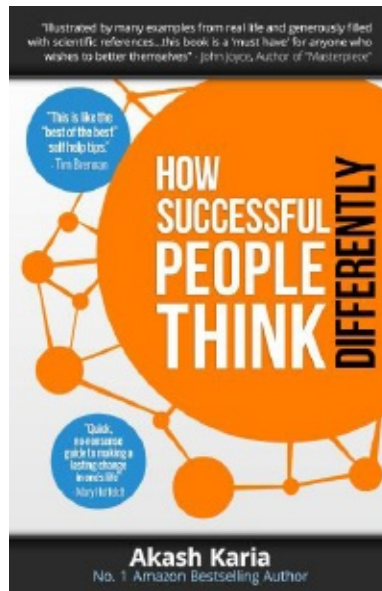
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About the Author



Akash Karia is an award-winning speaker and peak productivity coach who has been ranked as one of the Top Ten speakers in Asia Pacific. He is an in-demand international speaker who has spoken to a wide range of audiences including bankers in Hong Kong, students in Tanzania, governmental organizations in Dubai and yoga teachers in Thailand. He is regularly sought-out by governments as well as businesses for his expertise on communication, motivation and peak performance psychology.

Akash currently lives in Tanzania where he works as the Chief Commercial Officer of a multi-million dollar company. When he is not writing or lazing around on a beach with a good book in his hands, he is available for speaking engagements and can be contacted through his website: www.AkashKaria.com

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