Project Kage

\* I have chosen to call this app Project Kage based on one of my favorite videogames, Ghost of Tsushima. In the role of a Samurai, you get to pick the name of your horse, your loyal companion through the game. The world Kage translate to Shadow, which on the context of the game, during the Mongol Invasion, the Japanese had to endure in the shadows to reach Sora (the Sky), which is the name I hope this App will have; helping people reach the goals and form the habits they never though they could in the moments they found themselves in the shadows.

# Goal Tracking, Routine Scheduler and Habit forming and assistant app.

## Problem Description:

Throughout history, many substances have been introduced with the belief that they would greatly benefit society, only to later be regulated or banned due to their harmful effects. For instance, cocaine was once marketed as a miraculous cure for various ailments and even found its way into popular products like Coca-Cola. Similarly, asbestos was hailed for its fire-resistant properties before its devastating health impacts became apparent. More recently, opioids were prescribed widely as effective pain relievers, only to ignite a crisis of addiction and overdose deaths.

In much the same way, social media and the internet, initially celebrated for their ability to connect with people and democratize information, are now under scrutiny for their addictive qualities. Just as these substances were once thought to be harmless or even beneficial, the pervasive presence of digital platforms reveals a darker side, where users find themselves ensnared in cycles of dependency, with significant impacts on mental health and well-being. This evolving understanding prompts a call for greater awareness and regulation to mitigate the potential harms of our digital lives.

Trying to find myself a healthier routine away from Social Media and the Dopamine addiction of the internet I submerge into reading many productivity and habit guru’s all pointing somewhat in the same direction, write down your goals, set up a consistent schedule that allows you accomplish everything while being kind to yourself on difficult days and ***stick to it*** regardless of how hard or little motivation you have, show up, 85% of the job is showing up, after that, do 1 rep, put away 1 plate, the rest will fall into place.

Motivation will always leave you hanging I read in one of these books, and that is so true is somewhat painful. How is it possible that in the morning I want to go become the next Elden Lord (sorry for the gamer reference and a bow to all my fellow tarnished) but then by the time you have lunch your energy is depleted, just as if it was sucked by a Dementor (wand’s up for all my Potterhead’s). This situation made no sense to me until I stumbled upon a series of videos from Ali Abdaal, where is explain what he learned from the ***D.O.SE. Effect.***

An old passage reads that knowledge is power. And I think many times we do not know what this means and how powerful knowledge is. I recently read a chapter from Ryan Holiday’s Discipline is Destiny, where he recounts a story from Geroge Raveling’s childhood and in his words, it goes as follows:

“As a young boy, the famed basketball coach George Raveling learned an invaluable lesson about the power of both knowledge and ignorance from his grandmother, who raised him.

“Why did the slave masters hide their money in books, George?” she asked the young boy, standing together in her kitchen.

“I don’t know, grandma,” he said.

“Because they knew the slaves wouldn’t open them,” she said.

There’s a reason it was illegal to teach slaves to read. There is a reason that every totalitarian regime has burned and banned books. Knowledge is power. It sounds like a cliche, but cliches only sound that way because of the generally accepted truth at their core. What is less of a cliche but actually *more* true, is the converse of that idea: A lack of knowledge is weakness, it engenders supplication and makes resistance harder.”

Now, while I believe every word Ryan Holiday has ever written, I also think sometimes his writing is somewhat aggressive, is powerful no doubt, but for some people it can come as too strong, so let’s take this story and subsequent comment to a different realm, the one about our mind and moods, about why our body wants something different that what our mind plans about why we can follow a diet, do exercise every day or have the courage to ***seek discomfort***.

Dopamine, Oxytocin, Serotonin and Endorphins. That is the DOSE effect, the chemicals in our brain that help us survive, thrive, reach our potential, learn, get stronger, sleep well, love each other, ***love ourselves***, and much, much more. I learned from the DOSE effect that your Dopamine levels will help with your motivation and drive, and guess what depletes your dopamine? Social media, endless scrolling of TikTok, the instant gratification of Porn, Alcohol and many other drugs is the same, or worse, when it comes to social media.

Now, I know not everyone like me will delete any social media of their phone and go rouge from the modern world (although I highly recommend at the very least deleting TikTok and putting a timer on Instagram and disabling notifications) but truly understanding how these are affecting our brains is a great starting point. I read about this unperceptive addiction specifically in 2 amazing books, Stolen Focus by Johann Hari and Dopamine Nation by Anna Lembke, ***life changing knowledge.***

Bear with me as I go back an forth through this and let’s recap, social media is addictive and not just to demonize it but as a fact, there are algorithms made specifically to have you ***Hooked*** there are books, articles and studies base on the science of habits, habits rule the world, people with great habits thrive, gets places and succeed, people with bad habits can make it pretty far, but life will eventually get them. Because of this addiction many of us (me included) are having panic attacks, chronic depression, being diagnosed with ADHD and waking up every morning feeling awful, with no energy at all. Now, if knowledge is power, what is it here to learn? Or rather, what do we need to ask? Asking the right question is probably half the battle here.

What makes you focus on something? Dopamine. Dopamine motivates us to do things, things that thousand of years ago kept of alive, imaging having to wake up in the middle of a desert, needed to get into the jungle to hunt and get food to survive, to get water to stay hydrated, to find materials for shelter, do you think your body wouldn’t have listen to your mind? Or that your body would have ignored the signals of hunger and thirst? Of course not. Dopamine would have been the driving force behind your actions, pushing you to overcome obstacles and ensure survival.

In our modern world, the challenges are vastly different, yet the role of dopamine remains crucial. This neurotransmitter is often referred to as the "feel-good" chemical because it is associated with pleasure and reward. When we achieve a goal, dopamine is released, reinforcing the behavior that led to that achievement and motivating us to repeat it. This is one of the main ***tiny habits*** we should build, ***celebrate the small victories***. I particularly decided to go “Oh Yeah! (Hands up and everything)” like Vector from Despicable Me as my tiny victories’ celebration, after getting up in the morning, making my breakfast, exercising, anything that feels like an obligation I celebrated the fact that I can do it and that ***I did it.***

However, dopamine can also be a double-edged sword (and not the cool kind you can use in Soul Games). While it drives us to pursue beneficial activities, it can also lead us to seek out instant gratification, often in ways that are detrimental to our overall well-being. Drugs such as alcohol, cocaine, and nicotine manipulate the brain's reward system, causing a surge in dopamine levels that produces intense feelings of pleasure. This artificial spike in dopamine is far greater than what the brain would naturally experience, leading to addiction as the brain starts to crave more of these substances to achieve the same high.

Moreover, social media platforms exploit this very mechanism. With each like, comment, or share, dopamine is released, making us feel good and encouraging us to continue engaging with the platform. This cycle of immediate gratification can create a dependency similar to what we see with substance abuse, where the brain becomes conditioned to seek out these quick rewards, often at the expense of long-term goals and mental health.

Understanding how dopamine operates is essential for developing strategies to manage its effects. By recognizing the triggers that cause unhealthy dopamine spikes, we can take steps to mitigate them. This might include setting boundaries with social media usage, practicing mindfulness, engaging in physical activities, and fostering real-world connections that provide more sustainable sources of dopamine.

In essence, harnessing the power of dopamine requires a balanced approach—one that leverages its motivating properties while avoiding the pitfalls of instant gratification. With awareness and intentional actions, we can cultivate habits that promote lasting fulfillment and overall wellness but to do that we need to learn all of this first, we need ***knowledge*** and on top of that, the proper ***tools*** to help us, and that’s where ***Project*** ***Kage*** comes in, a Goal & Habit forming assistant that combines the best from the studies to trick the mind to form a habit, with the real compassion of a human being that wants you to get better.

## Goals & Habits

We will start every chapter with the same premise ***“Ask the right questions”***, and one that has particularly help me this year is ***“What do I want to celebrate in 12 months”***. My wife and I have had the luck to find a good stability right now in our life to make an annual trip abroad at the beginning of the year, the first year we went to Madrid, Barcelona and San Sebastian in Spain, and this past year we went back to Spain, to the south specifically, Sevilla, Granada and Malaga. In this trip we tend to have some hours in trains and airplanes, around 30 hours probably, and during this time we will chat about our previous year, what we accomplish and what we want to accomplish the following one. This is what I want you to imagine when Christmas comes and we are all happy buying gifts, calling our family abroad or flighting to see them, ***what do you want to tell them?*** ***What stories of your own success do you want to share with them?***

We need to tide our goals to a higher been, higher version of ourselves. Who do I want to be in 12 months. Link your new habits an imagine what your life would look like if you achieve that goal. For me personally, I want to be a polyglot and the image I see every time I think of this is traveling and being able to communicate in the language wherever I go, so I can more easily understand the cultures and learn new things. My goal is to be a polyglot, and my habit is to learn a little bit a French, to practice Italian, to keep improving my English and most importantly to be kind on the days that I am exhausted of running after my goals.

If you try to push yourself to do every single day 10, 15, 20 different things towards this goal you will eventually exhaust yourself and end up quitting, moderation is key, building a habit is a marathon and controlling your pace is key. Being patient and kind to yourself on slower days where you might not do all 3 sets of pushups but just 1 is really important, the maxim for these days is simple, ***progress, not perfection***.

While there are going to be a moment on does goals that you might need to hustle to achieve them, in most cases you will have plenty of time to see them come true, and I don’t mean the probably 5+ years that took me to get a B2 in Italian, but to understand that life changes, life happens, life does not stop and we need to adapt and keep going without thinking that because you lost your streak at Duolingo you now are never going to learn a new language and furthermore, that you have to spend money to save your streak… You should be getting into Duolingo to learn, not to do one section for the sake of saving your 875-day streak. Do not ruin your motivation by falling into the dopamine trap of modern applications.

Once you have understand the limitations of our brain and energy it is fundamental to have a clear path, breaking down your goal and setting time for it. Planning and Scheduling of your goals are vital for success and a key feature for ***Project Kage***.

One great exercise for this is using Sakichi Toyoda (founder of Toyota) method, “The 5 why’s”. While this is initially to find out the root cause of a problem, we will use an old Latin passage “mutatis mutandis”, which means change what needs to be changed to not affect the main point.

We need to ask ourselves what is the goal we want to reach and subsequently keep asking the how’s, why’s, and any other reasoning that can help you understand the task at hand in reference to your own situation, and I bring this last part up since we would most times try to follow someone else’s diet or workout routine, we will compare ourselves to them and then to others and keep telling ourselves that we failed on what others could do, not realizing that most likely that person before being able to publish all of that success, had to fail, that try hundreds of different things until they finally stuck.

* What do I want to achieve this year? I want to **read** 20 books this year.
* Why? I want to be cultured, learn new things and expand my knowing’s in general

***First change:*** My goal ***is not to read but to gain knowledge***, therefore watching videos (the internet and Social Media are not bad if we look in the right places), listening to an audiobook or podcast and reading, could all take me one step closer to it. ***Progress, not perfection.*** \* The best habit to cultivate is the ***habit of ignorance***, understanding that we are all ignorant about something is the best way to keep learning and thriving.

* How? By reading every day, listening to a podcast or audiobook or watching a video on an interesting topic for me.
* What can prevent you from reading every day? Being busy with work, having too many commitments, being on a trip or distracted (distraction is a beautiful topic for later on, specially by studying Nir Eyal book, ***Indistractable)***.
* How can you ensure you will always have time to read? By Setting up a time for me to read away from distractions (most likely the best habit for bedtime).
* What if you are on a business trip? I will listen to an audiobook as I walk to my meeting.

Integrating this into our AI as the initial conversation to properly set our goals. After questioning your own goal you can immediately start seeing what your problems could be and stay ahead of them, prepare yourself for success instead of failure. If you start the year saying that you want to read 100 books, that is (with an average of maybe 250 pages per book) almost 70 pages a day which on average will take 70 minutes to read and in this new world and hour of your time can go along way, and while I think that an hour of reading everyday is worth it, not every day you might have the time to do so.

This takes us to another concept, allow yourself to be mediocre. Churchill said: ***“The maxim, ‘Nothing prevails but perfection,’ may be spelled PARALYSIS”*** We love to wait for the perfect moment, or we wouldn’t follow that business idea because it is not perfect and we fall into a good all cliché, we wait and wait for something to happen and the only thing that happens is life.

Do not lower your standards, go for perfection but know, that this is almost an intangible truth especially in the world of abundance that will live in right now, there will be a more perfect person, a more perfect dish, sculpture, painting, if you do not start and you do not try then you high standards are actually mediocre and not allowing you to reach your full potential.

There is a lot to unpack from these thoughts but hopefully you are starting to see that reaching your goals is not just telling your friends that you got your gym membership again (although accountability can go a long way for habits), or writing it down on your phone notes. You need to plan, you need to foresee problems, barriers that can come up on the way, you must think through the intricacies of your mind and how one day you will not be motivated to go and that you will need to find a way to drag yourself out of bed. For this particular there are 2 quotes I read recently from one of Ryan Holiday’s books. The first is from Marcus Aurelius who was not a morning person by nature, but by force of habit and a problem that even a roman emperor had to face every day.

“At dawn when you have trouble getting out of bed, tell yourself: ‘I have to go to work – As a human being. What do I have to complain of, if I’m going to do what I was born for – the things I was brought into the world to do? Or is this what I was created for? To huddle under the blankets and stay warm?”

The second one is from Seneca, describing a moment that we all have experienced, when you want to do something, but fear holds you back. ***“We treat the body rigorously, so that it will not be disobedient to the mind”*** I have felt is while rock climbing or before the first time I try to do a cold plunge, I wanted to do it, I knew the benefits, the risk, the pros and cons and that I have thought through about how much I wanted to try hard on that route or getting into the cold water, but my body will resist me. That is why we need to win those battles, discipline is not easy, but the faster we get out of bed, the more we push ourselves to do things we fear or are uncertain of, the faster we will get there, ***do the hard thing*** every day look for the habit of doing something out of your comfort zone and your willpower will grow.

Now, not everything is great speeches of pushing yourself and jumping in freezing water to demonstrate how cool you are, we live in a really fast pace world and Is easy to forget thinks, and as I said before we cannot demonize the new technologies, your phones are a powerful tool and it is a matter of using it in the right way. We mention that a key feature for ***Project Kage*** is scheduling and planning. We already talk a little bit about what we mean by planning, studying our goal, checking on the possible problems, the real reason behind them and separating them into smaller habits.

We want to have Project Kage be your AI Assistant for your goal tracking and habit building, it will help you go through these possible problems that you might encounter by already knowing the limitations of the mind and pushing you in the right direction when feeling stuck. The AI will help you identify your goal, the problems, and most importantly the habits.

Our goals will be broken down by Kage into manageable pieces that you can easily track and understand to determine if they are right for you. You will provide feedback on whether the goal was too difficult or too easy, or if there was too much friction to start. Kage will then reassess the best options with you. Habits are the cornerstone of a better life, enabling you to build a strong foundation of good practices that lead you to your ultimate goals. Remember, it’s not about achieving perfection every day but about recognizing that some days will be good while others may not. You may have a perfect week followed by a challenging one, and that’s all part of the journey.

## Scheduling, Wellness, Journal & DOSE

The second part of this topic about "out of sight, out of mind" involves scheduling. Imagine if you had unlimited time, incomparable motivation, and willingness—how would your day be structured? Create a schedule for your ideal day.

To achieve goals, adopting the right mindset is important. Write down aspirations such as learning a language, obtaining a better job, or exercising. Determine the daily time required to make progress. Even small efforts count; for example, 30 minutes of exercise or 15 minutes of language practice can be substantial. Organize your schedule and adhere to it; you may find that less time is needed than initially thought.

Kage assists with goal setting and habit tracking. After selecting a goal and establishing habits, Kage can suggest schedules based on current activities. Users need to inform Kage about their daily routines and available free time so it can incorporate relevant activities. For instance, if there is a 1-hour lunch break at work, spending 20 minutes reading could help achieve the goal of finishing a book while still allowing time for rest.

Schedules are flexible; if attempts to attend a 25-minute gym session are unsuccessful, try again at a different time or day. Adaptation is key to reduce friction and facilitate progress.

Starting new habits often involves challenges due to lack of information. Kage's community information section provides articles from reputable sources offering guidance on habit formation. For challenging habits like exercise and diet, users can find routines and easily track calories either by estimation or precise measurement.

Kage offers personalized exercise routines based on weight goals, height, weight, strength baseline, and available equipment, ensuring progress without burnout. Additionally, Kage guides food choices, prioritizing whole foods over processed options.

A journal system, featuring conversations with the AI Assistant, enables schedule adjustments, daily routine inquiries, to-do lists, and ongoing journaling. Journaling helps understand personal progress in habits and goals. The AI Assistant can recommend activities or techniques to improve mood and maintain progress based on daily entries.

Recommendations for habits leverage the DOSE Effect, utilizing brain chemistry to enhance self-improvement. This involves controlling dopamine levels by reducing quick dopamine sources, promoting oxytocin release through social interactions, increasing serotonin through healthy eating and nature walks, and encouraging movement and laughter to boost endorphins.

## Conclusions & Features

In conclusion Kage is an app that leverages dozens of productivity systems to help you create that system that works for you, to properly set your goals and the plan to achieve it. It will help you time-block your work-life balance to properly keep making progress while reminding you that missing a day is not failure, not trying a gain the next day is.

Kage have multiple features all connected to your AI assistant, this is your main attraction, your front page is just a button to talk to Kage, form here you can let her know that you are setting up a new goal or just talk to her and she will register a new page in your journal or add a new to do in your to do list.

In this same section you have your summary, you can easily see with different dropdowns what’s your schedule, what’s your to do list, what are the next steps on your goal setting or the habits that you are tracking that day. A comprehensive dashboard, clean and easy to access.

On a different section you have you Goals and Habits, here you can select one or the other on the top of the screen to change pages within that section, you can select your goal and expand to see the habits under it, a reminder of what you want to accomplish a couple more options like starting a timer in case you want to start a reading session or exercise session (also doable through the AI). Predefine goals and habits will be available for the most commons ones to help you start, all properly categories for health, wellness, work and more.

You will have a Today section to view your daily habits, start timers, mark them as complete, or see more details. You can switch between habits and to-do lists at the top. Kage assists with habit tracking and helps manage tasks for work, school, kids, etc. It offers reminders for appointments and medications and allows you to tag household members and "ping" them about tasks or habits. This encourages accountability for daily habits, goals, and to-dos. You can inform friends when you start a workout or reading session, interacting and supporting each other's journey.

Our final section focuses on physical health, named the Temple section. This section aims to provide routines for yoga, home gym, or on-site gyms. With the support of AI and the personalized information you provide, it will help you establish and maintain a routine that can be followed daily, even while traveling. If you are unable to go to the gym, you can find alternative exercises here to replace those that you do not prefer or are currently unable to perform.

This is only the beginning of Kage and hopefully it will help you be the best version of yourself.

List of features:

* AI Assistant App capable of:
  + Taking journal notes, expanding these ideas and giving suggestions to help the use process its thoughts
  + Prompt Eng. can be tweaked in setting to personalize the desire response.
  + All basic functional To-Do List app:
    - Creating To-Do List.
    - Marking To-Do as completed.
    - To-Do List mode for advance personalization on amount of “To-Buy” in case it is a recipe or grocery list; or “To-Time” in case it is time sensitive for picking up something or delivering on a deadline.
    - Categorizing but Work, Home, Projects. Allowing all to-do items to be if desired link to calendar or to main summary page.
    - Ability to link To-Do List to a specific Goal.
  + Goals set up:
    - Available templates for easy initiation. You can either select a template or talk to your AI and he will tailor your goal setting experience. Templates will be categorized by Health, Carrer, Self-development, Spiritual and more.
    - Each goal set up will have a target, duration, tasks related to setting up your environment to be able to complete this goal and habits that you need to complete everyday to take small steps towards your goals. Also, a Notes section where you will get tips on how to help with your goals or you can personalize them to whatever message you want.
    - Users can see in the summary page a bubble for the goal, and they can expand to see the habits and tasks for the day.
    - All habits have the ability to be started manually or via your AI companion to track the amount of time spent in it whether it is reading, exercising or some other activity session.
  + Journaling:
    - Users can start a journal manually and type or start manually and talk to speech.
    - You can also start from the main page, center of the bottom button to activate AI conversation, and ask him to start a new journal page.
    - Journals can be linked to a specific goal or habit; to assess difficulty and feelings, AI can base on this journal recommend changes to properly maintain motivation.
  + Scheduling:
    - Users will be able to see their ideal week as they add their goals and habits are created, a time block function can be added to set work or rest hours outside of the goal tracking.
    - As the user completes or fails to complete habits, your AI Companion will suggest changing your calendar based on your statistics to properly tailor your calendar as you go.
  + Community:
    - The app will have a community board where people can share “Tips of the day” or “Quotes of the day”, they can also share small insights from their experiences and journaling.
    - Community can celebrate a post, quote and achievements.