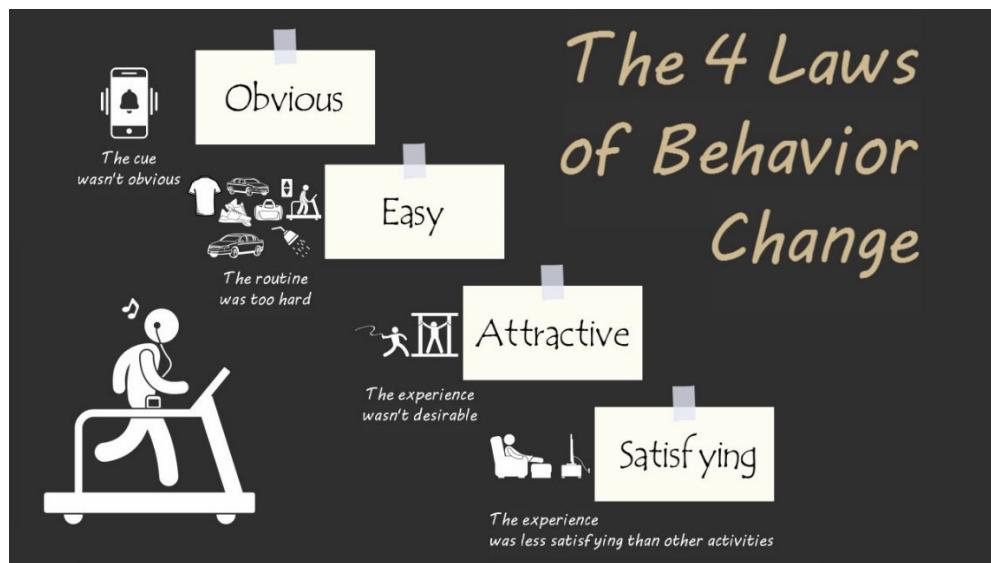


Summary of Atomic Habits by James Clear



If you've failed to stick to a New Year's resolution, it's because you failed to make a new habit obvious, easy, attractive, or satisfying.

These are what author James Clear calls 'the four laws of behavior change'. Failing to abide by any one of these laws means you'll fail to adopt a new behavior.



If you tried to develop a new exercise habit but you didn't create an obvious cue to start your exercise routine each day (ex: seeing a reminder on your phone), then you probably forgot about working out and stuck to your normal daily routine.

If your exercise routine felt like a difficult multi-step process (ex: find gym clothes, find shoes, drive to the gym, change, reserve an exercise machine, adjust the settings, shower, fight traffic, etc.), then it wasn't easy enough for you to do consistently.

If going to the gym seemed like punishment and you didn't enjoy the experience of working out, then it wasn't attractive enough for you to stick with it.

And if on a day-to-day basis you got more satisfaction from sitting on the couch and watching your favorite TV show than working out, then the act of working out wasn't satisfying enough for you to make it a habit.

After reading *Atomic Habits*, I found two powerful strategies that can make every new habit obvious, easy, attractive, and satisfying so that you become healthier, happier, and more productive in the New Year.

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The first strategy for developing a new habit is: '**Stack and Start**'.

Stack & Start

You've probably used habit stacking to build new hygiene habits without realizing it. As a child, you stacked the habit of flushing the toilet with the habit of washing your hands. Flushing the toilet became the cue for your hand washing habit.

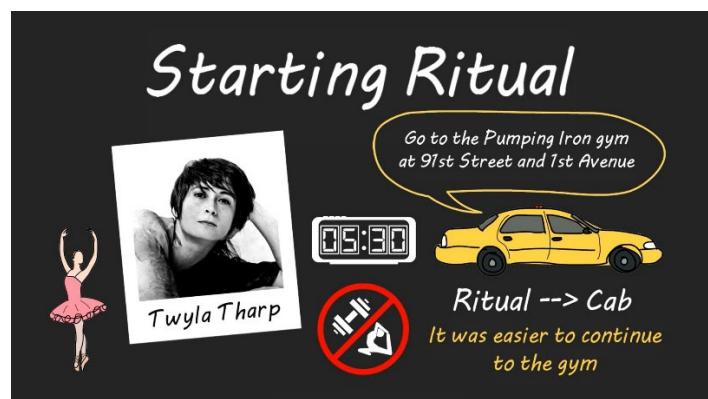


Habit stacking involves using an old and reliable daily habit as the trigger for a new habit.

Years ago, I used the reliable daily habit of brushing my teeth as a cue to start flossing. Every time I put down my toothbrush, I reached into my bag of floss sticks, pulled out a floss stick, and flossed one tooth. Soon my brain learned that putting down the toothbrush meant I should reach into my bag of floss sticks. Now, brushing and flossing are one unit in my mind; one whole habit stack.

When you stack a new habit on an existing habit, you use the momentum of the old habit to make the new habit easier to initiate. I think of it as riding a bike down a hill to build up enough speed to get up the next hill with minimal peddling.

But if the hill of your new habit is too daunting, the momentum of the old habit won't be enough. That's why you need to reduce your new habit to an easy **starting ritual**.



Twyla Tharp, the world-renowned dancer and choreographer used to wake up every morning at 5:30 a.m., put on her workout clothes, walk outside of her Manhattan apartment, and hail a cab. After getting in the cab, she'd tell the driver to go to the Pumping Iron gym at 91st Street and 1st Avenue. Tharp once said, "The ritual is not the stretching and weight training I put my body through each

Summary of Atomic Habits by James Clear

morning at the gym. The ritual is the cab. The moment I tell the driver where to go, I have completed the ritual."

Why was telling a cab driver to go to the gym a successful workout ritual for Tharp?

After Tharp got in a cab, she found it emotionally and physically easier to continue to the gym and complete her workout than to tell the cab driver to turn around and go back to her apartment. Getting the cab driver to turn around is embarrassing.

Like Tharp, instead of focusing on an entire routine of a new behavior, focus on a starting ritual. A starting ritual is the minimum number of steps you need to make it easier to complete an entire routine than to turn back.



Nearly all starting rituals can be completed in two-minutes or less.

If you take two-minutes to get off the couch and put one dirty dish in the dishwasher, you'll find that you have enough energy to put all the dirty dishes in the sink in the dishwasher.

If you spend two-minutes picking a book off your shelf and reading one page, you'll find that you have the energy read an entire chapter.

Here's where you could use habit stacking and a starting ritual to build an exercise habit.

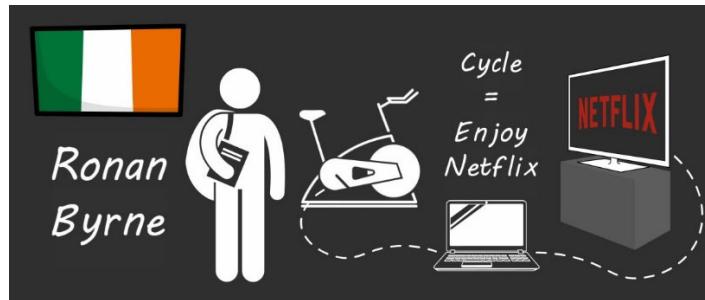
1. Leverage your habit of getting in your car after work and driving home as the cue for your new exercise habit.
2. When you get in your car after work, execute the following starting ritual: when you see the gym on your way home, exit the freeway, park at the gym, walk inside with your gym bag, and scan your gym pass.

If you complete this easy starting ritual, the rest of workout ritual will take care of itself. After you scan in your pass, the thought of turning around will look silly and it will be emotionally easier to continue with what you were doing than turn back.

'Stacking and Starting' makes a new behavior obvious and easy, but to turn a new behavior into a habit you must make it attractive and satisfying (behavior laws three and four). Therefore, you must '**Synchronize and Score**'.

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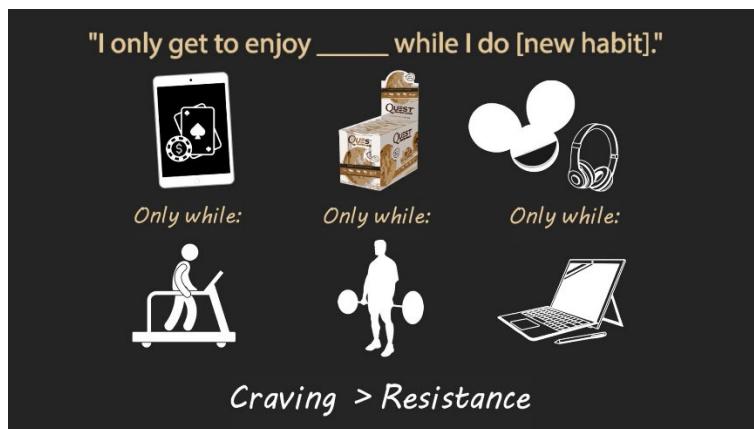
Sync & Score



Ronan Byrne, an electrical engineering student in Dublin, Ireland knew that he should exercise more, so he used his engineering skills to synchronize his stationary bike with his laptop. He wrote a program on his laptop to play his favorite Netflix shows on the TV in front of the stationary bike when he cycled at a certain speed. If he slowed down, Netflix would pause, and he'd need to cycle harder to finish the episode he was watching.

For Byrne, binge-watching Netflix meant burning calories.

Like Byrne, if you only allow yourself to enjoy your favorite experiences while executing a healthy and productive new habit, you'll find the new habit is something you look forward to doing.



Entrepreneur Kevin Rose only allows himself to play his favorite video game on the treadmill. Now, Rose looks forward to using the treadmill.

I only allow myself to enjoy my favorite protein cookie if I'm at the gym (my gym is fairly sly...they sell delicious protein cookies at the front desk).

I only allow myself to listen to my favorite DJ, Deadmau5 when I'm writing the scripts for my videos.

When you synchronize an experience you crave with a new habit you dread doing, the craving will counteract the resistance to executing the new habit and allow you to get started.

Synchronizing is a great tool for building a new habit, but to make a habit stick the habit must become inherently satisfying. And to make a habit inherently satisfying you must keep **score**.

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Imagine on January 30th you look up at your wall and see 27 red check marks, on 27 of the last 30 days. Each check-mark represents a successful workout. That calendar is visual proof that you are someone who cares about their health. You should take pride in that fact!



The calendar on your wall acts like a scorecard and each check mark is a point for the type of person you are.

Author James Clear says, "Each time you write a page, you are a writer. Each time you practice the violin, you are a musician. Each time you start a workout, you are an athlete."

If you take time to score the completion of a habit in a habit tracker (ex: calendar on your wall, app on your phone, or physical habit tracking notebook), you'll start to see a pattern of behavior that proves you're becoming the type of person you've dreamed of being.



The immediate pride you experience after using a habit tracker provides the satisfaction you need to return to the habit over and over until the habit sticks.

Takeaway

Build healthy and productive habits into your life this year by stacking and starting, then syncing and scoring, until it becomes obvious, easy, attractive, and satisfying. In a few months, the weird habit will seem weird not to do because it's part of your identity; it's who you are and what you do.

Summary of Atomic Habits by James Clear

Key Quotes

“Critical lesson: changes that seem small and unimportant at first will compound into remarkable results if you’re willing to stick with them for years.”

“Your outcomes are a lagging measure of your habits. Your net worth is a lagging measure of your financial habits. Your weight is a lagging measure of your eating habits. Your knowledge is a lagging measure of your learning habits.”

“Good habits make time your ally. Bad habits make time your enemy.”

“True long-term thinking is goal-less thinking. It’s not about any single accomplishment. It is about the cycle of endless refinement and continuous improvement. Ultimately, it is your commitment to the process that will determine your progress.”

“The goal is not to read a book, the goal is to become a reader. The goal is not to run a marathon, the goal is to become a runner. The goal is not to learn an instrument, the goal is to become a musician.”

“You do not rise to the level of your goals. You fall to the level of your systems.”

“Habits are like the atoms of our lives. Each one is a fundamental unit that contributes to your overall improvement. At first, these tiny routines seem insignificant, but soon they build on each other and fuel bigger wins that multiply to a degree that far outweighs the cost of their initial investment. They are both small and mighty.”

“Just as atoms are the building blocks of molecules, atomic habits are the building blocks of remarkable results.”

“The ultimate form of intrinsic motivation is when a habit becomes part of your identity. It’s one thing to say I’m the type of person who wants this. It’s something very different to say I’m the type of person who is this.”

“True behavior change is identity change. You might start a habit because of motivation, but the only reason you’ll stick with one is that it becomes part of your identity.”

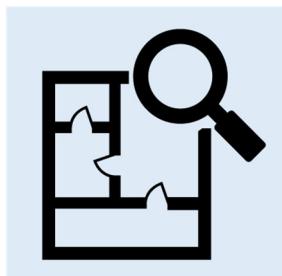
“Anyone can convince themselves to visit the gym or eat healthy once or twice, but if you don’t shift the belief behind the behavior, then it is hard to stick with long-term changes...Improvements are only temporary until they become part of who you are.”

“Habit tracking provides visual proof that you are casting votes for the type of person you wish to become, which is a delightful form of immediate and intrinsic gratification.”

Quotes above are by James Clear

Bonus Insights from Atomic Habits by James Clear

Three bonus insights to help you break a bad habit:



Redesign

To stop performing a bad habit you need superhuman willpower...or do you?

"People who appear to have tremendous self-control...aren't all that different from those who are struggling. '(D)isciplined' people are better at structuring their lives in a way that does not require heroic willpower and self-control." – James Clear

We typically underestimate how small changes in our environment can influence our behavior.

Research shows that just placing tempting foods out of sight significantly reduces consumption.

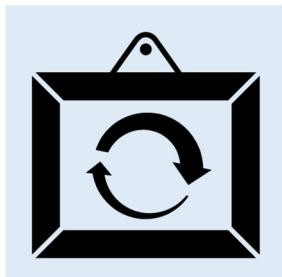
In one study, when chocolates were placed in opaque jars, office workers ate 46% fewer chocolates than when the chocolates were placed in transparent jars.

At the Google offices in New York City, a group of researchers moved M&Ms that were in open baskets into bowls with lids. Lifting the lids required little effort, but by making the M&Ms marginally harder to obtain, the Google employees consumed 3 million fewer M&Ms each month.

"Environment is the invisible hand that shapes human behavior." - James Clear

Action Plan #1:

When you want to break a bad habit, design your environment so that the cues for your bad habit are invisible.
Also, add obstacles to make your bad habits harder to initiate.



Reframe

When James Clear visited his friend Mike in Turkey, he was shocked to see that Mike hadn't had a smoke in the last three years (after a decade of smoking). When Clear asked how Mike how he broke his smoking habit, Mike told him that a book freed him from the mental burden of smoking.

The book was 'Allen Carr's Easy Way to Stop Smoking'. In the book the author says things like: "You think you are quitting something, but you're not quitting anything because cigarettes do nothing for you...You think smoking is about relieving stress, but it's not. Smoking does not relieve your nerves, it destroys them."

Chapter by chapter, the book helped Mike see how ridiculous smoking was.

After reading the book, Mike no longer associated smoking with feeling relaxed. In Mike's mind, cigarettes went from attractive to disgusting, and his craving to smoke went away.

Let's say you binge-eat because you're bored and anxious. Is binge-eating really the best way to cure your boredom and anxiety?

When I crave fast-food, I don't think of eating one cheeseburger, I think of eating 20 cheeseburgers in one sitting. By imagining eating 20 cheeseburgers I lose the craving to eat one.

Action Plan #2:

When you want to break a bad habit, reframe the feeling you expect to experience after completing your bad habit; make your bad habit ridiculous or disgusting.

Bonus Insights from *Atomic Habits* by James Clear



Create a Social Contract

When Entrepreneur Bryan Harris became a father, he noticed he was growing a belly, so Harris vowed to lose a few pounds. To avoid unhealthy foods and lose weight, he got his wife and personal trainer to sign a weight-loss contract.

The weight-loss contract stated that if Bryan did not send his wife and his personal trainer a written food log and a measurement of his weight each day, his wife would receive \$500 and his personal trainer would receive \$100 to spend on whatever they wanted. He would also need to wear business clothes every Sunday morning for a month; no jeans or t-shirts on Sundays.

It worked!

The immediate pain of breaking the contract with his wife and personal trainer was greater than the pain of tracking his food and weight every day.

In a few months, Bryan hit his target weight.

Entrepreneur Thomas Frank did a slightly less formal social commitment for his new habit.

Thomas Frank vowed to wake up every day at 5:55am. To hold himself accountable, he made his Twitter followers his accountability partners.

If he hit the snooze button at 5:55am, his phone automatically released at tweet at 6:10am that read: "It's 6:10 and I'm not up because I'm lazy! Reply to this for \$5 via PayPal (limit 5), assuming my alarm didn't malfunction."

"We care deeply about what others think of us, and we do not want others to have a lesser opinion of us. A habit contract can be used to add a social cost to any behavior. It makes the costs of violating your promises public and painful." – James Clear

Action Plan #3:

When you want to break a bad habit, get an accountability partner and write a social contract.