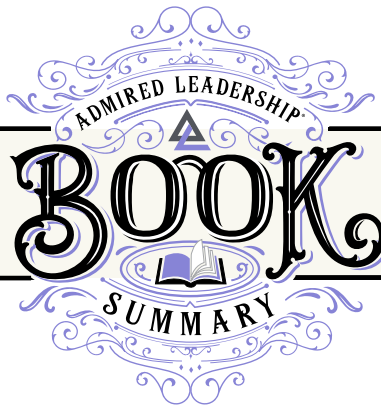




Eight Minutes, Not Eight Hours



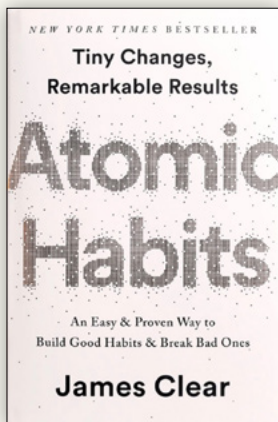
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Atomic Habits

Tiny Changes, Remarkable Results

Published 2018

BOOK AUTHOR: JAMES CLEAR



James Clear details concrete strategies for long-term progress by developing tiny habits that compound to larger successes over time. Clear draws on his own success as a young baseball player hospitalized for massive head trauma which led to months of recovery. Six years later, he emerged as the top athlete at Denison University, was named to the ESPN Academic All-America Team, and awarded the President's Medal. This book focuses on his method — the automation of habits, forming self-identity, and crafting an everyday system that works **with** your own natural abilities, capabilities, and ambitions.

Key Quote

“Success is the product of daily habits — not once-in-a-lifetime transformations.”

“**Atomic habits**” are powerful little building blocks that compound to produce success. The focus is on long-term systems versus simply setting goals.

“**Identity change**” is a focus at the macro level on beliefs, paradigms, self-image, and bias and produces the most powerful and lasting change. “Each action you take is a vote for the type of person you wish to become.”

Habit formation streamlines everyday approaches to expend as little time and energy as possible, freeing up space for new things. There are four steps to better habits: make it obvious (cue), make it irresistible (craving), make it easy (response), and make it satisfying (reward).

Make it obvious: Use cues already in your environment to introduce new habits. Pair a desired habit to a time and location, and tie it to a current habit pattern. Over time, new habits will merge with these new contexts and create even more opportunities for habit development.

Make it irresistible: When dopamine rises, so does our desire to act. “Temptation bundling” pairs the action you **need** to do with the action you want to do. Joining a culture where your desired behaviors are the norm will further reinforce your habits.

Make it easy: Shape your environment and standardize rituals around the behavior you want. Reduce difficulty — reduce friction — with positive habits and increase friction around negative habits.

Make it satisfying: “What is immediately rewarded is repeated. What is immediately punished is avoided.” Create rewards and use an accountability partner to reward success through social validation.


Advanced tactics: (1) Choose habits that align with natural ability, (2) work on the edge of your abilities, outside of your comfort zone, and (3) engage in frequent and deep reflection, personal review, and the ability to grow beyond your own preconceptions.

The Surprising Power of Atomic Habits


Habits are the compound interest of self-improvement. Getting 1% better each day results in compounded habits that in turn result in compounded success (p.17).

Daily habits and behavior either result in positive or negative compounding and, in turn, enable or erode at your success. Therefore, reaching a “critical threshold” or “Plateau of Latent Potential” can result in a major negative or positive breakthrough (pp. 12-22).

The title of the book **Atomic Habits** refers to these little building blocks of a large system, focusing on a functional, long-term system instead of goals only (pp. 23-26).



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How Your Habits Shape Your Identity (and Vice Versa)

This chapter focuses on the three levels of change: (1) outcome change, (2) process change, and (3) identity change. “Outcome change” focuses on changing results. “Process change” focuses on changing systems, i.e. implementing a new routine to get ready for work or preparation for social events. “Identity change” focuses on the most macro level of personal beliefs, paradigms, self-image, and biases. Many people focus on changing habits at an outcome change level initially but changing habits based on identity change results in lasting, comprehensive results. Behavior incongruent with the self will not last (pp. 29 -32).

Brian Clark, an entrepreneur from Boulder, Colorado, provides an example of a bad habit transformed by identity change. “For as long as I can remember, I’ve chewed my fingernails. . . I asked my wife to schedule my first-ever manicure. . . And it worked, not for the monetary reason. What happened was the manicure made my fingers look really nice for the first time. . . Suddenly, I was proud of my fingernails. And even though that’s something I had never aspired to, it made all the difference. I never chewed my nails since; not even a single close call” (p. 33).

True behavioral change is identity change. The motivation becomes personal, a reflection of identity by focusing on who you want to become and viewing the action as a source of pride. “For example, people who identified as ‘being a voter’ were more likely to vote than those who simply claimed ‘voting’ was an action they wanted to perform.” This chapter depicts most people as walking around in a “cognitive slumber” following the generalized, often erroneous beliefs they have about their identity. Identity conflict blocks personal change, even trumping common sense and good habits (pp. 34-35).

“Each action you take is a vote for the type of person you wish to become” (pp. 37-52).

Habits matter because they change your fundamental view of yourself. In a sense, you **become** your habits.

How to Build Better Habits in 4 Simple Steps

Edward Thorndike, a psychologist in 1898, conducted a study on animal behavior by training cats to search for a lever that led them to food. Thorndike describes the results thusly: “behaviors followed by satisfying consequences tend to be repeated and those that produce unpleasant consequences are less likely to be repeated” (pp. 43-44).

Habit formation automates tasks, streamlining everyday approaches to the problems of life while expending as little time and energy as possible. Despite the common belief that this form of habit building restricts freedom, habit formation actually helps free up time and energy for new tasks (p. 46).

The book **The Power of Habit**, by Charles Duhigg, describes the four stages of building a habit as cue, craving, response, and reward. This feedback loop serves as the backbone of habit formation and is personal to each person based upon their individual cues, cravings, responses, and rewards. The first purpose of a reward satisfies this craving by delivering the reward in a consistent, interrupted, predictable manner (pp. 47-52).

The Four Laws of Behavior Change work with these four stages to create or eliminate behaviors. To create a good habit, one must make it obvious (cue), make it attractive (craving), make it easy (response), and make it satisfying (reward). To eliminate a negative behavior, one must make it invisible (elimination of cue), make it unattractive (elimination of craving), make it difficult (elimination of response), and make it unsatisfying (elimination of reward) (pp. 53-55).

The First Law: Make it Obvious

Psychologist Gary Klein describes a story of a paramedic who recognizes an immediate risk of a heart attack in a family member through her knowledge and experience working with unhealthy patients. “With enough practice, you can pick up on cues that predict certain outcomes without consciously thinking about it. Automatically, your brain encodes the lessons learned through experience” (pp. 59-60).



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However, this automation can lead to fulfilling habit patterns without thinking, making self-awareness of utmost importance. “Pointing-and-calling” or verbalizing your actions raises your level of awareness, reduces errors by up to 85%, and cuts accidents by 30%. An exercise called a “Habit Scorecard” keeps score by listing daily habits, rating these habits with a positive/neutral/negative notation, and viewing the pattern from a third-party perspective (pp. 61-66).

In 2001, researchers in Great Britain divided 248 people into three groups to test encouragement of an exercise plan: (1) a control group, (2) a motivation-oriented group that viewed health-related material, and (3) a third group that formulated a specific plan for future exercise. In the first and second groups, 35-38% of the people exercised once per week, but in the third group, 91% of the group exercised. The specific plan affected the results by setting a “mentation intention,” which is a plan to implement a certain action for a habit. This format pairs time and location with the intention itself, using this formula: “I will [BEHAVIOR] at [TIME] in [LOCATION].” To make the process even simpler, combine the desired habit pattern with a current habit pattern. For example, “After [CURRENT HABIT], I will [NEW HABIT].” One such example of this format could be, “I will work out at home after work. After working out, I will drink 4 cups of water” (pp. 69-79).

“Environment is the invisible hand that shapes human behavior” (p. 82).

A cue introduces a habit. In 1936, psychologist Kurt Lewin wrote an equation explaining behavior as a function of the person in their environment, or $B = f(P,E)$. In 1952, economist Hawkins Stern described the equation as “suggestion impulse buying.” It is “triggered when a shopper sees a product for the first time and visualizes a need for it” (p. 83).

Over time, fostered habits merge with entire contexts as opposed to a single trigger, introducing a new environment that enables new strings and chains of habits (pp. 87-90).

In 1971 during the Vietnam War, congressman Robert Steele and Morgan Murphy discovered that as many as 20% of U.S. soldiers stationed there were heroin addicts. Lee Robins, one of the researchers in charge of the Special Action Office of Drug Abuse Prevention, found that about nine out of ten soldiers who used heroin in Vietnam quit their addiction when they came back home, suggesting that the addiction was born in context. Recent research states that those with high levels of self-control structure their lives in a way to avoid tempting situations and cues (pp. 91-95).

The Second Law: Make it Irresistible

In the 1940's Dutch scientist Niko Tinbergen won a Nobel Prize for studying the behavior of herring gulls' preference for satisfying, instinctive stimuli and an even stronger hunger for their overexaggerated examples. Humans seek the same stimuli in today's sensory-loaded environment. Studying the way that products are engineered to be rewarding and drive dopamine can help us understand how to make productive habits more satisfying. When dopamine rises, so does our desire to act (pp. 101-106).

The anticipation of the reward — the dopamine spike before action — drives us to act. “Temptation bundling” pairs the action you need to do with the action you want to do, to make positive actions more attractive (pp. 109-111).

We imitate the actions of our family and friends, the social norm, and the socially powerful. Therefore, joining a culture where our desired behaviors are the norm will help us receive the external validation that we desire to reinforce our habits (pp. 113-123).

The Third Law: Make it Easy

Donald Hebb, a neuropsychologist in 1949 created Hebb's Law stating, "Neurons that fire together wire together." Engaging in practice and taking action is more effective than planning because these automate the habit and change brain chemistry (pp. 141-147).

Automation is effective because of the human preference for the least effort expended. Reducing friction and difficulty with positive habits and increasing friction with negative habits help shape one's environment for future patterns (pp. 149-158).

Starting a new habit should take less than two minutes to do (The Two-Minute Rule). However, maintaining that level of focus requires developing standardized rituals around the behavior and automating the absence of the behavior through technology, e.g. canceling cable so that you watch less TV (pp. 158-176).



The Fourth Law: Make it Satisfying

We often repeat a behavior when the experience is rewarding, due to The Cardinal Rule of Behavioral Change: "What is immediately rewarded is repeated. What is immediately punished is avoided" (pp. 183-193).

Twenty-three-year old stockbroker Trent Dyrsmid excelled in his position using one simple habit: he would move 120 paperclips from one jar to an empty one, moving one with every successful sales call. He wouldn't move until he had finished relocating the paperclips, and within 18 months Dyrsmid was bringing in \$5 million to the firm. Habits are tracked in a visual, rewarding, and automated way, making tracking as easy as possible. However, setbacks are a part of the human experience, so recovering quickly is essential to getting back on track, such as "not breaking the chain" (pp. 195-204).

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An accountability partner can reward us through social validation to keep habits on track and add social cost to behavior (pp. 205-211).

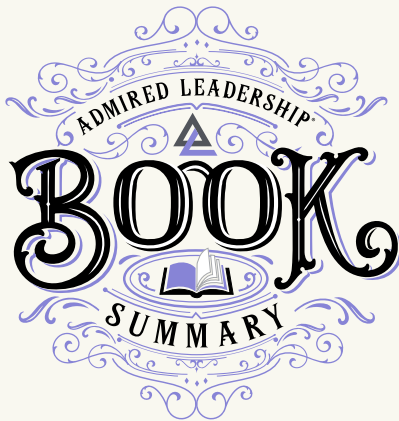
Advanced Tactics: How to Go from Being Merely Good to Being Truly Great

The Truth About Talent (When Genes Matter and When They Don't): Choosing the right competition and habits to foster provides a strong advantage that genes alone cannot. Different genetic makeups are advantageous in different solutions, so choose habit patterns that align with natural abilities and play to your natural strengths and specialize. However, if you can't find a game that aligns with your natural genetic strengths and abilities, create one (pp. 217-227).

The Goldilocks Rule – How to Stay Motivated in Life and Work: Humans work best on the edge of their current abilities. Boredom hinders peak motivation but working outside of one's comfort zone can keep motivation mentally fresh. To reach mastery, one must work within a routine desire commitment outside of motivation, and be comfortable with boredom (pp. 229-237).

The Downside of Creating Good Habits: Automating behavior increases the risk of small errors, therefore practice is key to maintaining good form. Habits essential to practice include frequent and deep reflection, review, and the ability to release your identity to grow beyond your own preconceived notions (pp. 239-250).

Clear, J. (2018). *Atomic Habits: Tiny Changes, Remarkable Results*. New York: Penguin Random House Publishers.



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The Latest and Greatest Books for Leaders

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