

TRANSCRIPT · EPISODE 54

Atomic Habits Deep Dive Part 2

Full episode script · English

395 lines

Your English Toolbox

Welcome back to the deep end of the pool.

We are back for episode two of our deep dive into atomic habits.

Today we are doing something ambitious.

We are covering five full chapters of the book in one single session.

If you sat down to read these chapters yourself, it would take you at least two hours.

And that is if you are a fast reader.

But we are going to give you the gold in just 25 minutes.

So we are saving you 90 minutes of your life.

And we are saving you the headache of translating difficult vocabulary.

That is a pretty good deal.

If you stay with us until the end, you will learn the four invisible steps that control every habit you have.

You will learn why Japanese train conductors scream at signs to save lives.

And you will discover why disciplined people are actually just lazy people with better environments.

So let's not waste

any of that time we just saved.

Let's go.

Part one.

The cat in the box.

Imagine a hungry cat inside a puzzle box.

Martin, why are we putting cats in boxes?

It is for science, Julia.

Okay, tell me about the cat.

This is a famous experiment by Edward Thorndyke.

The cat is stuck in the box, and there is food outside.

At first, the cat is angry.

It scratches the walls.

It smells the corners.

It is chaotic.

But then, by accident, the cat presses a lever.

And the door opens.

The cat escapes and eats the food.

Happy ending.

But here is the interesting part.

Thorndyke put the same cat back in the box.

Did it scratch the walls again?

It went straight to the lever.

It learned.

Behaviors followed by satisfying consequences tend to be repeated.

And behaviors with bad consequences are avoided.

This is how a habit is born.

In the last episode, we

learned about the 1% rule.

We learned that we are not trying to reach a goal.

We are building a system.

Today, we are going to build that system.

Part 2.

The Freedom Paradox.

Martin, many people hate the idea of habits.

They say, I want to be spontaneous.

I don't want to be a robot.

They think habits restrict their freedom.

But James Clear says this is the freedom paradox.

Actually, habits create freedom.

Think about it.

If you

have good financial habits, you have financial freedom.

If you have good health habits, you have the freedom to run and play.

And there is also mental freedom.

The conscious mind is slow and expensive.

It takes a lot of energy to think.

Habits transfer the workload to the subconscious.

The subconscious is fast and cheap.

If you don't have to think about cooking or doing laundry, you have mental space.

You have space for creativity.

So building habits is

not about being boring.

It is about automating the basics so you can enjoy the rest of your life.

Part 3.

The Loop.

Every habit follows a four-step loop.

If you understand this loop, you can control your life.

Step 1 is the cue.

This is the trigger.

It predicts a reward.

For example, seeing a coffee cup.

Step 2 is the craving.

This is the motivation.

It is the desire to change your internal state.

You are tired and

you want to feel alert.

Step 3 is the response.

This is the action you actually take.

You drink the coffee.

And step 4 is the reward.

The satisfaction.

You feel awake.

Your brain says, hey, remember this loop for next time.

The cue and the craving are the problem phase.

And the response and reward are the solution phase.

If you remove the cue, the habit never starts.

If you reduce the craving, you won't want to do it.

If the response is too hard, you won't do it.

And if the reward is bad, you won't repeat it.

This creates the four laws of behavior change.

Law 1, make it obvious.

Law 2, make it attractive.

Law 3, make it easy.

Law 4, make it satisfying.

Part 4, pointing and calling.

Today we focus on the first law, make it obvious.

The biggest problem with bad habits is that we don't see them.

We have automation blindness.

do things without thinking.

Let's look at the Japanese railway system.

It is one of the safest in the world.

Why?

Because the conductors do something very strange.

They point at things and scream at them.

It is called pointing and calling.

When the light is green, the conductor points at it and shouts, Signal is green.

When the train leaves, he looks at his watch and shouts, Time is 10 a.m.

This looks silly.

But it works.

It reduces

errors by 85%.

Why?

Because it raises a non-conscious habit to a conscious level.

You are using your eyes, your mouth, and your ears.

You cannot be on autopilot when you are screaming.

We can use this in our own lives.

Imagine you are about to eat a cookie.

You can say out loud, I am about to eat this cookie.

It is full of sugar and it will make me fat.

It sounds harsh.

But awareness is the first

step to change.

Sometimes, just noticing the habit is enough to stop it.

We can also use the Habit Scorecard.

This is an exercise for our listeners.

List every single thing you do in a day.

Wake up, check phone, brush teeth, make coffee.

Do not criticize yourself.

Be a scientist.

Just observe.

Label each habit as positive, negative, or neutral.

Ask the question, Does this behavior help me become the person I wish to be?

We often think we

lack motivation.

But actually, we lack awareness of what we are doing with our time.

Part 5 Implementation Intention Now that we see our habits, how do we start new ones?

Most people use vague intentions.

They say, I will eat healthier.

Or, I will study English more.

These are wishes, not plans.

They live in the fog of some time.

And some time usually means never.

Research on British voters showed something interesting.

People who wrote down exactly when

and where they would vote were much more likely to do it.

We need an implementation intention.

The formula is, I will behavior at time and location.

For example, I will study English at 7am in the kitchen.

This removes decision fatigue.

If you have to decide when to work out every day, you drain energy.

Decide once and the robot takes over.

Part 8 The Diderot Effect But we can go even further.

We can use the Diderot effect.

Denis Diderot was a French philosopher.

He was very poor, but then he bought a beautiful red robe.

He loved the robe.

But then he looked around his house.

He felt his house was too ugly for such a fancy robe.

So he bought a new rug.

Then new chairs.

Then a new mirror.

How it replaced everything.

This is the Domino effect.

One purchase leads to another.

And one habit leads to another.

We can use this for habit

stacking.

You already have strong neural pathways in your brain.

Like brushing your teeth or making coffee.

Habit stacking is grafting a new branch onto a strong trunk.

The formula is, after current habit, I will new habit.

For example, after I pour my coffee, I will meditate for one minute.

Or, after I close the dishwasher, I will learn one English word.

The after is the trigger.

Be specific.

Don't say after lunch.

Say, after I put my plate

in the sink.

This creates a logical flow.

It creates momentum.

One right action flows into the next.

Part 7.

Motivation is overrated.

Martin, I have a confession.

What is it?

I feel like I don't have enough willpower.

I see cookies and I eat them.

I see my phone and I check it.

I am weak.

You are not weak, Julia.

You are just a victim of your environment.

Chapter 6 tells us that motivation is overrated.

Environment matters

more.

Let's look at Anne Thorndyke.

She was a doctor in a hospital.

She wanted the staff to drink more water and less soda.

Did she give them a lecture on health?

Did she ask them to use their willpower?

She just changed the room.

She put water bottles next to the checkout counter.

Before it was only soda.

Suddenly, soda sales dropped and water sales went up.

No willpower required.

This is called choice architecture.

We think

we make choices.

But often the environment makes the choice for us.

Vision is our most powerful sense.

We have 10 million sensory receptors in the eye.

That is why visual dominance is real.

If you want to play the guitar but it is inside the closet, you will never play.

Make it obvious.

Buy a stand and put the guitar in the middle of the living room.

If you want to eat apples, put them on the table.

they are hidden in the fridge, they will rot.

If they are on the table, they get eaten.

Be the architect of your world, not the victim.

But Martin, my house is already full of bad triggers.

That is because of context association.

A habit is not associated with a single object.

It is associated with the whole space.

If you always smoke in one specific chair, the chair becomes the trigger.

If you eat, work and sleep in your

bed, your bed is confused.

Your brain doesn't know if it should be alert or asleep.

That is why you have insomnia.

You need to mix context less.

One space, one use.

Use your iPad only for reading.

If you install Instagram on it, the context is polluted.

It is easier to change habits in a new place.

Have you noticed that on vacation, it is easy to quit bad habits?

That is because the old cues are gone.

When

you are home, you are in zombie mode.

You respond to old cues automatically.

So, redesign your flow.

Put your gym clothes out the night before.

Put them right in front of your door.

Remove the friction for good habits.

And increase friction for bad habits.

If you want to stop watching TV, hide the remote.

Unplug the TV.

Put it in the closet.

Make yourself work for it.

This leads us to the final lesson, self-control.

We think disciplined

people are superheroes.

We think they sit in front of a cookie and say, no.

But that is a myth.

Research shows that disciplined people are just better at structuring their lives.

They spend less time in tempting situations.

They use avoidance, not resistance.

Let's talk about the Vietnam heroin study.

In the Vietnam War, 20% of American soldiers were addicted to heroin.

People were terrified about what would happen when they came home.

But once they returned to the

U.S., 90% of them stopped spontaneously.

How is that possible?

Because addiction is contextual.

In Vietnam, they had the stress of war.

They had the cues of the jungle.

When you remove the cues, the addiction fades.

But if you put a recovering addict back in their old neighborhood, they relapse.

Cue-induced wanting is powerful.

Once you see the cue, the dopamine starts flowing.

It is hard to stop the machine once it starts.

So the secret is inversion.

Make

it invisible.

Out of sight, out of mind is scientifically true.

If you have a phone addiction, leave your phone in another room.

Don't just turn it over.

Hide it.

Willpower is a battery.

It drains throughout the day.

Every time you say no to a temptation, you burn energy.

Eventually, the battery dies and you eat the cookie.

So be lazy.

Be lazy about self-control by removing the need for it.

Redesign your social circle, too.

If your friends

drink every night, you will drink.

Bad habits never truly disappear from the brain.

The neural pathways are always there.

That is why invisibility is the only long-term solution.

Martin, we talked about pointing and calling.

But why is it so hard to see our own habits?

Because of unconscious competence.

Let me tell you the story of the paramedic.

A paramedic walked into a house and saw her father-in-law.

He looked fine to everyone else.

But she looked at

him and instantly screamed, Call the ambulance.

Why?

She said, I don't like the look of his face.

A few minutes later he had a massive heart attack.

She saved his life.

But how did she know?

She couldn't explain it.

Her brain had seen thousands of heart attacks.

She recognized the pattern automatically.

This is the same with the museum curator.

He saw a statue and felt an intuitive repulsion.

He knew it was fake, but he didn't know

why.

This is the danger of habits.

We become blind to what we are doing.

That is why we need to point and call our mistakes.

Especially in English.

When you make a mistake, don't just ignore it.

Say, I just used the wrong verb tense.

Point at the mistake.

Raise it from the unconscious to the conscious.

Now, let's go back to habit stacking for a second.

We missed something important.

Why does stacking work biologically?

It is because

of synaptic pruning.

Your brain is like a gardener.

It strengthens connections you use often.

And it cuts away connections you don't use.

You have a superhighway in your brain for brushing teeth.

When you stack a new habit on top of it, you are not building a new road.

You are building an exit ramp off the superhighway.

You are using the energy that already exists.

So, where is the best place to put these new habits?

Use bookend

habits.

Your morning and your evening are usually the same every day.

The middle of the day is chaotic.

So, stack your most important habits at the bookends of your day.

Or use social stacking.

Use other people as the trigger.

When my partner cooks, I will clean the dishes.

The trigger is not the time.

The trigger is the other person.

We also need to talk about your phone.

We said, make it invisible.

But your phone is not

just a physical object.

It is a digital environment.

You need to clean your digital room.

If your home screen is full of social media, you will click it.

Put learning apps on the front page.

Put Instagram in a folder inside a folder on the last page.

And turn off notifications.

This is crucial.

A notification sound initiates a habit loop even if you don't look at it.

It is the notified brain.

Just hearing the ping releases dopamine.

It creates the craving.

So, silence is golden.

Part 12, resetting the room.

Finally, there is one secret tactic for self-control.

It is called resetting the room.

Imagine you finish working.

Don't just walk away.

Clean your desk.

Place your notebook in the center of the table.

It is not just cleaning.

It is designing the flow.

OK, now we have truly covered everything.

We learned to see the invisible with pointing and calling.

We learned to use our bookends

to stack habits.

We learned to prune our digital environment.

And we learned to reset the room.

Motivation is good, but a designed environment is better.

Go be the architect of your life.

And cast your votes for your new identity.

Thank you for listening to this deep dive.

With your help, we have built the foundation.

We learned the loop.

Cue, craving, response, reward.

We learned to make it obvious.

Point and call your habits.

We learned to make

it invisible.

And we learned to stack habits.

Your action step for today is simple.

Look at your room right now.

And what cues are missing for your good habits.

Be the architect.

If you enjoyed this episode, please leave a comment.

Tell us one change you made to your environment.

Did you hide the remote?

Did you put apples on the table?

Let us know.

Thank you for listening, friends.
