



Charles Duhigg: is an investigative reporter for the New York Times. He is a winner of the National Academies of Sciences, National Journalism, and George Palk awards, and was part of a team of finalists for the 2009 Pulitzer Prize.

Authors Purpose: The key to exercising regularly, losing weight, raising exceptional children, building revolutionary companies, and achieving success is understanding how habits work.

Quotes:

The Habit Loop

All habits are contained in the Habit Loop which is comprised of:

Cue – a trigger that tells your brain to go to automatic mode and which habit to use.

Routine – this can be physical, mental or emotional

Reward – helps your brain figure out if this particular loop is worth remembering for the future.

Over time, this loop; cue, routine and reward become more and more automatic. The cue and reward become intertwined until a powerful sense of anticipation and **craving** emerges. From a biological perspective your brain (basal ganglia) activity becomes less and less active as this loop becomes a habit. For example think about driving, as a teen versus now.

Businesses create cravings that make the cues and reward work. This craving is what powers the habit loop.

Pepsodent Story:

In the early 1900's most people did not brush their teeth, as the nation became wealthier; more people ate and drank more sugary foods and drinks. To the point that when the government started drafting men for WWI, so many recruits had rotting teeth that officials said poor dental hygiene was a national security risk.

Many people had gone broke trying to sell toothpaste and like products. Claude Hopkins a legend in the Advertising world was asked to market Pepsodent but refused several times, because of the poor odds of success. Mr. Hopkins finally agreed and knew that he needed a trigger (cue) to promote daily use of this product.



He found it by focusing on “the film” that covers our teeth, when not brushed. He then connected the removal of “the film” with beautiful teeth. Eating an apple or running your finger over your teeth eliminates “the film” also. Toothpaste didn’t do anything to help remove film, but what does that have to do with reality.

Cue – tooth film

Reward – beautiful teeth.

Within 3 months Pepsodent became an international best seller and the military’s dental problem was solved.

The Science

Monkeys were taught to push a lever first and then they would receive blackberry juice. As the experiment proceeded scientists noted that the monkey’s brain soon began to anticipate the blackberry juice creating the “I got a reward” pattern, before the juice arrived. When the scientists delayed the arrival or watered down the juice, the monkeys became irritable or depressed. So when the habit was established in the monkey’s mind, it started to crave “the reward”.

Think of a gambler who plays slots long after he’s lost his winnings.

Habits are powerful because they create neurological cravings. Most of the time, these cravings emerge so gradually that we are not aware they exist, so we are blind to their influence.

Example: Cinnabon stores in malls are located away from food courts. Why? Because Cinnabon executives want the smell of cinnamon rolls to waft down hallways and around corners uninterrupted, so that shoppers will start subconsciously craving a roll. Cue is the smell and the habit loop takes over from there.

Finish monkey story:

Cue: seeing the lever

Routine: hitting the lever

Reward: drinking the delicious blackberry juice.

Mobile Phones:

Cue: vibration...brain anticipates the momentary distraction that opening email or text msg. provides.

If left unopened for long anxiety starts in of wondering and a craving to know what the msg.is.

Routine: physically hitting the icons to open up.

Reward: distraction.

Note: if we turn off the vibrator mechanism there is no cue, therefore no craving.

The Golden Rule of Habit Change

You can’t extinguish a bad habit, you can only change it. You must keep the old cue, and deliver the old reward, but insert a new routine. Almost any habit behavior can be transformed if the cue and reward stay the same. You must understand the craving.



“Champions don’t do extraordinary things,” Dungy would explain. “They do ordinary things, but they do them without thinking, too fast for the other team to react. They follow the habits they’ve learned.”

Alcoholism and other addictions

Alcoholics Anonymous: Alcoholics crave a drink because it offers escape, relaxation, companionship, the blunting of anxieties and an opportunity for emotional release. Ironically addicts don’t crave the physical feeling of being drunk or high.

In order to offer alcoholics the same rewards they get at a bar, AA has built a system of meetings and companionship – the sponsor each member works with – that strives to offer as much escape, distraction, and catharsis as a Friday night bender. “AA forces you to create new routines for what to do each night instead of drinking,” You can relax and talk through your anxieties at the meetings. The triggers and payoffs stay the same, it just the behavior that changes.”

If you can identify the cues and rewards, you can change the routine. For a habit to stay changed, people must believe change is possible. And most often, that belief only emerges with the help of a group.

The evidence is clear: If you want to change a habit, you must find an alternative routine and your odds of success go up dramatically when you commit to changing as part of a group. Even if that group are only consists of 2 people.

Four Step Process of changing a Habit:

Identify routine

Experiment with rewards

Isolate the cue – where are you, when, emotional state (bored or anxious), with who and immediate prior action.

Have a plan

The Habits of Successful Organizations

“I knew I had to transform Alcoa,” O’Neill told me. “But you can’t order people to change. That’s not how the brain works. So I decided I was going to start by focusing on one thing. If I could start disrupting the habits around one thing, it would spread throughout the entire company.”

Some habits are more important than others and they are called “keystone habits”. They can influence how people work, eat, play, live, spend, and communicate. They remake our accepted patterns. Keystone habits say that success doesn’t depend on getting every single thing right, but instead relies on identifying a few key priorities and fashioning them into a few key levers.

Individual have habits, organizations have routines.



Alcoa story: Paul O’Neill took over Alcoa in 1987 when the company was in disarray after many strategic mishaps. His background was as a high ranking Federal employee, who had observed how waste and inefficiency was inculcated in the culture of the government and politics. Decisions were being made without thinking, but guided by cues, automatic routine to obtain rewards such as promotions and reelections.

After reviewing Alcoa’s poor safety history, he decided that the “keystone habit” needed was worker safety. Past history showed that Alcoa had one injured employee a week. Neither management nor the unions could argue with this new focus (priority) and a new audacious company goal was set: zero injuries.

The key to understanding to protecting Alcoa employees was to understand why they were getting hurt in the first place. Understanding how their existing processes were part of the problem and then to bring in people who could educate workers on quality control and the most efficient work processes, since correct work is also safer work.

Cue: employee injury

Routine: any time someone was injured, the unit president had to report it to O’Neill within 24 hours and present a plan to make sure it would never happen again.

Reward: the only people who got promoted were those who embraced the system and had measurable safety improvements.

The result was that to enforce the routine, communication habits had to change that made it easier for the lowliest worker to get an idea to the loftiest executive (Unit President). Unions and management gave ground on demands because they were in conflict with worker safety. Company became one of the safest and most profitable companies in the world.

Crisis helps reinforce habit if leadership still believes in the Priority, e.g. worker safety.

Detecting keystone habits means searching for certain characteristics. Keystone habits offer what is known within academic literature as “small wins”. Aim for singles and the possibility of doubles, triples and home runs are possible. All great movements have started this way, e.g. civil rights.

To determine the root cause of issues, the simple process of keep asking why, until it is identified.

Some habits are harder to change than others, like any kind of addiction. But this is a framework to start. Sometimes change takes a long time and patience is required. But once you understand how a habit operates – once you diagnose the cue, the routine, and reward – you gain power of it. As with anything in our lives the first step toward change is awareness.

But to be aware of what?



BizBookBriefs

SUMMARY & DIALOGUE IN 60