



THE POWER OF HABIT STACKING

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You have a long list of things you know you should be doing, but for some reason, you just don't do them. What's the deal? The key is habit stacking. But how do we make building habits simple and painless? Let's take a look!

When we consider our habits, we discover that many of them are deeply ingrained, and we've never really stopped to reflect on where they came from and why we have them. Think about it, every day you make automatic decisions that don't involve much thought or effort; you just do them. Making a cup of coffee in the morning, making your bed, or brushing your teeth are all examples of these. Your brain wants efficiency; it wants to turn any action you do frequently into a habit since it takes less effort to process and perform the behaviour.

Your brain builds a strong network of neurons to support your current behaviours. The more you do something, the stronger the connection becomes, as simple as that. The good news is that you can take advantage of these strong connections to build new and healthy habits by **HABIT STACKING** which is simply taking a current daily habit, and stacking a healthy one on top of it.

“ **After/Before** (Current habit), **I will** (new habit) ”

FOR EXAMPLE:

- 1** After I wake up, I will do 30 push-ups
- 2** After I make my bed each morning, I will pack my workout bag ready for evening class
- 3** After I grab a coffee at work, I will refill my water bottle
- 4** After I sit down to dinner, I will say one thing I'm grateful for that happened today.



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Our current habits are already programmed in on auto pilot, which is why habit stacking works so well. By coupling your new desired habit to established patterns and behaviours that have been reinforced through time, you increase the likelihood of sticking to it.

SO, HOW DO WE IMPLEMENT?

That's what you're here for right? No matter what the new habit is that you are adding, it is essential to find the right cue to ensure success.

- 1 To find the right cue, you may want to spend some time **brainstorming** all the daily habits you do without fail. Nothing is too small!
- 2 Now you have a list of things that you do every day, you can decide which ones you can 'stack', **don't be hasty** now, just a couple will do.
- 3 **Consider when to add a new habit** into your routine at a time you are most likely to be successful, for example, if you want to start a morning routine to up your daily activity but you have 4 kids you have to get ready and get to school, you will be setting yourself up for failure, how about an evening routine instead?
- 4 Habit stacking works best when the cue is specific, and the new habit is immediately actionable. If you want to get more activity throughout the day, saying "I will walk more" is too vague and really just means 'I want to keep failing'. **Get specific!** When do you walk? How far should you go? What route? "I will walk for 10 minutes every day after lunch." This is specific, you know you always have lunch and it has a definitive goal set. Voila.

4 LAWS OF BEHAVIOURAL CHANGE

What we have just outlined are the 4 laws of behavioural change:

- Make it **obvious** – stack it up and write it up!
- Make it **attractive** – if we combine the likely habits with the 'not-so-likely', the latter is more likely to be done
- Make it **easy** – one at a time and be specific
- Make it **satisfying** – rewards are acceptable! Celebrate the small wins.





FINAL THOUGHTS

Everybody slips up now and then and must overcome barriers, but it's how we bounce back and respond to those slips that really matters. You could set your goals too high, too quick, and bury your head in the sand, or you could keep it simple, manageable and every day just be 1% better than the last. Consistently good is better than occasionally perfect.

References

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