

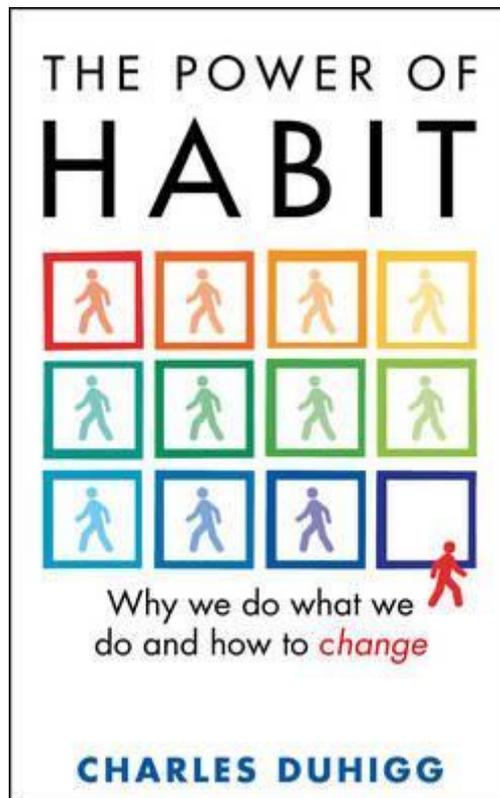
A summary of the book

The Power of Habit

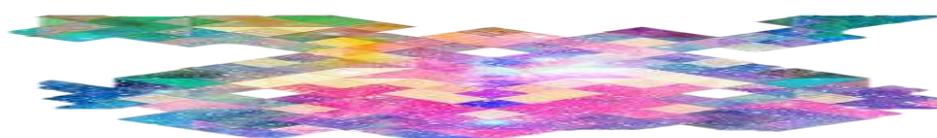
Why we do what we do and how to change

By Charles Duhigg

Summary by Kim Hartman

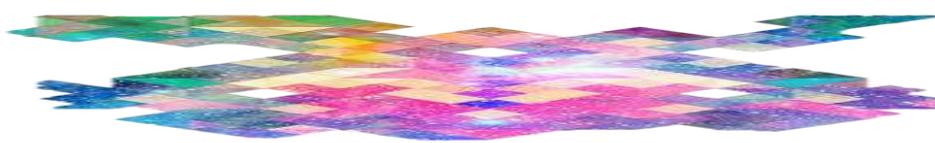


This is a summary of what I think is the most important and insightful parts of the book. I can't speak for anyone else and I strongly recommend you to read the book in order to fully grasp the concepts written here. My notes should only be seen as an addition that can be used to refresh your memory after you've read the book. Use the words in this summary as anchors to remember the vitals parts of the book.



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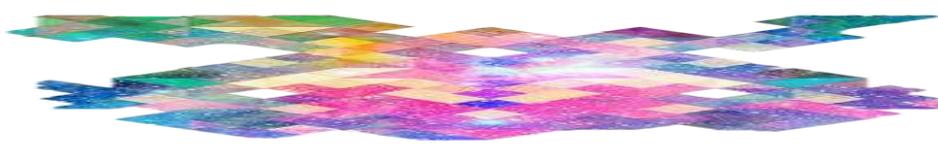
Description from amazon

In *The Power of Habit*, award-winning *New York Times* business reporter Charles Duhigg takes us to the thrilling edge of scientific discoveries that explain why habits exist and how they can be changed. With penetrating intelligence and an ability to distill vast amounts of information into engrossing narratives, Duhigg brings to life a whole new understanding of human nature and its potential for transformation.

Along the way we learn why some people and companies struggle to change, despite years of trying, while others seem to remake themselves overnight. We visit laboratories where neuroscientists explore how habits work and where, exactly, they reside in our brains. We discover how the right habits were crucial to the success of Olympic swimmer Michael Phelps, Starbucks CEO Howard Schultz, and civil-rights hero Martin Luther King, Jr. We go inside Procter & Gamble, Target superstores, Rick Warren's Saddleback Church, NFL locker rooms, and the nation's largest hospitals and see how implementing so-called keystone habits can earn billions and mean the difference between failure and success, life and death.

At its core, *The Power of Habit* contains an exhilarating argument: The key to exercising regularly, losing weight, raising exceptional children, becoming more productive, building revolutionary companies and social movements, and achieving success is understanding how habits work.

Habits aren't destiny. As Charles Duhigg shows, by harnessing this new science, we can transform our businesses, our communities, and our lives.

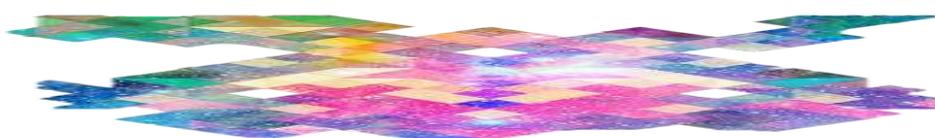


Prologue

Keystone habit: focus on one pattern – a keystone habit - and reprogram the other routines in your life as well.

40% of the actions people perform each day aren't actual decisions but habits.

The riot in Iraq example: Violence was usually preceded by a crowd of Iraqis gathering in a plaza or an open space, and over the course of several hours, growing in size. Food vendors would show up, as well as spectators. Then someone would throw a rock and hell broke loose. The police prohibited the food vendors from entering the plaza and people gathered as usual. The crowd grew in size, but at dusk people started to get hungry and there were no kebab to be found nearby. The chanters became dispirited, and at 8pm everyone was gone.



Part one – The habits of individuals

Chapter 1: The habit loop – how habits work

Habits emerge because the brain is constantly looking for ways to save effort.

The habit loop: The process with our brain is a three-step loop. First, there is a cue, a trigger that tells your brain to go into automatic mode and which habit to use. Then there is the routine, which can be physical or mental or emotional. Finally, there is a reward, which helps your brain figure out if this particular loop is worth remembering for the future. Cue – routine – reward

Over time, this loop becomes more and more automatic. The cue and reward become intertwined until a powerful sense of anticipation and craving emerges. Eventually, a habit is born.

When a habit emerges, the brain stops fully participating in decision making. It stops working so hard, or diverts focus to other tasks. So unless you deliberately fight a habit – unless you find new routines – the pattern will unfold automatically.

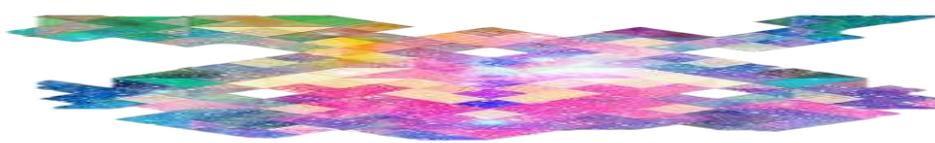
Habits never really disappear. They are encoded into the structures of our brain.

If we learn to create new neurological routines that overpower those behaviors – if we take control of the habit loop – we can force those bad tendencies into the background. And once someone creates a new pattern, studies have demonstrated, going for a jog or ignoring the doughnuts becomes as automatic as any other habit.

Habits, as much as memory and reason, are at the root of how we behave. We might not remember the experiences that create our habits, but once they are lodged within our brains the influence how we act – often without our realization.

Example: McDonalds and kids. When the kids are starving and you are driving home after a long day it makes sense to stop by McDonalds – it's inexpensive and taste good. One meal of processed food can't be that bad, right? But habits emerge without our permission. Studies indicate that families usually don't intend to eat fast food on a regular basis. What happens is that a once in a month pattern slowly becomes once in a week, and then twice a week.

As the cues and rewards creates a habit – until the kids are consuming an unhealthy amount of hamburgers and fries. There are a number of cues and rewards that most customers never knew were influencing their behavior – every McDonalds looks the same, the employees says the same things, so everything is a consistent cue to trigger eating routines.



The fries are designed to begin disintegrating the moment they hit your tongue, in order to deliver a hit of salt and grease as fast as possible, causing your pleasure centers to light up and your brain to lock in the pattern. Everything for the habit loop.

Chapter 2: The craving brain – how to create new habits

Craving is what makes cues and rewards work. The craving is what powers the habit loop.

1. Find a simple and obvious cue
2. Clearly define the rewards

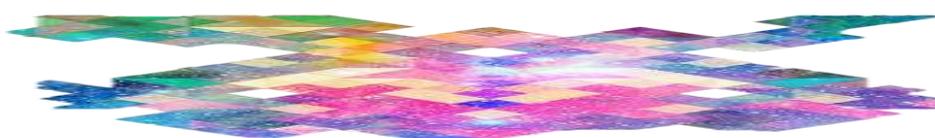
Habits create neurological cravings. As we associate cues with certain rewards, a subconscious craving emerges in our brain that starts the habit loop spinning.

How to create a new habit: put together a cue, a routine and a reward, and then cultivate a craving that drives the loop.

A cue and a reward on their own aren't enough for a new habit to last. Only when your brain starts expecting the reward – craving the endorphins or sense of accomplishment – will it become automatic to lace up your jogging shoes each morning. The cue, in addition to triggering a routine, must also trigger a craving for the reward to come.

Toothpaste example: Claude Hopkins wasn't selling beautiful teeth. He was selling a sensation. Once people craved that cool tingeling – once they equated it with cleanliness – brushing became a habit. While everyone brushes their teeth, fewer than 10% of Americans apply sunscreen every day. Why? Because there is no craving that has made sunscreen into a daily habit.

Craving is what drives habits. And figuring out how to spark a craving makes creating a new habit easier.



Chapter 3: The golden rule of habit change – why transformation occurs

You can never truly extinguish bad habits. Rather, to change a habit, you must keep the old cue, and deliver the old reward, but insert a new routine. That's the rule; if you use the same cue, and provide the same reward, you can shift the routine and change the habit. Almost any behavior can be transformed if the cue and reward stay the same.

Anonymous alcoholics

AA succeeds because it helps alcoholics use the same cues, and get the same reward, but it shift the routine. The program forces people to identify the cues and rewards that encourage their alcoholic habits, and then helps them find new behaviors. To change an old habit you must address an old craving. You have to keep the same cues and rewards as before, and feed the craving by inserting a new routine.

Often, intoxication itself doesn't make the list. Alcoholics crave a drink because it offers escape, relaxation, companionship, the blunting of anxieties, and an opportunity for emotional release. They might crave a cocktail to forget their worries. But they don't necessarily crave a cocktail to forget their worries. The physical effects of alcohol are often one of the least rewarding parts of drinking to addicts.

AA forces you to create new routines for what to do each night instead of drinking. AA: s methods have been refined into therapies that can be used to disrupt almost any pattern.

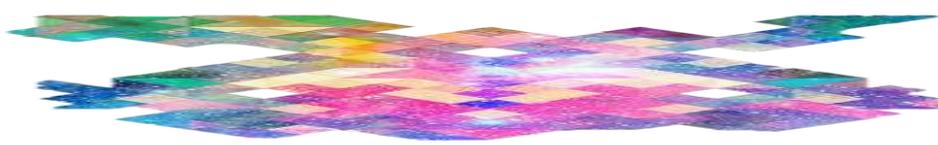
Often, we don't really understand the craving driving our behaviors until we look for them.

AA believing example: Those alcoholics that believed that some higher power had entered their lives were more likely to make it through the stressful periods with their sobriety intact. It wasn't god that mattered, it was the belief itself that made a difference. Once people learned how to believe in something, that skill started spilling over to other parts of their lives, until they started believing they could change. Belief was the ingredient that made a reworked habit loop into a permanent behavior.

Even if you give people better habits, it doesn't repair why they started drinking in the first place. Eventually they'll have a bad day, and no new routine is going to make everything seem ok. What can make a difference is believing that they can cope with that stress without alcohol.

AA trains in how to believe in something until they believe in the program and themselves.

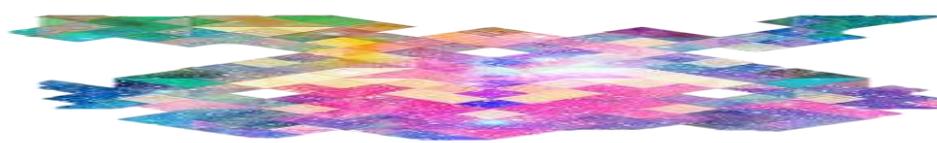
"If it worked for that guy, I guess it can work for me". There is something powerful about groups and shared experiences. People might be skeptical about their ability to change if they're by themselves, but a group will convince them to suspend disbelief. A community creates belief.



Change occurs among other people. When people join groups where change seems possible, the potential for that change to occur becomes more real. Belief is easier when it occurs within a community.

If we keep the same cue and the same reward, a new routine can be inserted. But that's not enough. 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.

Chapter conclusions: If you want to change a habit, you must find an alternative route, and your odds for success go up dramatically when you commit to changing as part of a group. Belief is essential, and it grows out of a communal experience, even if that community is only as large as two people.



Part two – The habits of successful organizations

Chapter 4: Keystone Habits – which habits matter most

Keystone Habits: Some habits have the power to start a chain reaction, changing other habits as they move through an organization. Some habits, in other words, matter more than others in remaking businesses and lives. These are Keystone Habits, and they can influence how people work, eat, play, live, spend, and communicate. Keystone habits start a process that, over time, transforms everything.

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 powerful levels.

The habits that matter the most are the ones that, when they start to shift, dislodge and remake other patterns.

Families who habitually eat dinner together seem to raise children with better homework skills, higher grades, greater motional skills, and more confidence.

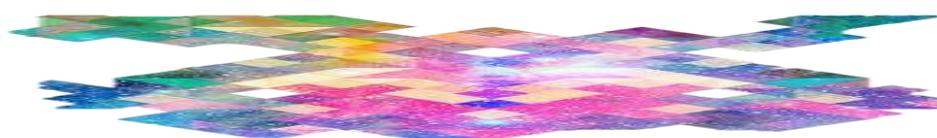
Detecting keystone habits means searching out certain characteristics. Keystone habits offer what is known within academic literature as "small wins". They help other habits to flourish by creating new structures, and they establish cultures where change becomes contagious.

Small wins are part of how keystone habits create widespread changes. Small wins are a steady application of a small advantage. Once a small win has been accomplished, forces are set in motion that favors another small win. Small wins fuel transformative changes by leveraging tiny advantages into patterns that convince people that bigger achievements are within reach.

Small wins: Small wins do not combine in a neat, linear, serial form, with each step being a demonstrable step closer to some predetermined goal. More common is the circumstance where small wins are scattered like miniature experiments that test implicit theories about resistance and opportunity and uncover both resources and barriers that were invisible before the situation was stirred up.

Keystone habits encourage change by creating structures that help other habits to flourish.

Keystone habits transform us by creating cultures that make clear the values that, in the heat of a difficult decision or a moment of uncertainty, we might otherwise forget.



Chapter 5: The habit of success – when willpower becomes automatic.

Willpower is the single most important keystone habit for individual success.

Willpower isn't just a skill. It is a muscle and it gets tired as it works harder, so there is less power left over for other things.

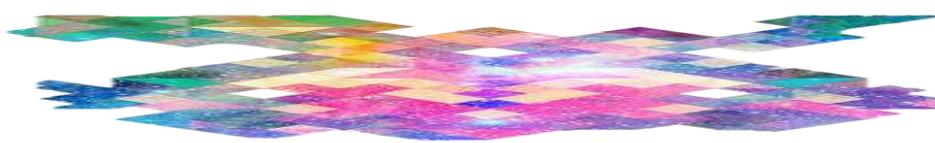
If you want to do something that requires willpower – like going for a run after work – you have to conserve your willpower muscle during the day. If you use it up too early on tedious tasks like writing emails or filling out boring forms, all the strength will be gone by the time you get home.

The willpower experiment: 29 people were signed up for a 4 months money management program. The participants were to deny themselves luxury's and asked to keep detailed logs of everything they bought. People finances improved as they progressed through the program, but there were also side effects. They smoked fewer cigarettes, drank less booze and coffee, ate less junk food and were more productive at work. As people strengthened their willpower muscles in one part of their lives, that strength spilled over into what they ate or how hard they worked. Once willpower became stronger, it touched everything.

This is why signing up kids for piano lessons or sports are so important. It has nothing to do with creating a good musician or a football star. When you learn to force yourself to practice for an hour or run fifteen laps, you start building self-regulatory strength.

How willpower becomes a habit: By choosing a certain behavior ahead of time, and then following that routine when an inflection point arrives.

When people are asked to do something that takes self-control, if they think they are doing it for personal reasons – if they feel like it's a choice or something they enjoy because it helps someone else – it's much less taxing. If they feel like they have no autonomy, if they're just following orders, their willpower muscles get tired much faster.



Chapter 6: The power of crisis – creating habits through accident and design

It may seem like most organizations make rational choices based on deliberate decision making, but that's not really how companies operate at all. Instead, firms are guided by long-held organizational habits, patterns that often emerge from thousands of employees independent decisions.

Routines reduce uncertainty. Routines provide the hundreds of unwritten rules that companies need to operate. They allow workers to experiment with new ideas without having to ask for permission at every step. They provide a kind of organizational memory, so that managers don't have to reinvent the sales process every six months or panic each time a VP quits. Routines reduce uncertainty.

Among the most important benefits of routines is that they create truces between potentially warring groups or individuals within an organization.

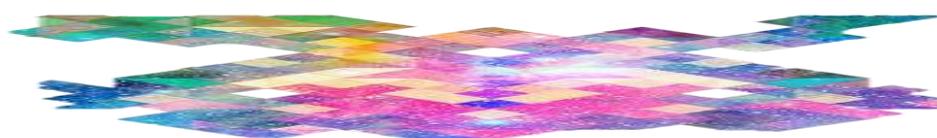
Companies aren't families. They are battlefields in a civil war.

Organizational habits offer a basic promise: if you follow the established patterns and abide by the truce, the rivalries won't destroy the company, the profit will roll in, and, eventually, everyone will be rich.

Truces are only durable when they create real justice. If a truce is unbalanced – if the peace isn't real – the routines often fail when they are needed the most.

Creating successful organizations isn't just a matter of balancing authority, for an organization to work, leaders must cultivate habits that both create a real and balanced peace and, paradoxically, make it absolutely clear who's in charge.

A company with dysfunctional habits can't turn around simply because a leader orders it. Rather, wise executives seek out moments of crisis – or create the perception of crisis – and cultivate the sense that something must change, until everyone is finally ready to overhaul the patterns they live with each day.



Chapter 7: When companies predict and manipulate habits

The first things you see upon entering the grocery store are the fruits and vegetables arranged in attractive, bountiful piles. If we start our shopping sprees by loading up on healthy stuff, we're much more likely to buy Doritos or frozen pizza when we encounter them later on.

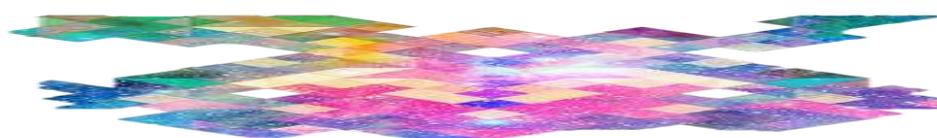
Peoples buying habits are more likely to change when they go through a major life event. When someone gets married, for example, they are more likely to start buying a new type of coffee.

Sticky songs are what you expect to hear on radio. Your brain secretly wants that song, because it's so familiar o everything else you've already heard and liked. It just sounds right.

The areas in the brain that process music are designed to seek out patterns and look for familiarity. Our brains crave familiar music because familiarity is how we manage to hear without becoming distracted by all the sound. That's why songs that sound familiar – even if you've never heard them before – are sticky. Our brains are designed to prefer auditory patterns that seem similar to what we've already heard. When Celine Dion releases a new song and it sounds the same as her previous songs, our brains unconsciously crave its recognizability and the song becomes sticky.

We react to the cues (this sounds like all the other songs I've ever liked) and rewards (its fun to hum along) and without thinking, we either start singing, or reach over and change station.

If you dress a new something in old habits, it's easier for the public to accept it.



Part three – The habits of societies

Chapter 8: How movements happen

Social habits: the behaviors that occur, unthinkingly, across dozens or hundreds or thousands of people which are often hard to see as they emerge, but which contain power that can change the world. Social habits are what fill streets with protesters who may not know one another, who might be marching for different reasons, but who are all moving in the same direction. Social habits are why some initiatives become world changing movements, while others fail to ignite.

At the root of many movements is a 3 part process that historians and sociologists say show up again and again:

1. A movement starts because of the social habits of friendship and the strong ties between close acquaintances.
2. It grows because of the habits of a community, and the weak ties that hold neighborhoods and clans together.
3. And it endures because a movement's leader gives participants new habits that create a fresh sense of identity and a feeling of ownership.

Only when all three part of this process are fulfilled can a movement become self-propelling and reach a critical mass.

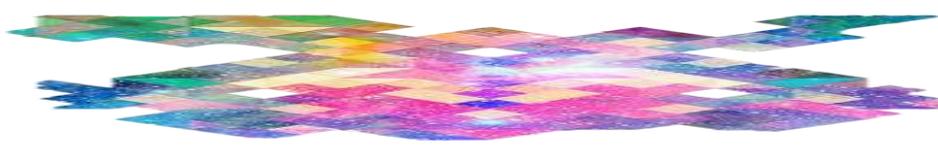
Our deepest relationships tend to be with people who look like us, earn about the same amount of money, and come from a similar background.

There's a natural instinct embedded in friendship, a sympathy that makes us willing to fight for someone we like when they are treated unjustly. Studies show that people have no problem ignoring stranger's injuries, but when a friend is insulted, our sense of outrage is enough to overcome the inertia that usually makes protests hard to organize.

The power of weak ties: represents the links that connect people who have acquaintances in common, who share membership in social networks, but aren't directly connected by the strong ties of friendship themselves. Weak-tie acquaintances are often more important than strong-tie friends because weak ties give us access to social networks where we don't otherwise belong.

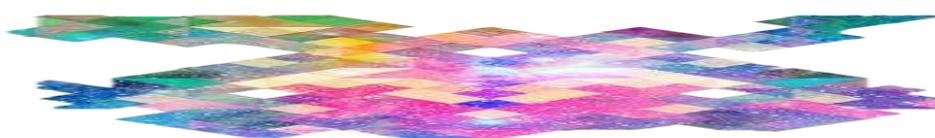
The habits of peer pressure: the social habits that encourage people to conform to group expectations. The habits of peer pressure often spread through weak ties, and they gain their authority through communal expectations.

When the strong ties of friendship and the weak ties of peer pressure merge, widespread social change can begin.



For an idea to grow beyond a community, it must become self-propelling. And the surest way to achieve that is to give people new habits that help the figure out where to go on their own.

Movements don't emerge because everyone suddenly decides to face the same direction at once. They rely on social patterns that begin as the habit of friendship, grow through the habits of communities, and are sustained by new habits that change participant's sense of self.

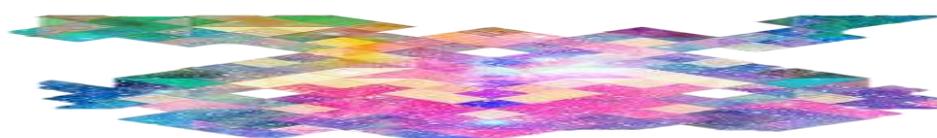


Chapter 9: The neurology of free will – are we responsible for our habits?

The Switch: As our bodies move in and out of different phases of rest, our most primitive neurological structure – the brain stem – paralyzes our limbs and nervous system, allowing our brains to experience dreams without our bodies moving.

To pathological gamblers, near misses looked like wins. Their brains reacted almost the same way. But to a non-pathological gambler, a near miss was like a loss. Real neurological differences impact how pathological gamblers process information. Adding a near miss to a lottery is like pouring jet fuel on a fire. And every scratch off ticket is designed to make you feel like you almost won.

Once you understand that habits can change, you have the freedom – and the responsibility – to remake them. If you believe you can change – if you make it a habit – the change becomes real. This is the real power of habit: the insight that your habit is what you choose them to be. Once that choice occurs – and becomes automatic – it's not only real, it starts to seem inevitable.



Appendix

The framework:

1. Identify the routine
2. Experiment with rewards
3. Isolate the cue
4. Have a plan

Rewards are powerful because they satisfy cravings. But we're often not conscious of the cravings that drive our behaviors.

Test different hypotheses: What you choose to do instead of buying a cookie isn't important. The point is to test different hypotheses to determine which craving is driving your routine. As you test 4 or 5 different rewards, you can use an old trick to look for patterns: after each activity, jot down on a piece of paper the first three things that come to mind when you get back to your desk. They can be emotions, random thoughts, reflections on how you're feeling, or just the first three words that pop up into your head.

By experimenting with different rewards, you can isolate what you are actually craving, which is essential in redesigning the habit.

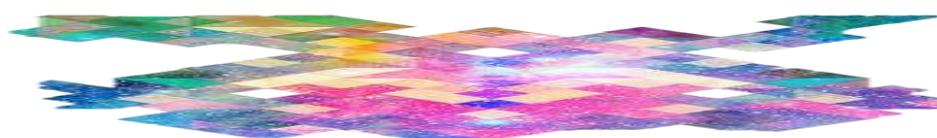
The reason why it is so hard to identify the cues that trigger our habits is because there is too much information bombarding us as our behaviors unfold.

Experiments have shown that almost all habitual cues fit into one of five categories:

- Location
- Time
- Emotional state
- Other people
- Immediately preceding action

Once you've figured out your habit loop – you have identified the reward driving your behavior, the cue triggering it, and the routine itself – you can begin to shift the behavior. You can change to a better routine by planning for the cue and choosing a behavior that delivers the reward you are craving. What you need is a plan.

A habit is a formula our brain automatically follows: when I see CUE, I will do ROUTINE in order to get REWARD.



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