

4 Laws of Behavior Change (and 9 Strategies) to Help Build Better Habits

Based on the book *Atomic Habits* by James Clear

THE HABIT I WANT TO WORK ON IS: _____

STEP 1: Make it obvious – the 1st law of behavior change.

Research shows that all habits have a *cue* that triggers your brain to begin a behavior. In this step, the goal is for you to choose an obvious cue that will help you reliably *start* your habit. Below are two strategies to choose a cue. *Pick one* to use:

- **Create an intention with HABIT STACKING.** To do this, you attach a new behavior to an existing one. The formula is: After [CURRENT HABIT], I will [NEW HABIT]. Ex: “After I turn on my computer, I will map out my day before I jump into work.”
- **Set up the environment for good habits.** Give yourself visual cues to remind you to do your habit. For example, to drink more water, leave water bottles around you home and office. To run in the morning, set out your running clothes the night before (my husband puts his in the bathroom so he can’t say to himself, “I don’t want to wake Jenn so I’ll skip my run this morning.”)

HOW WILL YOU MAKE YOUR CUE FOR YOUR NEW HABIT OBVIOUS? _____

STEP 2: Make it attractive – the 2nd law of behavior change.

Making your new habit attractive is about creating a *craving* that supplies the motivation to get you to do it! Below are 2 strategies from the book to make it attractive – *choose one*.

- **Use TEMPTATION BUNDLING.** This is similar to HABIT STACKING. With this technique, you take something you crave (like checking Twitter or drinking a cup of coffee) and you promise it to yourself after you do the new habit. The formula is: After [HABIT I NEED], I will [HABIT I WANT]. For example, “After I write the agenda for my staff meeting, I will get a cup of coffee.”
- **Join a culture where the desired habit is the norm.** If you want to play more music, join a band. If you want to do yoga, join a class. If you want ongoing professional learning in your life, join Jenn & Mitch’s Mastermind;)

HOW WILL YOU MAKE YOUR NEW HABIT ATTRACTIVE? _____

STEP 3: Make it easy – the 3rd law of behavior change.

We tend to think that *motivation* is the key to habit change, but humans are wired to conserve energy. We prefer the easier path. So, what can we do to make a habit *easy* to do? Below are two techniques – pick one to try for your new habit!

- **Prime the environment to make your habits easier.** In step one, you used the environment to create a cue to *start* your behavior. Here, the idea is to shape the environment to make it easier to *complete* the habit by adding or removing friction.
 - To improve your diet: Chop and store a ton of fruits and vegetables in containers in your fridge.
 - To decrease your TV watching: Unplug it after each use. To make it worse – take out the batteries from the remote as well.
 - To improve work efficiency: Put your phone in another room when you work.

- **Use the TWO-MINUTE RULE to start your habits on a small scale.** It’s hard to start a habit of doing 100 push-ups daily, but you can *start small* by doing just a few each day (get it, *atomic* habits...) Almost any habit can be broken down. Try this with yours:

Very Easy	Easy	Moderate	Hard	Very Hard
Write 1 sentence	Write 1 paragraph	Write 1,000 words	Write a 5,000-word article	Write a book

HOW WILL YOU MAKE YOUR NEW HABIT EASIER? _____

STEP 4: Make it satisfying – the 4th law of behavior change.

Humans are primed for immediate satisfaction. However, the rewards of good habits (like healthy eating) often take a long time to produce results. It will help if you can get an *immediate* reward from doing your habit. Choose one of these strategies for your habit:

- **Reward yourself for the habit *immediately*.** Find ways to give yourself immediate satisfaction. Want to develop a 30-second hand washing habit to stay safe? Consider buying nice smelling, extra foamy soap so the experience is pleasurable. Want an immediate reward for skipping happy hour or dessert? Set aside a jar and put money in to save for a special leather jacket each time you skip.
- **Use a HABIT TRACKER and don’t break the chain!** With this technique you record your progress with habits on a calendar or a chart. You just need a chart (can be an app, a computer document, or a piece of paper) and check off each day you do the habit.
- **Create a negative consequence: Get an accountability partner and set up a HABIT CONTRACT.** Why do we pay our bills on time? To avoid the negative consequence of a late fee. You can create a contract with an accountability partner and promise a negative consequence – like wearing an opposing team jersey or paying a sum of money – if you do not complete your habit regularly.

HOW WILL YOU MAKE YOUR NEW HABIT SATISFYING? _____