



# Atomic Habits Quotes

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A habit is a routine or behavior that is performed regularly - and in many cases, automatically.

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The entrepreneur and investor Naval Ravikant has said, "To write a great book, you must first become the book."

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The aggregation of marginal gains - the philosophy of searching for a tiny margin of improvement in everything you do.

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If you can get just 1 percent better each day, you'll end up with results that are nearly 37 times better after one year.

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When we repeat 1 percent errors, day after day, by replicating poor decisions, duplicating tiny mistakes and rationalizing little excuses, our small choices compound into toxic results.

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Your outcomes are a lagging measure of your habits.

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Time magnifies the margin between success and failure. It will multiply whatever you feed it.

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Change can take years before it happens all at once.

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Forget about goals, focus on systems instead.  
Goals are about the results you want to achieve. Systems are about the processes that lead to those results.

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Achieving a goal only changes your life for the moment. That's the counterintuitive thing about improvement.

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True long-term thinking is goal-less thinking.

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You fall to the level of your systems.

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There are three layers of behavior change: a change in your outcomes, a change in your processes, or a change in your identity.

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There are a set of beliefs and assumptions that shape the system, an identity behind the habits.

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The ultimate form of intrinsic motivation is when a habit becomes part of your identity.

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When working for you, identity change can be a powerful force for self-improvement. When working against you, identity change can be a curse.

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The more you repeat a behavior, the more you reinforce the identity associated with that behavior.

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The most practical way to change who you are is to change what you do.

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Decide the type of person you want to be.  
Prove it to yourself with small wins.

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This is the feedback loop behind all human behavior: try, fail, learn, try differently.

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The process of building a habit can be divided into four simple steps: cue, craving, response, and reward.

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Every craving is linked to a desire to change your internal state.

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Rewards are the end goal of every habit.

Cue - notice the reward

Craving - want the reward

Response - obtaining the reward

Rewards satisfy and teach us.

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All behavior is driven by the desire to solve a problem.

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The human brain is a prediction machine.

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You don't need to be aware of the cue for a habit to begin. This is what makes habits useful.

It's also what makes them dangerous.

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If a habit remains mindless, you can't expect to improve it.

"Until you make the unconscious conscious, it will direct your life and you will call it fate."

Carl Jung

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Pointing-and-calling is so effective because it raises the level of awareness from a nonconscious habit to a more conscious level.

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There are no good or bad habits. There are only effective habits.

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Habits that reinforce your desired identity are usually good. Habits that conflict with your desired identity are usually bad.

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Don't blame yourself for your faults. Don't praise yourself for your successes.

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Implementation intention - a plan you make beforehand about when and where to act, how you intend to implement a particular habit.

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Two of the most common cues are time and location. Implementation intentions leverage both of these cues.

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Many people think they lack motivation when what they really lack is clarity.

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Being specific about what you want and how you will achieve it helps you say no to things that derail progress.

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No behavior happens in isolation. Each action becomes a cue that triggers the next behavior.

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Consider when you are most likely to be successful. DON't ask yourself to do a habit when you're likely to be occupied with something else.

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The 1st Law of Behavior Change is to make it obvious.

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People often choose products not because of what they are, but because of where they are.

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The most powerful of all human sensory abilities, however, is vision.  
Creating obvious visual cues can draw your attention toward a desired habit.

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Most people live in a world that others have created for them.  
Environmental design allows you to take back control and become the architect of your life.

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Our behavior is not defined by the objects in the environment but by our relationship to them.

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It is easier to associate a new habit with a new context than to build a new habit in the face of competing cues.

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Disciplined people are better at structuring their lives in a way that does not require heroic willpower and self-control.  
They spend less time in tempting situations.

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The people with the best self-control are typically the ones who need to use it the least.

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You can break a habit, but you're unlikely to forget it.

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An inversion of the 1st Law of Behavior Change - Rather than make it obvious, you can make it invisible.

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The 2nd Law of Behavior Change - Make it attractive

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We have the brains of our ancestors but temptations they never had to face.

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The ability to experience pleasure remained, but without dopamine, desire died. And without desire action stopped.

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Every behavior that is habit-forming... is associated with higher levels of dopamine.

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Dopamine is released not only when you experience pleasure, but also when you anticipate it.

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The reward system that is activated in the brain when you receive a reward is the same system that is activated when you anticipate a reward.

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Your brain has more neural circuitry allocated for wanting rewards than for liking them.

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Desire is the engine that drives behavior.

It is the expectation of a rewarding experience that motivates us to act in the first place.

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Temptation bundling works by linking an action you want to do with an action you need to do.

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More probable behaviors will reinforce less probable behaviors.

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Doing the thing you need to do means you get to do the thing you want to do.

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A genius is not born, but is educated and trained.

Laszlo Polgar

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Humans are herd animals. We want to fit in, to bond with others, and to earn the respect and approval of our peers.

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In the long history of humankind, those who learned to collaborate and improvise most effectively have prevailed.

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We imitate the habits of three groups in particular:

The close

The many

The powerful

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The closer we are to someone, the more likely we are to imitate some of their habits.

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Join a culture where your desired behavior is the normal behavior. New habits seem achievable when you see others doing them every day.

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Nothing sustains motivation better than belonging to the tribe.  
The shared identity begins to reinforce your personal identity.

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It's friendship and community that embed a new identity and help behaviors last over the long run.

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Whenever we are unsure how to act, we look to the group to guide our behavior.  
It's usually a smart strategy. There is evidence in numbers.

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The reward of being accepted is often greater than the reward of winning an argument, looking smart, or finding truth. Most days, we'd rather be wrong with the crowd than be right by ourselves.

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When changing your habits means fitting in with the tribe, change is very attractive.

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We want to be acknowledged, recognized, and praised. This tendency can seem vain, but overall, it's a smart move.

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Once we fit in, we start looking for ways to stand out.

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High-status people enjoy the approval, respect, and praise of others. And that means if a behavior can get us approval, respect, and praise, we find it attractive.

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On Quitting Smoking - You are losing nothing and you are making marvelous positive gains not only in health, energy and money but also in confidence, self-respect, freedom and, most important of all, in the length and quality of your future life.

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A craving is just a specific manifestation of a deeper underlying motive. At a deep level, you simply want to reduce uncertainty and relieve anxiety, to win social acceptance and approval, or to achieve status.

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Your habits are modern-day solutions to ancient desires.

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Once you associate a solution with the problem you need to solve, you keep coming back to it.

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Life feels reactive, but it is actually predictive.  
You are endlessly predicting what will happen in the next moment.

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Our behavior is heavily dependent on how we interpret the events that happen to us.  
The cause of your habits is actually the prediction that precedes them.

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It is only when you predict that you would be better off in a different state that you take action.

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Desire is the difference between where you are now and where you want to be in the future.

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You can make hard habits more attractive if you can learn to associate them with a positive experience.

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You don't "have" to. You "get" to.

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We can find evidence for whatever mind-set we choose.

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Reframing habits to highlight their benefits rather than their drawbacks is a fast way to reprogram your mind.

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It is easy to get bogged down trying to find the optimal plan for change.  
We are so focused on figuring out the best approach that we never get around to taking action.

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The best is the enemy of the good.

Voltaire

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The biggest reason why you slip into motion rather than taking action: you want to delay failure.

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When preparation becomes a form of procrastination, you need to change something.  
You don't want to be planning. You want to be practicing.

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Start with repetition, not perfection.

You just need to get your reps in.

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Like the muscles of the body responding to regular weight training, particular regions of the brain adapt as they are used and atrophy as they are abandoned.

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An important truth about behavior change: habits form based on frequency, not time.

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Our real motivation is to be lazy and to do what is convenient.  
This is a smart strategy, not a dumb one.

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Energy is precious, and the brain is wired to conserve it whenever possible.

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You don't actually want the habit itself. What you really want is the outcome the habit delivers. This is why it is crucial to make your habits so easy that you'll do them even when you don't feel like it.

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The idea is to make it as easy as possible in the moment to do things that payoff in the long run.

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One of the most effective ways to reduce the friction associated with your habits is to practice environment design.

Habits are easier to build when they fit into the flow of your life.

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When we remove the points of friction that sap our time and energy, we can achieve more with less effort.

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The most habit-forming products remove little bits of friction from your life.

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Business is a never-ending quest to deliver the same result in an easier fashion.

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Reduce the friction associated with our good habits and increase the friction associated with our bad ones.

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Prime your environment so it's ready for immediate use.

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The greater the friction, the less likely the habit.

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A habit can be completed in just a few seconds, but it can also shape the actions that you take for minutes or hours afterward.

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Decisive moments set the options available to your future self.

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Habits are the entry point, not the end point.  
Any habit can be scaled down into a two-minute version.

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Make your habits as easy as possible to start.  
A new habit should not feel like a challenge.

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You have to standardize before you can optimize.

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Reinforce the identity you want to build.

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A commitment device is a choice you make in the p[resent that controls your actions in the future.

A Ulysses Pact - locking your future actions while your mind is in the right place

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The best way to break a bad habit is to make it impractical to do. Increase the friction until you don't even have the option to act.

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Each habit that we hand over to the authority of technology frees up time and energy to pour into the next stage of growth.

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The average person spends over two hours per day on social media. What could you do with an extra six hundred hours per year?

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We are more likely to repeat the behavior when the experience is satisfying. This is entirely logical.

Pleasure teaches your brain that a behavior is worth remembering and repeating.

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What is rewarded is repeated.

What is punished is avoided.

Positive emotions cultivate habits.

Negative emotions destroy them.

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You are walking around with the same hardware as your Paleolithic ancestors.

Compared to the age of the brain, modern society is brand-new.

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The world has changed much in recent years, but human nature has changed little.

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You value the present more than the future.

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The cost of your good habits are in the present.  
The cost of your bad habits are in the future.

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At some point, success in nearly every field requires you to ignore an immediate reward in favor of a delayed reward.

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The ending of any experience is vital because we tend to remember it more than other phases.  
You want the ending of your habit to be satisfying.

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Reward yourself with free time, which aligns with your ultimate goal of more freedom and financial independence.

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Incentives can start a habit.  
Identity sustains a habit.

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Making progress is satisfying, and visual measures provide clear evidence of your progress.

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"Don't break the chain" is a powerful mantra.

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Most of us have a distorted view of our own behavior. We think we act better than we do.  
Measurement offers one way to overcome our blindness to our own behavior and notice what's really going on each day.

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The most effective form of motivation is progress.  
Tracking can become its own form of reward.

200

No matter how consistent you are with your habits, it is inevitable that life will interrupt you at some point.  
Perfection is not possible.

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Never miss twice.

As soon as one streak ends, get started on the next one.

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The first mistake is never the one that ruins you. It is the spiral of repeated mistakes that follows.  
Missing once is an accident. Missing twice is the start of a new habit.

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The problem is not slipping up; the problem is thinking that if you can't do something perfectly,  
then you shouldn't do it at all.

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Avoiding a 33% loss is just as valuable as achieving a 50% gain.

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The human mind wants to "win" whatever game is being played.

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We optimize for what we measure.

""When a measure becomes a target, it ceases to be a good measure.""

Charles Goodhart

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Just as we are more likely to repeat an experience when the ending is satisfying, we are also  
more likely to avoid an experience when the ending is painful.

Pain is an effective teacher.

206

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If a failure is relatively painless, it gets ignored.  
When consequences are severe, people learn quickly.

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To be productive, the cost of procrastination must be greater than the cost of action.

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The Habit Contract

A verbal or written agreement in which you state your commitment to a particular habit and the  
punishment that will occur if you don't follow through.

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The secret to maximizing your odds of success is to choose the right field of competition. Embracing this strategy requires the acceptance of the simple truth that people are born with different abilities.

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Our environment determines the suitability of our genes and the utility of our natural talents. When our environment changes, so do the qualities that determine success.

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Competence is highly dependent on context.

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Genes do not determine your destiny.  
They determine your areas of opportunity.

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The key is to direct your effort toward areas that both excite you and match your natural skills, to align your ambition with your ability.

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It is now at the point where we have stopped testing to see if traits have a genetic component because we literally can't find a single one that isn't influenced by our genes.

Robert Plomin - King's College behavioral geneticist

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Big Five Traits:  
Openness to experience  
Conscientiousness  
Extroversion  
Agreeableness  
Neuroticism

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You don't have to build the habits everyone tells you to build. Choose the habit that best suits you, not the one that is most popular.

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In theory, you can enjoy almost anything. In practice, you are more likely to enjoy the things that come easily to you.

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Pick the right habit and progress is easy.  
Pick the wrong habit and life is a struggle.

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The Explore/Exploit Tradeoff

If you are currently winning, you exploit, exploit, exploit.  
If you are currently losing, you explore, explore, explore.

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What feels like fun to you, but work to others?

The work that hurts you less than it hurts others is the work you were made to do.

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What makes you lose track of time?

It is nearly impossible to experience a flow state and not find the task satisfying at least to some degree.

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Where do you get greater returns than the average person?

A behavior is more likely to be satisfying when the comparison is in our favor.

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What comes naturally to you?

Wherever you feel authentic and genuine, you are headed in the right direction.

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When you can't win by being better, you can win by being different.

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A good player works hard to win the game everyone else is playing.

A great player creates a new game that favors their strengths and avoids their weaknesses.

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The more you master a specific skill, the harder it becomes for others to compete with you.

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Until you work as hard as those you admire, don't explain away their success as luck.

Work hard on the things that come easy.

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The brain loves a challenge, but only if it is within an optimal zone of difficulty.

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The Goldilocks Rule

Humans experience peak motivation when working on tasks that are right on the edge of their current abilities.

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Behaviors need to remain novel in order for them to stay attractive and satisfying. Without variety, we get bored.

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Boredom is perhaps the greatest villain on the quest of self-improvement.

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Really successful people feel the same lack of motivation as everyone else. The difference is that they still find a way to show up despite the feelings of boredom.

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Men desire novelty to such an extent that those who are doing well wish for a change as much as those who are doing badly.

Machiavelli

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No habit will stay interesting forever.  
You have to fall in love with boredom.

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If you only do the work when it's convenient or exciting, then you'll never be consistent enough to achieve remarkable results.

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Professionals stick to the schedule; amateurs let life get in the way.

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When a habit is truly important to you, you have to be willing to stick to it in any mood.

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The only way to become excellent is to be endlessly fascinated by doing the same thing over and over.

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In chess, it is only after the basic movement of the pieces have become automatic that a player can focus on the next level of the game.

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Habits are necessary, but not sufficient for mastery. What you need is a combination of automatic habits and deliberate practice.

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Mastery is the process of narrowing your focus to a tiny element of success, repeating it until you have internalized the skill, and then using this new habit as the foundation to advance to the next frontier of your development.

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Each habit unlocks the next level of performance. It's an endless cycle.

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Sustaining an effort is the most important thing for any enterprise. The way to be successful is to learn how to do things right, then do them the same way every time.

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Without reflection, we have no process for determining whether we are performing better or worse compared to yesterday.

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Reflection and review offers an ideal time to revisit one of the most important aspects of behavior change: identity.

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The more sacred an idea is to us, the more deeply it is tied to our identity, the more strongly we will defend it against criticism.

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The more you let a single belief define you, the less capable you are of adapting when life challenges you.

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Whoever is stiff and inflexible  
is a disciple of death.  
Whoever is soft and yielding  
Is a disciple of life.  
The hard and stiff will be broken.  
The soft and supple will prevail.  
Lao Tzu

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Habits deliver numerous benefits, but the downside is that they can lock us into our previous patterns of thinking and acting—even when the world is shifting around us.

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A lack of self-awareness is poison. Reflection and review is the antidote.

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### The Sorites Paradox

The effect one small action can have when repeated enough times.

"Can one coin make a person rich?"

251

The holy grail of habit change is not a single 1 percent improvement, but a thousand of them.

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Success is not a goal to reach or a finish line to cross. It is a system to improve, an endless process to refine.

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The secret to getting results that last is to never stop making improvements.

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"Small habits don't add up.  
They compound."

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"Awareness comes before desire.  
A craving is created when you assign meaning to a cue."

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"Happiness is simply the absence of desire.  
Happiness is not about the achievement of pleasure, but the lack of desire."

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"It is the idea of pleasure that we chase.  
At the time of action, we do not know what it will be like to attain that."

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"Peace occurs when you don't turn your observations into problems.  
If you do not desire to act on what you observe, then you are at peace."

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With a big enough why you can overcome any how.  
"He who has a why to live for can bear almost any how."  
Friedrich Nietzsche

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"Being curious is better than being smart.  
Because it leads to action, it is desire, not intelligence, that prompts behavior."

261

"Emotions drive behavior.  
The feeling comes first, and then the behavior."

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"We can only be rational and logical after we have been emotional.  
The primary mode of the brain is to feel; the secondary mode is to think."

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"Your response tends to follow your emotions.  
Our thoughts and actions are rooted in what we find attractive, not necessarily in what is  
logical."

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"Suffering drives progress.  
With craving, we are dissatisfied but driven. Without craving, we are satisfied but lack ambition."

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"Your actions reveal how badly you want something.  
Your actions reveal your true motivations."

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"Reward is on the other side of sacrifice.  
Response (sacrifice of energy) always precedes the reward (the collection of resources)."

262

"Self-control is difficult because it is not satisfying.  
Self-control requires you to release a desire rather than satisfy it."

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"Our expectations determine our satisfaction.  
The gap between our cravings and our rewards determines how satisfied we feel after taking  
action."

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Happiness is relative.

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"The pain of failure correlates to the height of expectation.  
Failing to attain something you want hurts more than failing to attain something you didn't think  
much about in the first place."

263

"Feelings come both before and after the behavior.  
How we feel influences how we act, and how we act influences how we feel."

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"Desire initiates. Pleasure sustains.  
Desire and craving are what initiate a behavior.  
Pleasure and satisfaction are what sustain a behavior."

264

"Hope declines with experience and is replaced by acceptance.  
In the beginning, hope is all you have."