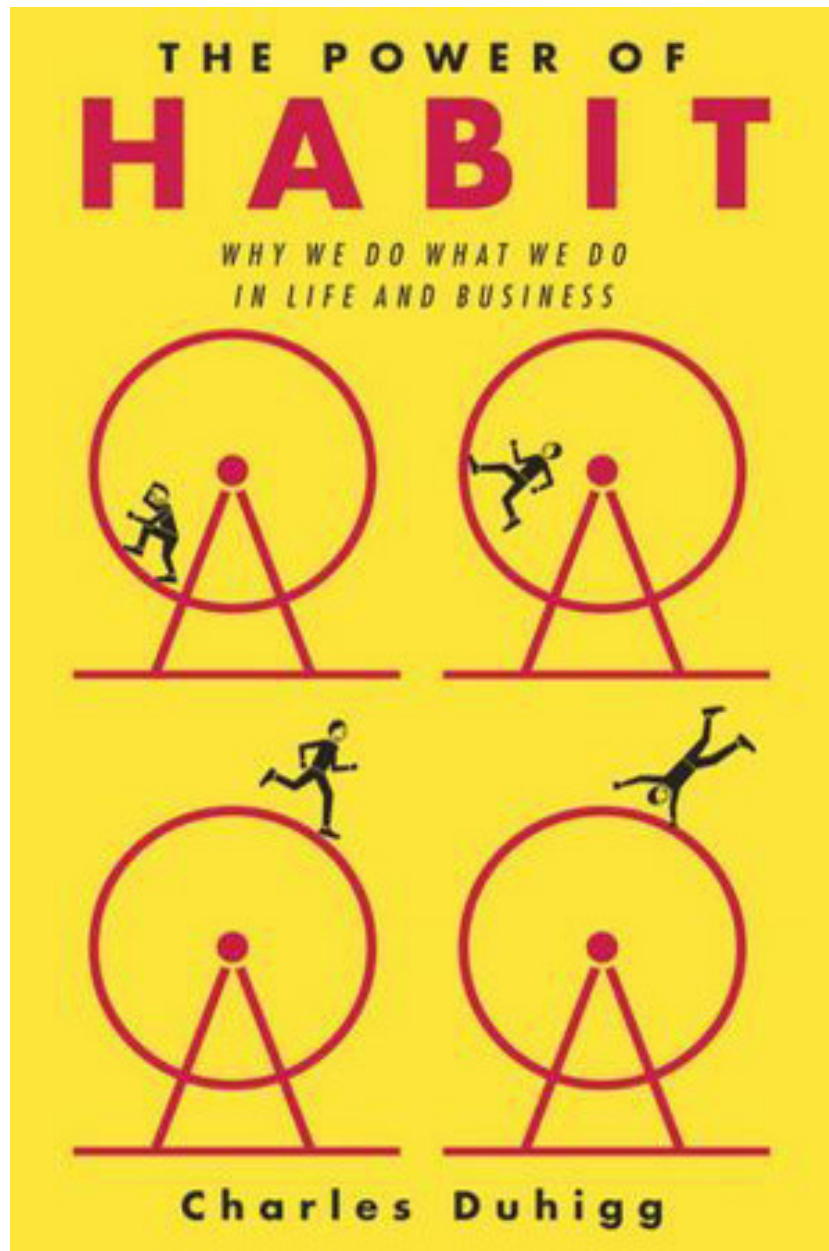


The Power of Habit: Why We Do What We Do in Life and Business Book PDF Download



By:
Charles Duhigg

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I just read Kelly McGonigal's "The Willpower Instinct", so I can't help but compare the two.

Duhigg is an investigative reporter for the NY Times, while McGonigal is a research psychologist, and the differences come across in the writing. McGonigal has a much better grasp on the research and how to apply it, while Duhigg brings in stories that are entertaining but stretch his powers of interpretation. His most annoying stylistic problem is that he breaks his stories up, stopping one to start another.

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I did enjoy many of his stories though. The most interesting was in the section about social habits where he explains why the arrest of Rosa Parks was so influential while other black women at the same time had also refused to give up their seats but didn't spark much interest (Parks had social ties across dozens of groups, black and white, and knew some people of influence). The entire story of how Martin Luther King, Jr. became involved, and all the people who got the bus boycott rolling is so fascinating to hear in detail.

Robert Chapman

This is great book, and you need to read it. How is that for a definitive opening line? The reason it's such a good book is because it uses research to explain how habits are formed and changed. Everyone knows someone who was out of shape, or was a smoker, and then in what appeared as if almost overnight, changed themselves in a short period of time. How did they do that? They formed new habits and changed old ones, that's how.

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Do something enough and it becomes a habit, good or bad. This is explained in the book by research on memory loss. For example, the research found that patients suffering from memory loss could not show someone where the kitchen is when asked, but once they got hungry they would get up and go to the kitchen automatically.

This is made possible by the habit loop of cue, routine, and reward. The cue makes the brain find the routine as it anticipates the reward. A classic example is stress and smoking, the cue is stress, the routine is smoking, the reward is the feeling the cigarette brings.

I was most interested in how the book described changing a habit. Let's face it, we all have habits we want to change. To accomplish this we need to keep the cue and reward, but change the routine. I'll use an example from my own life to illustrate. I love chocolate, and to make it worse I love to eat it at night. Well I love to eat at night because that is how I formed the habit some time ago. I used the guidance from this book to change that habit. I kept the cue and reward, but I changed the routine to use apples instead of chocolate.

This logic flows into much larger problem sets such as organizations and communities. Focus on changing one thing, the keystone habit from which a cascade of other habits will form. The author illustrates this example by discussing how the company Alcoa was transformed by the keystone habit of a singular focus on safety.

The book flows really well and uses research throughout to substantiate the concepts presented. The audience who can benefit from this book is vast, from individuals to corporations to governments.

K

Read this because of fascinating NYT magazine excerpt on how Target tracks our buying habits. The rest of the book is not as compelling -- anecdotes sometimes don't support particular arguments he's attempting to illustrate (the Hey-Ya examples being the most egregious), and his section on how social movements occur is weak and unconvincing, and not really about habits, per se. Style and structure were often clunky, and the book seems a bit muddled as its ultimate purpose. I dunno, I guess I was

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Anyway, lessons I'll take away --

- *making your bed every morning and committing to regular exercise are two habits that can transform your entire goddamn life

- *Diagram about mouse brain activity spike post-reward eventually arriving prior to reward (the origin of cravings)

- *Changing habits requires identifying the cues and rewards that trigger and support the habit behavior, then trying out various substitutes for the behavior that might achieve the same reward

- *deliberate advance plans for responding to challenging situations can be extremely helpful (ex Scottish knee/hip replacement patients, Michael Phelps, Starbucks)

- *With more challenging habits like alcoholism or stuff related to football, true belief and submission to some higher purpose is necessary

- *in general, it's more effective to change others' habits if you make them believe they have some power or authority over their decision than if you coerce them with force

- *casinos are super evil

Rhianna

This may be a crappy review since its going up via iPhone. Sorry.

First caveat: I work in research. A big part of my job is creating these habit loops and seeing if they can be altered or enhanced via medication.

Second caveat: I'm a nerd and love journal articles, scientific writing, and technical reading, even off the job.

Third caveat: I only got to chapter eight.

I honestly don't know what I was expecting. By far and large, when there's big buzz about a book I inevitably dislike it with very

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I honestly don't know what I was expecting. By far and large, when there's big buzz about a book I inevitably dislike it with very few exceptions. I was hoping for something smart and eye opening; a different, more personal take on habits and addiction (which is really what a habit is if you think about it), and I was let down mostly by the writing and anecdotes. I realize this book isn't intended for scientific review, but when there were so many teasing moments of talking about the research going on, I guess I just expected a little more substance in laymans terms.

Riku Sayuj

Hey. Have you heard of Thomas Baker? How about Carol Wright? Chris Cameron? Vineet Shaw? Let us discuss Baker.

Thomas Baker was an average joe, but not without ambitions. A few years ago, acting on a tip, Tom, a competitive enough guy, decided to take his life into his own hands. What's more, he

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Tom read the book with great diligence. He made notes and he made placards and he even bought magnets for his fridge and special sticky tapes for his mirrors. He knew this could work. He only had to believe.

He changed his routines, identified and included habit-forming cues. He created them, he played around with them, he even had some fun. He was very inventive and imaginative. The author would have commended the effort if he knew. Tom decided that he would write to Duhigg about his success once it pays off.

Tom had made slight improvements but no major pay-off seemed to be in the offing. He chided himself for expecting windfalls. He reminded himself that these things take time. He kept at it.

Even the minor gains he had made originally have fallen by the wayside now. He had read the book thrice in this time, trying to reaffirm his faith. He was discouraged now but he kept at it.

The book is long forgotten. But Tom had taken the trouble to document his experiences and had sent a detailed case study to the author. He had requested that it be included in the next edition of the book. He wanted the author to include a chapter on failures - on how it might not work for everyone. He wanted a caveat, a mild statement of warning that just because a book worth of case studies of success is presented, there is no reason to expect that any approach (no matter how good) might work for everyone. Humans would be fulfilling Asimov-esque dreams if that were the case. He thought this would add depth and realism to an otherwise fine book.

He did not even get an auto-generated acknowledgment slip. But that was ok, he had discovered a new Gladwell book on another airport aisle. Apparently, it is not just habits that doesn't stick, lessons don't either.