

Ändra vanor – tankar, tips och ideér

Att ändra på vanor som hjälper en och lägga sig till med nya bättre är ibland svårt. Även om vi börjat med något nytt eller provat att sluta med något så är det lätt att falla tillbaka i gamla inkörda mönster.

En som skrivit mycket kring vanor är James Clear (jamesclear.com) och materialet som följer kommer från honom. Läs gärna hans bok Atomic Habits.

Han menar att för att byta eller ändra vanor så är det viktigt att börja med den egna identiteten. Vem vill jag vara? Vem vill jag se mig som? Och utifrån det fundera på hur en sådan person är.

Livsintentionerna en bra början

Här kommer livsintentionerna in som du fick bekanta dig med i första kursavsnittet. Dina intentioner säger vem du vill vara och sträva efter, t.ex "Min intention är att vara fysiskt frisk och i god form". Om den intentionen är viktig och du vill leva den, då behövs också vanor och beteenden som är i linje med den.

Övning: gå igenom dina intentioner igen, välj ut två-tre som du känner lite extra för. Fundera på om det finns några vanor kopplade till dessa som du antingen vill ta bort, ändra eller lägga till. Skriv ner dina reflektioner.

Ta hjälp av tipsen från James Clear nedan om du behöver.

Först kommer fyra gyllene regler/lagar, sedan en artikel om hur lång tid det tar att ändra en vana och sist en artikel om hur man kopplar den egna identiteten till sina vanor.

Från James Clear

Make it obvious

The 1st Law of Behavior Change is to *make it obvious*. However, taking the time to spot the root causes of bad behavior can be helpful because once you know what triggers an unwanted habit you can reduce exposure to that trigger.

Here's one way to do it:

In my research, I came across the story of a man named Zach, who wanted to cut down on the amount of sugar in his diet. The problem was he didn't really know when or why he consumed sugar, only that he did it too often.

At the beginning of each day, Zach tucked a 3x5 notecard in his pocket. Whenever he found himself eating sugar he would pull the card out of his pocket and quickly jot down five things.

- Who am I with?
- What am I doing right now?
- Where am I?
- When is it?
- What emotions are driving my actions?

Zach didn't always remember to fill out the card and sometimes he wasn't sure how to answer a particular question, but by the end of the first week, he had a wealth of new insights about what triggered his sugar habit.

You can use a similar method (either by carrying a 3x5 notecard or simply creating a new note on your phone) to identify the cues of your unproductive or unhealthy habits. Once you know the cues that cause your bad habits, you can use the strategies mentioned in Chapters 6 and 7 of *Atomic Habits* to remove them from your life.

Question: How can I create an environment conducive to good habits?

Answer: The physical environment is one of the most overlooked drivers of habits and behavior change.

Your habits are often triggered by what is obvious or available to you in your current environment. Drive down any major road. It is no surprise we eat so much fast food when we are surrounded by it. It's hard to resist the pull of what engulfs us.

Thankfully, you don't have to be the victim of your environment. You can also be the architect of it.

Want to practice guitar more frequently? Place your guitar stand in the middle of your living room. Want to read more? Put a book on top of your pillow when you make your bed each morning and then read a few pages when you go to bed at night.

If you want to make a habit a big part of your life, make the cue a big part of your environment. By sprinkling triggers throughout your surroundings, you increase the odds that you'll think about your habit throughout the day. Making a better decision is easier when the cues for good habits are right in front of you.

Make it attractive

The 2nd Law of Behavior Change is to *make it attractive*. When habits are attractive, we feel motivated to do them.

The challenge, however, is that motivation is a fluctuating resource. Sometimes you feel motivated, and sometimes you don't. It comes and goes throughout the day like a series of waves.

As you can imagine, it is much easier to stick with a habit when motivation is high rather than when it is low. And this brings us to an important detail about the 2nd Law, a detail that is not covered deeply in the book: timing.

One of the secrets to sticking with a habit is asking yourself to act at the right time. Habits are attractive when you have the energy to do them, and your energy levels largely depend on the time of day.

Broadly speaking, I think it is better to ask yourself to perform a habit early in the day rather than later in the day. This is because most people have fewer distractions to deal with in the morning. The deeper you get into the day, the more likely it becomes that an unexpected task will creep into your schedule. You end up spending more time responding to everyone else's agenda and less time working on what matters most to you.

The author Ernest Hemingway lived by similar advice. "When I am working on a book or a story," he said, "I write every morning as soon after first light as possible. There is no one to disturb you and it is cool or cold and you come to your work and warm as you write."

I think this is the only productivity tip many people ever need: do the most important thing first each day.

The key point is that a habit can seem attractive or unattractive depending on when you ask yourself to perform it throughout the day. If you want to adhere to the 2nd Law of Behavior Change and make sure your habits are attractive, then ask yourself to stick to them when you have the time and energy to do so.

Question: How can I stay motivated when my habits go against the grain of my social environment?

Answer: Social norms are a powerful driver of our everyday behavior. If you find yourself in a social situation where your desired habit goes against the grain of the group, then it will be hard to stick with it because doing so seems unattractive (an inversion of the 2nd Law).

The best option is to join a culture where (1) your desired behavior is the normal behavior and (2) you already have something in common with the group.

When this is not possible, you'll need to leverage the remaining three Laws of Behavior Change. If you can manage to make a habit obvious, easy, and satisfying, then it's possible you'll be able to stick with it—even if it runs against the social norm.

Make it easy

The 3rd Law of Behavior Change is to *make it easy*. One way to make a habit easy is to reduce the amount of friction associated with the behavior. The habits with the least amount of friction are generally the ones that are most likely to occur.

You can reduce the friction associated with any task by mapping out all of the behaviors connected to a given process and then identifying areas where you can automate or streamline the process.

For example, let's say you're thinking about launching a ride-sharing business like Uber or Lyft and you want to create a more frictionless experience for your customers. You can start

by considering the process of hiring a taxi for a ride across town. Map out every little action associated with getting a taxi: scheduling the car, waiting on the curb, putting your bags in the trunk, riding in the back seat, paying the cab driver, and so on.

Then, you identify portions of the process that you can either eliminate, automate, or streamline. For example, the process of paying the cab driver (taking out cash or swiping your credit card) can take a minute or two. But your new ride-sharing service could have a customer's credit card information pre-loaded in the app, which means they can get out as soon as the car arrives at the destination. Payment is automatic and the process of getting a ride across town suddenly has a little less friction.

You can do the same thing with personal habits. Write down every little stage of a process and then look for specific steps that can be streamlined. When you reduce friction and make your habits easy, making progress becomes inevitable.

Question: How small can a change be and still remain useful?

Answer: It can be easy to dismiss small habits as not being worthwhile.

The truth is, small habits can reinforce the identity you want to build. If you show up at the gym five days in a row—even if it's just for two minutes—you are casting votes for your new identity. As the votes accumulate, so does the evidence of your new identity.

If a small habit reinforces your desired identity, then it is meaningful. And if it is meaningful, then it is actually a big deal.

Make it satisfying

The 4th Law of Behavior Change is to *make it satisfying*

Typically, when we think about achieving a satisfying ending to a goal or project, we think about getting the result we wanted. Today, however, I'd like to encourage you to think about the final stage of habit formation in a different way.

As I cover in the book, one of the key components in habit formation is enjoying an immediate reward. The more instantaneous the reward, the more likely you are to learn that a behavior is worth repeating in the future.

Here's a helpful tip: rather than focusing on the results of a habit, focus on how it makes you feel.

As one person put it on Twitter, "Exercising to look better isn't sustainable, the daily effect is too small. Exercise to feel better. It works every day."

The same can be said for nearly any habit. Do it for the change in mood (which is instant), not the change in results (which is delayed).

If you're eating "healthy food" to look better, the feedback is too slow. If you are eating healthy food that tastes great, then you have an immediate reason to keep going.

The most effective habits are the ones that make you feel good in the moment *and* lead to the results you want in the long-run. It's not just about the results. The feeling is essential. Without it, you have no immediate reason to repeat the behavior in the future.

Question: You say habit tracking is a good way to make a habit satisfying. How do you specifically track your habits?

Answer: First, it's not necessary to track every habit. If you employ the Four Laws of Behavior Change, then you'll find that you can often stick to a tiny behavior whether you track it or not.

However, I do believe tracking can be beneficial for the most important tasks. Personally, I track my exercise habits (how many workouts I do), writing habits (how many new articles I write), and travel habits (how many new places I visit).

I generally believe using a habit tracker is the simplest way to get started. The most basic format is a calendar on which you mark an "X" on each day you do the habit.

How Long Does it Actually Take to Form a New Habit? (Backed by Science)

Maxwell Maltz was a plastic surgeon in the 1950s when he began noticing a strange pattern among his patients. When Dr. Maltz would perform an operation — like a nose job, for example — he found that it would take the patient about 21 days to get used to seeing their new face. Similarly, when a patient had an arm or a leg amputated, Maxwell Maltz noticed that the patient would sense a phantom limb for about 21 days before adjusting to the new situation.

These experiences prompted Maltz to think about his own adjustment period to changes and new behaviors, and he noticed that it also took himself about 21 days to form a new habit. Maltz wrote about these experiences and said, “These, and many other commonly observed phenomena tend to show that it requires a minimum of about 21 days for an old mental image to dissolve and a new one to jell.”

In 1960, Maltz published that quote and his other thoughts on behavior change in a book called [Psycho-Cybernetics \(audiobook\)](#). The book went on to become a blockbuster hit, selling more than 30 million copies.

And that’s when the problem started.

You see, in the decades that followed, Maltz’s work influenced nearly every major “self-help” professional from Zig Ziglar to Brian Tracy to Tony Robbins. And as more people recited Maltz’s story — like a very long game of “Telephone” — people began to forget that he said “a minimum of about 21 days” and shortened it to, “It takes 21 days to form a new habit.”

And that’s how society started spreading the common myth that it takes 21 days to form a new habit (or 30 days or some other magic number). It’s remarkable how often these timelines are quoted as statistical facts. Dangerous lesson: If enough people say something enough times, then everyone else starts to believe it.

It makes sense why the “21 Days” Myth would spread. It’s easy to understand. The time frame is short enough to be inspiring, but long enough to be believable. And who wouldn’t like the idea of changing your life in just three weeks?

But the problem is that Maxwell Maltz was simply observing what was going on around him and wasn't making a statement of fact. Furthermore, he made sure to say that this was the *minimum* amount of time needed to adapt to a new change.

So what's the real answer? How long does it take to form a habit? How long does it take to break a bad habit? Is there any science to back this up? And what does all of this mean for you and me?

How Long it Really Takes to Build a New Habit

Phillippa Lally is a health psychology researcher at University College London. In [a study](#) published in the *European Journal of Social Psychology*, Lally and her research team decided to figure out just how long it actually takes to form a habit.

The study examined the habits of 96 people over a 12-week period. Each person chose one new habit for the 12 weeks and reported each day on whether or not they did the behavior and how automatic the behavior felt.

Some people chose simple habits like "drinking a bottle of water with lunch." Others chose more difficult tasks like "running for 15 minutes before dinner." At the end of the 12 weeks, the researchers analyzed the data to determine how long it took each person to go from starting a new behavior to automatically doing it.

The answer?

On average, it takes more than 2 months before a new behavior becomes automatic — 66 days to be exact. And how long it takes a new habit to form can vary widely depending on the behavior, the person, and the circumstances. In Lally's study, it took anywhere from 18 days to 254 days for people to form a new habit.

In other words, if you want to set your expectations appropriately, the truth is that it will probably take you anywhere from two months to eight months to build a new behavior into your life — not 21 days.

Interestingly, the researchers also found that "missing one opportunity to perform the behavior did not materially affect the habit formation process." In other words, it doesn't

matter if you mess up every now and then. Building better habits is not an all-or-nothing process.

Finding Inspiration in the Long Road

Before you let this dishearten you, let's talk about three reasons why this research is actually inspiring.

First, there is no reason to get down on yourself if you try something for a few weeks and it doesn't become a habit. It's supposed to take longer than that! There is no need to judge yourself if you can't master a behavior in 21 short days. Learn to love your [10 Years of Silence](#). Embrace the long, slow walk to greatness and [focus on putting in your reps](#).

Second, you don't have to be perfect. Making a mistake once or twice has no measurable impact on your long-term habits. This is why you should treat [failure like a scientist](#), give yourself permission to make mistakes, and develop strategies for [getting back on track quickly](#).

And third, embracing longer timelines can help us realize that habits are a process and not an event. All of the “21 Days” hype can make it really easy to think, “Oh, I'll just do this and it'll be done.” But habits never work that way. You have to embrace the process. You have to [commit to the system](#).

Understanding this from the beginning makes it easier to manage your expectations and commit to making [small, incremental improvements](#) — rather than pressuring yourself into thinking that you have to do it all at once.

Identity-Based Habits

The key to building lasting habits is focusing on creating a new identity first. Your current behaviors are simply a reflection of your current identity. What you do now is a mirror image of the type of person you believe that you are (either consciously or subconsciously).

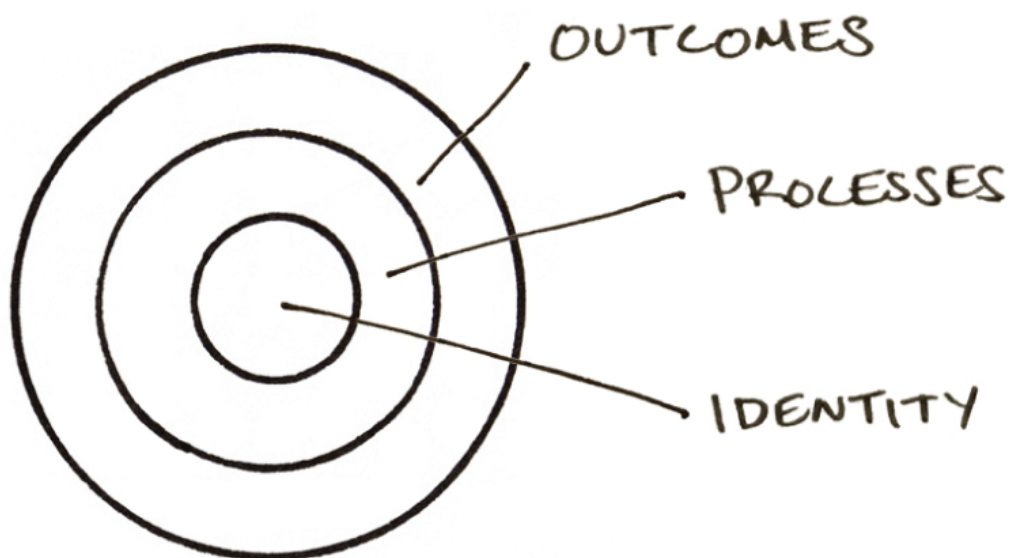
To change your behavior for good, you need to start believing new things about yourself. You need to build identity-based habits.

Imagine how we typically set goals. We might start by saying “I want to lose weight” or “I want to get stronger.” If you're lucky, someone might say, “That's great, but you should be more specific.”

So then you say, “I want to lose 20 pounds” or “I want to squat 300 pounds.”

These goals are centered around outcomes, not identity.

To understand what I mean, consider that there are three levels at which change can occur. You can imagine them like the layers of an onion.



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

The first layer is changing your outcomes. This level is concerned with changing your results: losing weight, publishing a book, winning a championship. Most of the goals you set are associated with this level of change.

The second layer is changing your process. This level is concerned with changing your habits and systems: implementing a new routine at the gym, decluttering your desk for better workflow, developing a meditation practice. Most of the habits you build are associated with this level.

The third and deepest layer is changing your identity. This level is concerned with changing your beliefs: your worldview, your self-image, your judgments about yourself and others. Most of the beliefs, assumptions, and biases you hold are associated with this level.

Outcomes are about what you get. Processes are about what you do. Identity is about what you believe. When it comes to building habits that last—when it comes to building a system of 1 percent improvements—the problem is not that one level is “better” or “worse” than another. All levels of change are useful in their own way. The problem is the *direction* of change.

Many people begin the process of changing their habits by focusing on *what* they want to achieve. This leads us to outcome-based habits. The alternative is to build identity-based habits. With this approach, we start by focusing on *who* we wish to become.

The Recipe for Sustained Success

Changing your beliefs isn't nearly as hard as you might think. There are two steps.

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

First, decide who you want to be. This holds at any level—as an individual, as a team, as a community, as a nation. What do you want to stand for? What are your principles and values? Who do you wish to become?

These are big questions, and many people aren't sure where to begin—but they do know what kind of results they want: to get six-pack abs or to feel less anxious or to double their salary. That's fine; start there and work backward from the results you want to the type of person who could get those results. Ask yourself, "Who is the type of person that could get the outcome I want?"

Here are five examples of how you can make this work in real life.

Want to lose weight?

Identity: Become the type of person who moves more every day.

Small win: Buy a pedometer. Walk 50 steps when you get home from work. Tomorrow, walk 100 steps. The day after that, 150 steps. If you do this 5 days per week and add 50 steps each day, then by the end of the year, you'll be walking over 10,000 steps per day.

Want to become a better writer?

Identity: Become the type of person who writes 1,000 words every day.

Small win: Write one paragraph each day this week.

Want to become strong?

Identity: Become the type of person who never misses a workout.

Small win: Do pushups every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday.

Want to be a better friend?

Identity: Become the type of person who always stays in touch.

Small win: Call one friend every Saturday. If you repeat the same people every 3 months, you'll stay close with 12 old friends throughout the year.

Want to be taken seriously at work?

Identity: become the type of person who is always on time.

Small win: Schedule meetings with an additional 15-minute gap between them so that you can go from meeting to meeting and always show up early.

What is your identity?

In my experience, when you want to become better at something, proving your identity to yourself is far more important than getting amazing results. This is especially true at first.

If you want to get motivated and inspired, then feel free to watch a YouTube video, listen to your favorite song, and do P90X. But don't be surprised if you burn out after a week. You can't rely on being motivated. You have to become the type of person you want to be, and that starts with proving your new identity to yourself.

Most people (myself included) will want to become better this year. Many of us, however, will set performance- and appearance-based goals in hopes that they will drive us to do things differently.

If you're looking to make a change, then I say stop worrying about results and start worrying about your identity. Become the type of person who can achieve the things you want to achieve. Build identity-based habits now. The results can come later.