

"Good Habits, Bad Habits" by Wendy Wood

Habit: a mental association between a context cue and a response that develops as we repeat an action in that context for a reward.

- 43% of our behavior is habit.

- Habits are a "second self," not inferior, superior, subservient to executive control. Equal and parallel.
- Habits have no essential nature as good or bad.
- Habit works outside our conscious awareness. Only occasionally do we realize that we acted out of habit.
- Self-control isn't effort...it's *reducing* effort. Remove the cue and there's no behavior to control.
- In the absence of habit, we revert to our values.

What People Believe Creates Habits

- * Intention
- * Willpower
- * Self-control
- * Executive control (conscious effort)
- * Suppressing desire

What Actually Creates Habits

- * Stable, consistent context cues
- * Behavior
- * Immediate rewards
- * Repeat until automatic and unconscious

CONTEXT

Change Your Contexts to Change Your Habits

Contexts: everything in the world surrounding you except you.

Arrange your world in a way that enables your success

Remember this word: **FRICTION**

The two forces:

1. Driving (reduces friction)
2. Restraining (increases friction)

Habit chaining letting one habit cue another

Habit swapping changing the behavior the context cues

Context cues include:

Place	Actions
Time	State of mind
People	Other habits

REPETITION

Habit can do only what it has done before.

It's a myth that it takes 21 days to create a habit. The actual number of days depends on the behavior, number of repetitions, and consistency of external forces (contexts). Anywhere from ten to ninety days.

You can lower your magic number by establishing forces that push you to repeat in the same way each time.

REWARD

Create Immediate Rewards for Lots of Repetition

Unexpected rewards are often more effective than expected rewards. They trigger *reward prediction error* and release dopamine. Essentially, they make you think "what just happened, and how do I do it again?" But the reward must be quick. Dopamine seems to promote habit learning *for less than a minute*.

Rewards, to have a role in habit formation, have to be bigger and better than what you would normally experience.

If there isn't initially a reward, the habit won't take. Context and repetition won't be enough.

Once Established, Habits Do Not Need Reward