



Tiny Habits

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Create tiny habits to achieve
big results over time.

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To Jaiden and Jensyn.

Experiment with tiny habits while you're young. They'll be helpful to you all your life.

Introduction

Tiny habits have changed my life.

I started exploring the concept of tiny habits as a teenager with the “simple” decision of ending my showers with cold water. I kept that up for over a decade.

In 2017 I took my interest in habits to the next level and begun to realize just how important and valuable good habits can be.

I wrote this book to tell you my story in the hope that I can inspire you and encourage you to create tiny habits of your own.

Let's start with...

My Story

I'd been struggling with my exercise routine for awhile. The problem was that it didn't exist. My hours in front of a computer each day were broken up by the occasional walk to the bathroom or kitchen. I'd long been convinced of the benefits of consistent exercise, but being convinced just wasn't enough.

During a flight home I sat next to a woman who appeared to be in her mid to late forties. Over the course of our conversation the topic of health came up. I discovered she was older than she looked yet healthier than most folks far younger, myself included. We talked about exercise and the importance of doing *something*, which was much better than doing nothing.

That conversation stuck with me.

A few days later, I came across several “30 Day Pushup Challenge” videos on YouTube based on the idea of doing 100 pushups per day. I felt inspired to try the challenge – after all, I could see results in as early as 30 days!

There was a problem, though. I could barely complete a single pushup. 100 per day wasn’t going to happen.

I was still inspired, though, so I decided I’d try something else. I decided I would do 4 sets of pushups per day, starting with just 1 pushup at a time.

And so I began.

I used an app called *Productive* to track my progress and got to work. I set reminders on my phone and completed my 4 sets throughout the day.

I started on October 2, 2017. I haven’t missed a single day since.

In the beginning, my friends laughed. After all, what difference would 4 pushups a day make?

After a few weeks, though, the number of pushups per set began to increase. Soon, I was at 3, then 5.

As of this writing, over a year later, I'm averaging 100+ pushups per day.

This story would have been a great personal success if that's all that had happened. But it turned out pushups were just the beginning.

Inspired by the progress I'd made, I started to experiment with different habits. At first, I tried too hard. I chose habits like "Write for an hour a day" that I just wasn't able to keep up. Then I reminded myself why the pushup habit had worked - I had started ridiculously small. I stopped the habits that weren't working and tried smaller ones.

Over time, I expanded and refined my list of habits to over 20, moving beyond health to family, work, and personal growth.

While some habits made a big difference quickly, most changes were imperceptibly small. It's only as I look back months and years later that I notice the compounded effects

I've learned that tiny habits, laughably or even embarrassingly tiny habits, can make a big difference over time.

Now, every chance I get I encourage the folks I meet to start a tiny habit. Tiny habits have made a big difference in my life and I know they can in yours too.

What is a Tiny Habit?

A habit is something that you do regularly, often without thinking about it.

We run our lives on habits. The food we eat, the shows we watch, the games we play, the way we get out of bed each day, and the things we say.

For our purposes, a tiny habit is something we start for a reason.

To create momentum.

In a day or even a week, a tiny habit will make little if any noticeable difference.

But after a year? Or 3 years? It starts to really add up.

For a habit to be considered a “tiny habit” it needs to be:

- **Simple** - Ideally, "No equipment needed". A habit that you can complete whether you're at home, at school, at work, or on vacation.
- **Fast** - It should take no more than 5 minutes to complete. Ever.

Simple and fast is important because you'll have days where you definitely don't feel like doing much of anything or days where you're so busy you just didn't have the time.

If it's simple and fast, you'll be able to make the time to do it anyway, even if it's the last thing you do before bed.

A good rule to follow is that the habits you pick should feel “too easy” to you, like they're *too* simple.

The power in the habit, though, comes from you doing it again, and again, and again, day after day after day.

Let's look at an example: "Take a picture of your food each day".

This habit is *ridiculously easy* and you can use it as a way of encouraging you to *think about* what you eat, without feeling like you're forced to do anything.

As the months went by I found myself making *better* choices about the food I ate, without really thinking about it. Because I chose a habit that encouraged me to be *aware* and made it easy to do so ("just take a picture") I was able to *be aware* and that nudged me to make tiny, positive choices about the food I ate over time.

Building Block Habits

Some habits you create will become “building blocks” for other habits.

In my case, doing four sets of pushups a day meant that I would check the habit tracking app on my iPhone at least four times a day. That meant that I was also seeing and remembering my other habits at least four times each day.

Once you’re on a roll with a few key habits you’ll naturally want to keep going.

I now track more than 20 habits a day. If I’ve finished 19 of them, many of which I’m now doing anyway, it becomes easy to finish the last habit or two.

Alright, now it’s your turn.

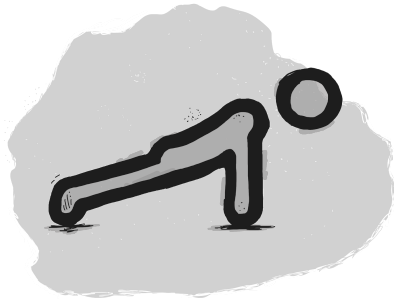
Inspiration

There are a lot of great habits to choose from and ultimately you'll pick the habits that work best *for you*.

I want to inspire you with a few ideas for tiny habits that have worked for me.

These are my personal favorites. These are the habits that I've experimented with and that I stuck with (there are quite a few I tried that I didn't keep up!).

Let's get started with...



Pushups

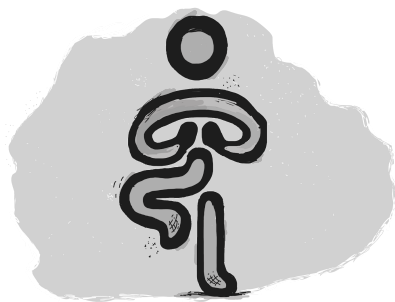
A pushup is a simple exercise that uses a lot of different parts of your body. It's also an exercise that requires no tools and can be done anywhere - beaches, ice covered ponds, airplanes, and boats.

Pushups are a great “building block” habit that keeps you coming back to your list of habits to mark off your progress.

Suggestion: Start with 4 sets of pushups (regular or modified, whichever you can do!) spread throughout the day.

In my habit tracking app I have “Pushups Set #1”, “Pushups Set #2”, and so on.

For tips on how to do pushups, visit tinyhabits.io/pushups/



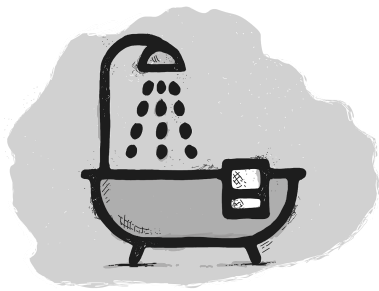
Deep Breathing

Sometimes it's hard to wake up in the morning. For me, deep breathing is a great way to get oxygen to my brain and help me feel awake.

I also find myself being more mindful of my breathing *throughout* the day.

Suggested habit: "3 breathing rounds"

Use a timer on your phone. Inhale deep, from your stomach, and let your breath out slow. Do so for about 3 minutes, then inhale big, exhale all the way and hold. Once you can't hold any longer, inhale and hold again. Repeat 3 times.



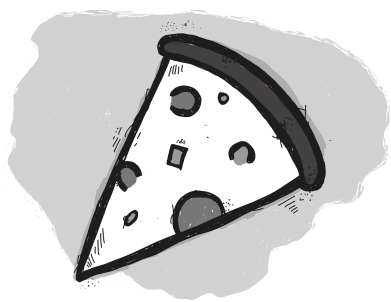
Cold Showers

There's nothing quite like starting (or ending) your day with a cold shower.

It's great for your immune system and, for me, I found completing a cold shower gave me more energy for the day and a sense that I'd already accomplished something difficult.

Suggested habit: "Cold shower" or "End shower on cold"

You can "warm up" to a cold shower by *ending* each shower on cold (target 15-30 seconds). Or just jump to it. It's *much easier* if you take a cold shower right after some deep breathing.

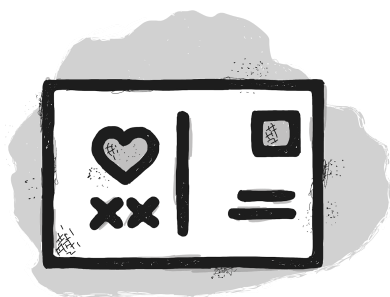


Food Pictures

An easy first step when it comes to food is to become more aware of what you eat. You can keep a journal, use an app, or, just take a picture.

I found that the simple act of taking a picture of my food has encouraged me to make better choices without any sense of obligation to do so. There are *lots* of habits you could experiment with around food but if you're looking for a really easy place to start, try a photo.

Suggested habit: "Take a picture of or record at least one meal" (That way, if you forget, you can still write it down at the end of the day without breaking the streak)



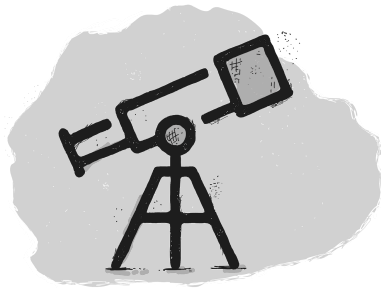
Express Thanks

I read a book called *Giftology* that got me thinking about the value and impact of a personal note.

Taking just a few short minutes to say “thank you” on purpose and in detail can really make someone’s day.

Suggested habit: “Express thanks to an individual or organization through a review, referral, or personal message”

Consider keeping a set of blank “note” cards and some stamps handy to make it easy to send physical notes in the mail.



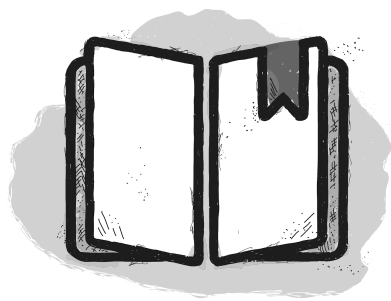
Share Perspective

In a relationship it's easy to assume that everything is "good" or "bad". When you assume, though, you're doing so from *your* perspective.

In a relationship it also matters what the other person thinks. A great habit I found for relationships that are especially important to me is to share how I see that I am doing and give the other person a chance to give feedback.

It only takes a few moments and can help you learn things about your relationships that you would miss otherwise.

Suggested habit: "Share thoughts on how I've been helpful, hurtful, what I'm grateful for with [person name]"



Read

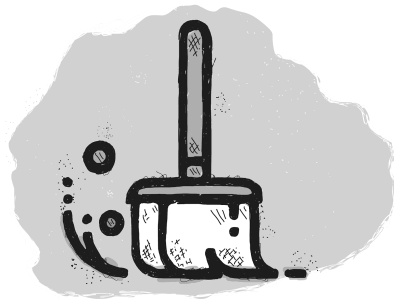
Writer Mark Twain said, “The man who does not read has no advantage over the man who cannot read.” Most of us know this to be true but it’s easy to have days, weeks, and months go by without reading.

Now, the key to this being a good habit is for it to be intentional. I want to make sure that I’m investing time in reading books that help me grow.

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Suggestion: “Read / listen for 5 minutes to any of the books I own”

The idea here is that I chose a book to help me grow (which includes books that are for fun) and I’m making sure that I spend some time in one or more of my books each day.



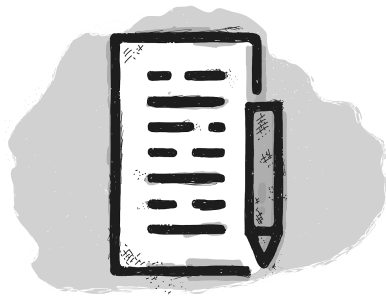
Cleaning

While I *like* things to be clean, I'm also OK working and living in a bit of a mess. That means it's easy for things like laundry, dishes, paperwork, etc., to grow from a tiny mess to a big mess.

I've found that tiny amounts of cleaning each day keeps the mess from growing too big and makes it easier to get everything cleaned up on the days where we want everything done.

Suggestion: "Spend 2 minutes cleaning / organizing office, computer, or anything else"

There are days where I *really* don't like cleaning. 2 minutes ensures that I can still get *something* done even if it's late at night.



Writing

Sometimes writing is easy. Most of the time it's really hard. It's also really important.

Writing helps me think and gives me something that I can give to others. I noticed that I was going months at a time without writing so I decided to use tiny habits to get back into writing.

Suggestion: "Spend 5 minutes writing"

It could be writing in a journal, working on a blog post, or working on a book. I wrote this book in 2 months, 5 minutes each day.

It's Your Turn

Choose *one* new habit to start. If you're undecided, start with pushups.

Track your progress. If you've got an iPhone, I suggest you use the App called *Productive*. On Android, check out *HabitHub*.

Or, just use a tiny notebook you can carry with you.

And tell me how you do! Send me an email to sirjonathan@gmail.com.

Special Thanks

To Joshua, for working with me to get this done and for your amazing illustrations.

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And to Laurie, for our conversation on the plane, and for encouraging me to start with *something*.