HABITS
THE WORLD OF WORK PODCAST
SERIES 3
EPISODE 5
S03.E05 – HABITS

J&J discuss habits, how they are important and how humans automate processes through habit. They also share the habit replacement loop and two lists of the week, both of which focus on replacing bad habits.

### DEFINITION DISCUSSION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Habit</th>
<th>A habit,... is a routine of behavior that is repeated regularly and tends to occur subconsciously. (Merriam-Webster)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Habit Formation</td>
<td>Habit formation is the process by which a behavior, through regular repetition, becomes automatic or habitual.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Automaticity</td>
<td>Automaticity is the ability to perform tasks without conscious thought.</td>
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<td>Cue</td>
<td>Cues are internal or external events which have a signalling significance to an organism which subsequently affects learning and behavior. The cue may be verbal or nonverbal (Psychology wiki)</td>
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<td>Self-Regulation</td>
<td>Self-regulation is the ability to monitor and manage your energy states, emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in ways that are acceptable and produce positive results such as well-being, loving relationships, and learning. It is how we deal with stressors and as such, lays the foundation for all other activity (Move with me website)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Habitualization</td>
<td>The idea that behaviors, norms, and values that an individual learns are picked up from their social situation and ingrained into them due to prolonged exposure to such social situation. (Open Education Sociology Dictionary)</td>
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**RESEARCH ROUNDBUP**

**Automaticity**

Automaticity is the brain’s way of automating repetitive processes, freeing the mind for higher level activity. It can happen in several ways.

- **Muscle Memory** - A physical task that initially requires conscious effort but falls into the background with practice such as typing on a keyboard, riding a bicycle or playing a music instrument.
- **Language** - Language skills (e.g. reading) initially require thought as a learner but later become almost automatic. For example, a fluent reader of English can read English fiction while thinking about the story leaving the technical complexity of understanding words and grammar to the subconscious.
- **Highway Hypnosis** - Highway hypnosis occurs when someone drives some distance in an apparently safe manner obeying traffic rules but then can’t remember driving. This typically occurs during a boring drive when the mind drifts off or when the driver is focused on a conversation.
- **Unconscious Competence** - It is sometimes claimed that certain tasks are better done without thought. For example, a free throw in basketball that gets worse when a player thinks about it. This implies that the subconscious has become better at a task than the conscious mind.
- **Intuition** - The ability to judge a situation without conscious thought. This may allow an individual to make reasonable decisions at high speed without any apparent thought. For example, a surfer may intuitively know that a particular wave is trouble and choose to let it pass.

**How Long?**

Many people say it takes 21 days to form a new habit. This isn’t the case!

- Evidence suggests 66 days on average, but in reality it varies.
- The key message here is that forming new habits takes some time and some dedication.
- Stick at it and don’t give up!

**Habits all have share a common neurological process, known as the “Habit Loop”. This process has several models associated with it, and is used in several different industries.**

This simple version of the habit loop that cues (internal or external) trigger set human responses that result in a reward. This process is an explanation of what drives habits.

Understanding the different stages of your habit loop is an important part of trying to change your habits.

- Avoid cues that trigger a habit
- Modify routines, or
- Replace rewards with substitutes

All of these steps act to disrupt the negative aspects of the habit loop and ultimately help to break or replace habits.

A key point here is that actually breaking habits is hard. In many instances, it’s easier (and in the short term at least) better to REPLACE negative habits with better ones.
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LISTS OF THE WEEK

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<tr>
<th>Step 1: Understand how habits work</th>
<th>Step 1: Decide what to change</th>
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<td>Gain an understanding of how the habit loop works, and how replacement works within the loop then start to recognize your own cues, routines and rewards.</td>
<td>The first step to making changes is to decide what you want to change, and to convince yourself that you can change.</td>
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Step 2: Substitute negative routines
- Replace the routine part of an existing habit that you wish to change. Having identified what you wish to change, you should substitute a negative routine for a more positive one. Remember, these routines could be physical activities, but they could also be thought patterns or other forms of behaviors as well.

Step 3: Substitute negative cues and triggers
- Having identified and replaced some of your negative routines and responses with more positive ones, the next stage is to focus on your cues or triggers. Again, you should look to remove the cues that trigger negative behaviors and replace them with cues that trigger positive behavior.

Step 4: Get support
- Doing these steps on your own isn't always easy, so the next step of this process recommends joining forces with someone else who's looking to make similar changes.

Step 5: Surround yourself with helpful people
- As well as buddying up to get support on your goals, it's important to surround yourself with people who will help you achieve your goals. This might mean stepping away from unhelpful people and replacing them with people who are more helpful in your life.

Step 6: Visualize your success
- It's important to see yourself being successful. You need to believe that you can achieve your goal and to visualize yourself doing so. Others can help you, but the believe and the confidence to change needs to come from within as well.

Step 7: Keep trying to change
- There are often many set backs on the path to change. It's important to stick to your objectives no matter what happens. You might miss a few instances of your goal, or lapse back into bad habits, but it's important to celebrate the successes and keep trying to change. Persistence is the key to ultimate success.

Step 2: Understand the habit
- Once you've decided what you want to change, you need to explore the habit. You should understand what is causing it, when it occurs, what triggers it and so on.

Step 3: Set Goals
- Once you understand the habit you wish to change, the next step is to do some goal-setting. You should set reasonable targets around how you'd like to change, including timelines.

Step 4: Change and measure progress
- Having set goals, it's time to start to change. While implementing your change you should measure your progress as the act of measurement supports behavior change. It's important not to be too upset by some slips and lapses. Focus on the big picture and celebrate your successes.

Step 5: Get support
- Seek support and use the power of social relationships to help you change. Commit to your goals, request assistance and generally let those around you help you change your habits.

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www.thewowpodcast.org
jj@thewowpodcast.org