



Title, Author: Atomic Habits, James Clear

Published: 2018, Penguin Random House

This book came highly recommended from different quarters – friends, colleagues, Twitter handles, Youtubers and of course Amazon (a huge influencer for most purchases these days).

I am personally very fascinated with topics like discipline and habits. Hence, it was an easy decision to pick the book for reading and its friendly tone is something I really enjoyed. Indeed, the author keeps things simple and that makes the book more relatable.

Atomic habits tries to explain how even tiny changes (as small as 1%) if done consistently can have a huge impact on eventual outcomes. Tiny habits performed everyday amplify your success. They help you grow into a person you wish to become.

The book covers lot of granular aspects of how habits can be formed or broken. Let me try explaining the crux of the book and some key interesting points worth sharing.

Core of the Book:

The Four laws of behaviour change:

1. Cue: Make it obvious,

- Add cues that lead to good habits (a book on your pillow, easy to spot yoga mat, a filled fruit bowl on dining table, visible bookshelf) can make a huge positive difference. Conversely, remove cues that lead to bad habits (unplugging the TV, taking the batteries out of the remote). Make a cue for a bad habit invisible, make a cue for a good one obvious.

2. Craving: Make it attractive

- What's more attractive – watching a sport or studying? Obviously watching a sport! This is because studying is considered boring. However, if you can make your way of studying interesting, your mind will find it attractive and won't procrastinate on it. Join a culture where your desired behaviour (eg: have friends with inclination towards studying) is a normal behaviour, this can make the habit far more attractive.

3. Response: Make it easy.

- The only way to ensure that you stay consistent is to make your habit so simple and easy that it doesn't create any problem in your normal routine. Reduce friction. Decrease the number of steps between you and your good habits (eg: join a gym which is on your way to office).

4. Reward: Make it satisfying.

- If the habit you wish to follow is satisfying, meaning it gives you immediate reward, it increases the probability of you repeating it. Cardinal Rule of Behaviour Change: what is immediately rewarded is repeated.

The first 3 laws increase the odds that a behaviour will be performed. The 4th law increases the odds that a behaviour will be repeated next time. It completes the habit loop.

Conversely, we can reverse the laws to break a bad habit (Make it invisible, make it unattractive, make it difficult and make it unsatisfying).

Key Highlights:

1. **You do not rise to the level of your goals. You fall to the level of your systems.**
2. In the long run, the quality of our lives often depends on the quality of our habits. **Habits are the compound interest of self-improvement.**
3. If you want better results, then forget about setting goals. Focus on your system instead. **Goal setting suffers from survivorship bias.** We concentrate on the people who end up winning – the survivors – and mistakenly assume that ambitious goals led to their success while overlooking all the people who had the same objective but didn't succeed.
4. **True behaviour change is identity change.** The real reason you fail to stick with habits is that your self-image gets in the way. Your habits are how you embody your identity.
5. **Environment is the invisible hand that shapes human behaviour.** Instead of testing self-control, one should change the Environment to suit his habits (Self-control is a short-term strategy, not a long-term one).
6. **The greatest threat to success is not failure but boredom.** We get bored with habits because they stop delighting us.

Key takeaways for me were:

- Concentrate on processes and journeys rather than outcome / result.
- Tiny changes add up over time and have compounding effect. This applies to both good and bad habits.

Author reiterates these points in different ways in the book and cautions against the big bang success narratives peppered with survivorship bias.

The category of the book falls in between being an actionable instruction manual and philosophy. It touches the philosophical aspects and the actionable points. Hence, I feel it is highly recommended and relevant to someone who hasn't explored the fields of discipline and habits.

As is the case with most of the Self-Help books – these ideas may not seem brand new or life altering. However, that's the whole point of reading a good self-help book – get back to the basics and remind yourself of aspects which you may know but haven't implemented.

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