KESTON SCHOOL

HUMAN BEHAVIOR · FREE SAMPLE

Habits That Stick

A simple system for habits you still keep after the first two weeks

CHAPTER 1 + WORKBOOK SECTION

BEFORE YOU START

How to use this book

By the last page you will be able to design a habit small enough to start today, anchor it to your routine and keep it going through busy weeks and setbacks.

1. Read one chapter at a time. Each one gives you a single idea and a single action.
2. Open the Habits That Stick Workbook and complete the matching section while the chapter is fresh.
3. Do the “Try this” action within seven days. Reading changes what you know; the action changes what you do.
4. Finish with the checklist in chapter 12 and come back to it whenever you slip.

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CHAPTER 1

Why Habits Fall Apart

Most habits fail not because people are lazy, but because they rely on motivation, start too big and have no plan for bad days.

January 2nd. You have a new running app, new shoes and a plan: five runs a week, starting today. The first week is great. You feel energized and a little proud. The second week, it rains twice and work gets busy, so you run three times. The third week, you are tired, you miss Monday and Tuesday, and by Wednesday the whole plan feels pointless. By February, the shoes are by the door and the app is sending you reminders you swipe away.

If this story sounds familiar, the problem is probably not you. It is the way you started. Most people build habits in a way that almost guarantees they will collapse, and then blame themselves when they do.

The motivation trap

Most new habits begin with a burst of motivation. A new year, a birthday, a health scare, an inspiring video or a frustrating day can all spark the feeling: this time, I am really going to change.

Motivation is wonderful for getting started. It is terrible for keeping going. It rises and falls with your mood, your sleep, your stress and the weather. If your habit only happens when you feel motivated, it will only happen on good days. And most days are not especially good. They are ordinary.

The people who keep habits for years are not more motivated than everyone else. They have simply built habits that do not need much motivation to happen.

> **Key idea:** Do not build habits for your best days. Build them for your ordinary, tired, busy days.

Starting too big

The second reason habits fall apart is size. When motivation is high, it is tempting to aim high: an hour at the gym every day, reading fifty pages a night, meditating for thirty minutes, cutting out sugar completely. These plans feel inspiring. They are also fragile.

A big habit needs a lot of time, energy and willpower every single day. The first time life gets in the way, the habit breaks, and because it was so ambitious, restarting feels overwhelming. A small habit, on the other hand, can survive a bad day. It is easy to do even when you are tired, and that is exactly what keeps it alive.

It feels backward, but it is true: the smaller you start, the more likely you are to end up doing a lot.

No plan for bad days

The third reason is that most habit plans assume everything will go smoothly. They do not include what to do when you are sick, traveling, busy, stressed or simply not in the mood. So when one of those days arrives, as it always does, there is no plan. You skip. Then you skip again. Soon the habit is gone.

Strong habits have a built-in answer to the question, “What do I do on a bad day?” Often that answer is a much smaller version of the habit. We will build that into your plan in later chapters.

All-or-nothing thinking

Many habits end not because of one missed day, but because of what people tell themselves after it. “I have already broken my streak, so what is the point?” “I ate one cookie, so the diet is ruined.” “I missed three days, so I might as well start again next month.”

This all-or-nothing thinking turns small slips into complete stops. In reality, missing one day has almost no effect on a habit. Missing many days in a row, because you have given up, is what really breaks it.

Willpower is not the answer

When habits fail, people often conclude that they need more discipline or willpower. But relying on willpower is like trying to hold a door shut against the wind. You can do it for a while, but eventually your arms get tired.

A better approach is to change the wind: to design your habits and surroundings so that the right behavior is easy and the wrong behavior is harder. This is what the rest of this book teaches. You will still need some effort, but far less than you think.

What this book will give you

Over the next chapters, you will build a simple system:

1. Understand how habits actually form, so you can work with your brain.
2. Connect your habits to who you want to be, not just to results.
3. Start with a tiny version that is almost impossible to skip.
4. Anchor it to something you already do and design your surroundings to help.

5. Track it and make it feel rewarding.
6. Plan for missed days and busy weeks.
7. Grow it slowly and keep it running.

None of these steps require extraordinary discipline. They require a bit of planning and a lot of small repetitions.

Try this

Think of the last three habits you tried to build and then dropped. For each one, write down in your workbook:

1. What the habit was and how big it was at the start.
2. How long it lasted.
3. What happened right before it stopped: a busy week, illness, travel, a missed day, boredom.
4. What you told yourself after the first missed day.

Look for patterns. Did you start too big? Rely on motivation? Have no plan for bad days? Fall into all-or-nothing thinking?

Then choose one habit you want to build with this book. Write it down simply, for example “exercise regularly” or “read more.” You will shape it into a habit that sticks over the next chapters.

In the next chapter, we look at how habits actually form, so you can stop fighting your brain and start using it.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Motivation is a great starter and a terrible engine.
- Big starts create big crashes - the size of a habit predicts its survival.
- A habit without a plan for bad days is a habit with an expiry date.

→ Workbook, section 1

01 Why Habits Fall Apart

Learn from the habits you dropped before.

FILL IN

Habits I tried and dropped

Habit and starting size	How long it lasted	What happened right before it stopped

CHECKLIST

My usual failure pattern

- [ ] Relied on motivation
- [ ] Started too big
- [ ] No plan for bad days
- [ ] All-or-nothing thinking after a miss

The one habit I will build with this book:

YOUR NEXT STEP

Want the whole book?

You just read chapter 1 of Habits That Stick and tried the first workbook section. The full e-book has 12 chapters, a complete workbook and a final checklist. Here is everything inside:

01 Why Habits Fall Apart

02 How Habits Really Form

03 The Cost of Starting Over

04 Identity Before Goals

05 Make It Tiny

06 Anchor It and Design for It

07 Track It and Reward It

08 Habits for Real Life

09 When You Miss a Day

10 Systems That Run Themselves

11 Small Actions, Big Results

12 Mistakes & Checklist

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