

Cracking the Habit Code

21 days to keeping your resolutions

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Day 2:

Your Brain on Autopilot

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2: Your brain on autopilot

- * Why your resolution will be easy once it's a habit
- * Foundations of a habit: the anchor, the routine, and the reward
- * Coaching you to build-a-habit

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* **Habits 101:**

- When we try to do something new, it takes a lot of willpower, energy, and effort
- As we get tired or stressed, our efforts start to fail

* **The built-in back-up plan:**

- The basal ganglia, a primitive knob of tissue deep in your noggin, is your own personal auto-pilot
- Routines and habits allow us to access this energy-efficient part of our brain

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- * Habits are critical cornerstones for happiness, and most of us don't even realize it.
- * Routines can make us feel habitually good, or healthy, or productive—or they can make us feel habitually bad.
- * Bad habits, or routines, can be changed into good ones.
- * Neutral habits can be expanded to include our resolutions.
- * Using willpower to change our lives is hard. Once habits are established, change comes effortlessly.

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- * A caveat: this doesn't mean that we aren't "mindful"
 - Mindfulness: when we consciously pay attention to what experiencing in the present moment, without judging our thoughts and feelings as "good" or "bad"
 - Mindfulness is a research-tested way to reduce stress
 - Mindful attention to our breathing--the ultimate habit on auto-pilot--is the gold-standard meditation or mindfulness practice
- * Ultimate goal for happiness: mindful *while* on auto-pilot

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* A few notes about bad habits:

- Your brain can't tell the difference between “good” habits and “bad” habits--it will cling to them both
- Once a habit is established, it is easier to alter the routine than it is to just quit it. To change a habit, keep the old anchor and reward, but insert a new routine.
- Habits are so powerful that they can “cause our brains to cling to them at the exclusion of all else, including common sense.” (Charles Duhigg)

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* **Three parts of a habit to craft today:**

1. The **ANCHOR**: what action cues or triggers your habit?
2. The **ROUTINE**: what exactly do you do?
3. The **REWARD**: what makes you feel good?

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* **Daily practice: Creating Your Habit**

- Start using your anchor, trigger, or cue – **DAILY** if possible
- Pay attention to **ORDER**, and doing it the same each time
- Don't forget to reward yourself! What will you come to crave?