

THE BIG IDEAS

B = MAP

The elements of behavior.

ABCs

The anatomy of Tiny Habits.

Anchor Prompts

After I (anchor), I will (new habit).

Get Your Shine On!

Don't forget to celebrate.

Tiny Habits

The Small Changes That Change Everything

BY BJ FOGG, PH.D · HOUGHTON MIFFLIN HARCOURT © 2019 · 320 PAGES

“Tiny is mighty.

At least when it comes to change.

Over the last twenty years, I've found that most everyone wants to make some kind of change: eat healthier, lose weight, exercise more, reduce stress, get better sleep. We want to be better parents and partners. We want to be more productive and creative. But the alarming levels of obesity, sleeplessness, and stress reported by the media—and seen in my Stanford lab's research—tell me there is a painful gap between what people want and what they actually do. The disconnect between *want* and *do* has been blamed on a lot of things—but people blame it on themselves for the most part. They internalize the cultural message of ‘It's your fault! You should exercise more, but you aren't doing it. Shame on you!’

I am here to say. It isn't your fault.

And creating positive change isn't as hard as you think.”

~ BJ Fogg, Ph.D from *Tiny Habits*

BJ Fogg founded the Behavior Design Lab at Stanford University. He is one of the world's leading authorities on the science of behavior change and has deeply influenced how we think about habit change—on both a product development level and a personal level.

In this book, he introduces us to the core elements of his Fogg Behavior Model as we learn that habit change doesn't need to be as hard as we make it. As BJ tells us: “*We are not the problem. Our approach to change is. It's a design flaw—not a personal flaw.*”

A couple other gems to keep in mind: “*If there's one concept from my book I hope you embrace, it's this: People change best by feeling good, not by feeling bad.*” And: “*The essence of Tiny Habits is this: Take a behavior you want, make it tiny, find where it fits naturally in your life, and nurture its growth. If you want to create long-term change, it's best to start small.*”

If you're looking to Optimize your ability to create habits that stick, I think you'll LOVE the book. BJ is THE academic authority on the subject. (Get a copy [here](#).) For the record, I'd say this book, James Clear's *Atomic Habits* and Stephen Guise's *Mini Habits* are the Top 3 most practical books on the subject. (With *Superhuman by Habit* tied for that third slot. :)

And, as this is one of my favorite subjects, we have a few 101s you might enjoy including: Habits 101, Willpower 101 and Algorithms 101. Plus, check out the Algorithms module in our Mastery Series where we help you move from Theory to Practice Mastery as we use our willpower wisely to install habits that run on autopilot.

The book is PACKED with Big Ideas (as in: RIDICULOUSLY packed!).

We'll barely scratch the surface of all the wisdom BJ shares but I'm excited to share a few of my favorite Ideas we can apply to our lives TODAY so let's jump straight in!

“The essence of Tiny Habits is this: Take a behavior you want, make it tiny, find where it fits naturally in your life, and nurture its growth. If you want to create long-term change, it's best to start small.”

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THE ELEMENTS OF BEHAVIOR: B = MAP

"You can change your life by changing your behaviors. You know that. But what you may not know is that only three variables drive those behaviors.

The Fogg Behavior Model is the key to unlocking that mystery. It represents the three universal elements of behavior and their relationship to one another. It's based on principles that show us how these elements work together to drive our every action—from flossing one tooth to running a marathon. Once you understand the Behavior Model, you can analyze why a behavior happened, which means you can stop blaming your behavior on the wrong things (like character and self-discipline, for starters). And you can use my model to design for a change in behavior in yourself and in other people.

B = MAP

Behavior happens when **Motivation & Ability & Prompt** converge at the same moment"

Welcome to the first words of chapter #1: "The Elements of Behavior."

Want to understand WHY we do *any* and *everything*? Well, BJ tells us that we need to understand this simple formula: **B = MAP**.

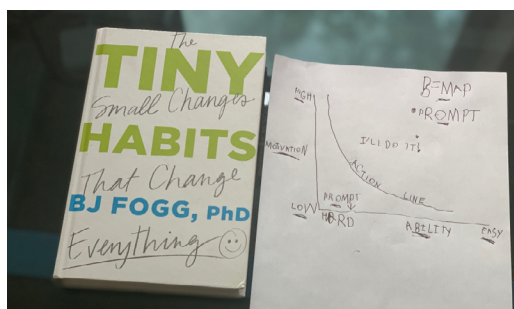
Behavior is a function of our **Motivation + Ability + Prompt**.

As BJ tells us: "A behavior happens when the three elements of MAP—Motivation, Ability, and Prompt—come together at the same moment. Motivation is your desire to do the behavior. Ability is your capacity to do the behavior. And prompt is your cue to do the behavior."

One more time: **B = MAP**

In the book he presents a super simple and equally powerful little diagram to bring the point home. [You can find his model here.](#)

As it turns out, I walked Emerson through this model the other night while we were talking about how to rock a Digital Sunset. More on that in a moment. For now, here's his version:



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So... Let's take a quick tour through the primary elements of that diagram.

First, on the Y axis, we have our Motivation. It can be either High or Low. Then, on the X axis, we have our Ability. That can be either Low or High as something can be either Hard to Do or Easy to Do.

Then we have a Prompt. The Prompt can show up either above or below what BJ calls the "Action Line." If our Motivation is High and our Ability is High (aka, it's Easy to Do), the Prompt will fall above the Action Line and we'll do it. If, on the other hand, we have Low Motivation and our Ability is Low (aka it's Hard to Do), we won't do it.

That's it. Super simple and equally powerful. You can run ALL Behaviors through that model.

Of course, BJ spends the entire book walking us through how to use that model to install the habits we want to rock while deleting those we want to get rid of. For now, let's go back to Emerson and our chat about Digital Sunsets.

"You can disrupt a behavior you don't want by removing the prompt. This isn't always easy, but removing the prompt is your best first move to stop a behavior from happening."

~ BJ Fogg

Quick context: As you know, I'm ALL about shutting down the electronics early and moving from Deep Work to Deep Love. The other night I was on Alexandra's phone ordering something from Amazon AFTER the time I usually have it turned off.

At which point, Emerson tells me: "Daddy. I can make it easier for you to do the Digital Sunset by putting the phone in the drawer and then putting a lock on it."

To which I replied, "Buddy. You're absolutely right. That is AMAZING behavior design. In fact, I'm reading a book right now by the world's leading expert and you know what he says?"

Then I might have sketched the Fogg Behavior Model and walked him through what it meant. Then I showed him that my Motivation to use the phone is relatively high so we'd need to either reduce that Motivation more by reminding myself just how important Digital Sunset -> Deep Love is for me and/or make it MUCH harder for me to use the phone.

His idea of putting the phone in a drawer and locking it up with a key I don't have would do a GREAT job of making it REALLY hard for me to use the phone while also removing the Prompt—making it much more likely that I'd engage in the Behavior I say I want.

So... One more time: **B = MAP**

If you feel so inspired, take a moment to run one of YOUR Behaviors through that model.

Here's to mastering the three variables of our **Behavior: Motivation + Ability + Prompt**.

P.S. "It's time to set the record straight and acknowledge that bad habits are not fundamentally different from good habits when it comes to basic components. Behavior is behavior; it's always a result of motivation, ability, and a prompt coming together at the same moment."

THE ANATOMY OF TINY HABITS

1. ANCHOR MOMENT

An existing routine (like brushing your teeth) or an event that happens (like a phone ringing). The Anchor Moment reminds you to do the new Tiny Behavior.

2. NEW TINY BEHAVIOR

A simple version of the new habit you want, such as flossing one tooth or doing two push-ups. You do the Tiny Behavior immediately after the Anchor Moment.

3. INSTANT CELEBRATION

Something you do to create positive emotions, such as saying, 'I did a good job!' You celebrate immediately after doing the new Tiny Behavior.

Anchor Behavior Celebration."

We now know that B = MAP. Now it's time for the ABC's of Tiny Habits. We'll talk about Anchors and Celebrations more in a moment. For now, let's talk about the TINY in Tiny Habits.

Stephen Guise wrote a whole book on the theme called [Mini Habits](#). Recall that he tells us to make our habits "stupid small" and "too small to fail." Well, as you might have guessed, BJ Fogg was the source of a lot of his practical tips.

BJ tells us that one of THE best ways to put the Prompt above the Action Line is to make the behavior REALLY (REALLY!) (REALLY!!!) easy to do.

It's funny because I'm writing this days after we moved to our new property in the country outside of Austin. We're blessed to have 8.5 acres of wooded tranquility. Emerson and I weed-

"Here's a related insight that might begin to transform your life (it transformed mine): The easier a behavior is to do, the more likely the behavior will become a habit. This applies to habits we consider 'good' and 'bad.' It doesn't matter. Behavior is behavior. It all works the same way."

~ BJ Fogg

"We are not the problem. Our approach to change is. It's a design flaw—not a personal flaw."

~ BJ Fogg

whacked a running trail around the property last weekend and I'm typing this with chickens pecking around my new outside desk. (Ahhh... My heart rate variability is going through the roof. Laughing as I type this but I hit an average of 100 on Oura the other night which is crazy.)

Now, the place is wonderfully, minimally landscaped right around the house but a few of the areas in our backyard and walkways have a bunch of weeds.

So... I decided to approach those weeds with a Behavior MAP. Although I'm not a weed-pulling guy by nature, I *am* highly Motivated as I love this place and want to make it even more Zen beautiful. But... What really did the trick was making the Behavior EASY. As in: Crazy Easy.

How? I went TINY. I told myself that if I saw some weeds while walking in or out of the house, I'd pull out one weed. Just one tiny little weed. THAT would be a win worthy of a celebration.

B = Motivation (create a Zen sanctuary = High) + **Ability** (pull one weed = Easy!) + **Prompt** (see a weed = Obvious and above the Action Line!)

And, you know what happened? I rocked it. And, as you can guess, it's hard to stop after pulling after just one weed. Although I didn't REQUIRE myself to pull out more than one weed (which is a key part of the whole Tiny Habits approach), once I got in action, I tended to stay in action.

And, well, let's just say that our landscaping is looking epically weed free and I'm about to enter the weed-pulling Hall of Fame. (Hah.) Seriously.

All part of a longer chat BJ goes OFF on in the book but for now, what's a habit you'd like to build? How can you make it TINY? Like JUMBO CRAZY TINY?!

Make it REALLY EASY to win, anchor that behavior to something you already do and celebrate those tiny wins then let me know what happens. :)

P.S. There are seven steps in the Behavior Design process.

Step 1: Clarify the Aspiration. (Aka: What do you want to achieve?)

Step 2: Explore Behavior Options. (Aka: What can you do to achieve that aspiration?)

Step 3: Match with Specific Behaviors. (Aka: What SPECIFICALLY can you do?)

Step 4: Start Tiny. (Aka: SUPER tiny.)

Step 5: Find a Good Prompt. (Aka: Connect it to something you already do; see next Idea!)

Step 6: Celebrate Successes. (Aka: Hack your brain's reward centers immediately and intensely!)

Step 7: Troubleshoot, Iterate, & Expand. (+1 +1 +1 for the win!)

"If our attempts to create this habit don't work, we will troubleshoot, starting with the prompt. And we won't blame ourselves for lack of motivation or willpower. What we are doing is all about design—and redesign. If we need to tap into willpower, we are doing it wrong. If we revise the prompt and make the behavior as simple as possible, and we still don't succeed, we'll back up and pick a different behavior—one that we actually want to do."

~ BJ Fogg

ANCHOR PROMPTS

"You already have a lot of reliable routines, and each of them can serve as an Action Prompt for a new habit. You put your feet on the floor in the morning. You boil water for tea or turn on the coffee maker. You flush the toilet. You drop your kid off at school. You hang your coat up when you walk through the door at the end of the day. You put your head on a pillow every night.

These actions are already embedded in your life so seamlessly and naturally that you don't have to think about them. And because of *that*, they make fantastic prompts. It's an elegant design solution because it's so natural. You already have an entire ecosystem of routines humming along nicely—you just have to tap into it.

Action Prompts are so much more useful than Person Prompts and Context Prompts that I've given them a name: Anchors. When talking about Tiny Habits, I use the term Anchor to describe something in your life that is already stable and solid. The concept is pretty simple. If there is a habit you want, find the right Anchor within your current routine to serve as your prompt, your reminder. I selected the term 'anchor' because you are attaching your new habit to something solid and reliable."

" In Behavior Design we match ourselves with new habits we can do even when we are at our most hurried, unmotivated, and beautifully imperfect. If you can imagine doing the behavior on your hardest day of the week, it's probably a good match."

~ BJ Fogg

That's from a chapter called "Prompts—The Power of After" in which we learn about THE most important part of our MAP equation: Prompts. Note: In *The Power of Habit*, Charles Duhigg calls "prompts" a "cue." In *Atomic Habits*, James Clear echoes the "cue" word as well. We could also call the thing that gets us to take action a "trigger." Again, BJ calls it a Prompt.

Whatever we call them, we want to know this: *"Prompts are the invisible drivers of our lives."* And: *"No behavior happens without a prompt."*

Here's something funny: RIGHT AFTER I typed that, my 1,000-second timer went off. As you know, that's my cue-trigger-prompt to get up and bang out a set of 11 burpees if I haven't hit 100 for the day yet. (Once I've hit that target, the Tiny habit is to simply stand up.)

The example BJ refers to many times in the book is his Tiny Habit to do two push-ups after he goes to the bathroom while working from home.

He connects the things we're ALREADY doing to the habits we want to create. One of the power words he uses to help us create new if-then algorithms (that he calls "habit recipes") is AFTER.

After he goes to the bathroom, he does two push-ups.

After I hear my 1,000-second timer go off, I do 11 burpees (or simply get my butt off my chair!).

After I wake up and do my morning hygiene stuff, I meditate.

After I meditate, I do a quick stretching series.

After I do that, I start my Deep Work clock... Etc., etc. etc.

In the book, BJ provides 300 (!) recipes for Tiny Habits all of which follow this basic model:

After I (ANCHOR), I will (NEW HABIT).

For example:

After my feet hit the ground in the morning, I will ...

After I brush my teeth, I will ...

After I walk in the door after work I will ...

After I put my head on the pillow I will

How about you? How can you anchor a new (tiny!) habit after something you're already doing?!?

P.S. *"You can disrupt a behavior you don't want by removing the prompt. This isn't always easy, but removing the prompt is your best first move to stop a behavior from happening."*

P.P.S. Although BJ doesn't make the concept of "algorithms" a central part of his teaching like we do in our work together, he does say this: *"I now see this like creating computer code. If you get the algorithm correct—this behavior then this behavior then this behavior and then bam—you have a reliable outcome."*

GET YOUR SHINE ON (AKA DON'T FORGET TO CELEBRATE!)

"What might surprise you is this: In English we do not have a perfect word to describe the positive feeling we get from experiencing success. I've read piles of scientific literature on related topics, and I've done my own research in this area, and I am convinced that we are lacking a good word. (The closest label is 'authentic pride,' but that's not an exact match.) So, with the encouragement of three of the world's experts on human emotion, I decided to create a new word for this feeling of success.

Ready? I call this feeling Shine.

You know this feeling already: You feel Shine when you ace an exam. You feel Shine when you give a great presentation and people clap at the end. You feel Shine when you smell something delicious that you cooked for the first time.

" Once you remove any hint of judgment, your behavior becomes a science experiment. A sense of exploration and discovery is a prerequisite to success, not just an added bonus."

~ BJ Fogg

"You can now filter out all that noise and confusion about habits and human behavior. Because you know how behavior works, you what to pay attention to and embrace, and what to ignore and discard. If an e-mail from a friend comes through about a new exercise or diet program, a quick scan will tell you all you need to know. Will it help you do what you already want to do? Will it help you feel successful? The answers to those questions are freeing because if the change program doesn't satisfy these two requirements, it's not worth your time."

~ BJ Fogg

I believe my celebration technique is a breakthrough in habit formation. I hope you can see why. By skillfully celebrating, you create a feeling of Shine, which in turn causes your brain to encode the new habit.

If I could teach you Tiny Habits in person, I would start our training by focusing on celebrations. I would help you find celebrations that are natural and effective for you. We would practice them together and it would be a blast. I would train you in celebrations before teaching you about the Fogg Behavior Model, or the power of simplicity, or Anchors, or recipes for Tiny Habits. Celebrations would be first—because it's the most important skill for creating habits."

That's from a chapter called "Emotions Create Habits" in which we learn how to Celebrate. When? *Immediately*. How? With *intensity*.

Enter: A feeling we all know captured in a new word: SHINE!

Short story: RIGHT after we do the TINY thing we said we'd do, we give ourselves a little fist pump and "YES!" or whatever it is you naturally do when you do something awesome. (Take a moment and think about what you do when something awesome happens. Then, DO THAT as you install your Tiny Habit!!)

Basic idea: When we do that IMMEDIATELY after taking action (not in a month after a bunch of little wins lead to a big win but RIGHT AFTER WE DO IT), we hack our brains to give us a little burst of dopamine that activates our reward centers and makes our habits much more likely to stick (and stick at a much faster velocity).

Throw in a little [With Winning in Mind](#) "That's like me!!" and we're well on our way to creating an even more powerful Identity.

BJ also tells us: *"Celebration will one day be ranked alongside mindfulness and gratitude as daily practices that contribute most to our overall happiness and well-being. If you learn just one thing from my entire book, I hope it's this: Celebrate your tiny successes. This one small shift in your life can have a massive impact even when you feel there is no way up or out of your situation. Celebration can be your lifeline."*

So, yah. Let's celebrate and get our Tiny Habit making Shine on. TODAY.

B

Brian Johnson,
Heroic Philosopher CEO

About the Author of This Note

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Brian Johnson is the Founder + CEO of Heroic. He's spent half of the last 25 years as a Founder/CEO and the other half as a Philosopher. Brian loves integrating ancient wisdom and modern science to help YOU become the best, most heroic version of yourself so we can create a world in which 51% of humanity is flourishing by 2051. Learn more at heroic.us.

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