

DO IT FOR A DAY

DAY 4 – LICK THE HONEY

“Write the vision, and make it plain upon tablets.” – Habakkuk 2:2, KJV

In 1965, a social psychologist named Howard Leventhal designed four pamphlets to promote the tetanus shot among Yale University seniors. These pamphlets were divided into **two categories: low fear and high fear**. The difference? The low-fear pamphlets had no pictures. The high-fear pamphlets, on the other hand, included shocking photographs of people who had suffered the side effects of tetanus.

Fear is a powerful motivator, but evidently it's not powerful enough to guarantee follow-through. There was only a 1% difference in vaccination rates between the low fear and high fear group of students!

But Leventhal had added a second variable that proved to be much more powerful than fear, “between low fear and high fear, the pamphlets **fell into the low-specificity and high-specificity categories**. The low-specificity pamphlet promoted the vaccine, but did not specify when, where, or how. The highly specific pamphlet included a map of the campus with hours and the location of the health center where students could be vaccinated.

The results? Only 3% of students in the low specificity category were vaccinated. The success rate among students in the high-specificity category was ten times higher: 30% received the tetanus shot.

Specificity was the silver bullet, and still is! The technical term is “implementation intention,” **and it's critical when it comes to making and breaking habits. If you don't specify when and where and how, good luck with that.**

“Imagine you set up a appointment with some people and ask them when and where they want to meet. They answer: “wherever, whenever”. Flexibility is greatly appreciated, but that meeting is never going to happen, is it? **Good intentions are good, but they are not good enough**. Do you remember how your habits should be? **Your habits have to be measurable, meaningful and maintainable.**

Make an appointment with yourself. For what? **For everything!** Schedule date nights, gym time and personal retreats. No, you don't have to schedule shower time; that's going too far. But generally speaking, **if it's not on your schedule, it's not going to happen!**”

“In the field of behavioral economics, nudge theory analyzes the way small prompts can have a major impact on behavior.”

“Aad Kieboom is a *choice architect*. In fact, we all are! **As parents, we engage with our children through choice architecture all the time.** How? We turn vegetables into airplanes and fly them into your mouth! Our tactics get more sophisticated as we get older, and we resort to things like reverse psychology. But the principle of the architecture of choice remains the same. **We devise ways to motivate or discourage different behaviors.** Of course we do the same with ourselves. **It is the third phase of the cycle of a habit: imagining the prize. And that is the key to self-motivation.**”

“How do we implement those kinds of prompts when it comes to habit formation? How do we nudge ourselves and others? How do we reverse engineer our environment to maximize good habits and minimize bad ones?”

“**Nudge theory** may be new, but the idea is as old as the Torah. If you lived in Judea in the first century, your formal education would begin at the age of six in the local synagogue school called Bet Sefer. The first lesson? The rabbi would cover the students’ slates with honey and instruct them to lick the honey while reciting **Psalm 119:103: “How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!”**”

“The teacher was creating a **positive association, a positive addiction.** The goal was to catalyze a craving for the Word of God—helping students “taste and see that the Lord is good.”⁷ What do you think those students thought of every time they tasted honey? It was their first lesson, and it left a lasting taste in their mouths. Fun fact? **Honey is the only food that lasts forever.**”

Habit formation not only misdirects neural connections, but creates new desires. The key is to feed the good wishes while starving the bad ones.”

“To break bad habits, the aversive stimulus is an effective stopgap.

When I was in junior school, I wouldn't stop biting my nails. How did I break that habit? I started using a clear nail polish that turns your stomach if you swallow it. **The aversive stimulus was an effective** short-term strategy, but there is a better way to recycle your bad habits. **It's called habit change.** It is breaking bad habits by replacing them with good habits.

You can break a bad habit by not doing it, and it can work for a week or two. But it is not a long-term solution. Spiritually speaking, you don't stop sinning by not sinning. ”

“Habit change is about replacing a bad habit with a good one, and it takes time and effort. According to Dr. Glasser, it takes a minimum of forty to sixty minutes a day to cultivate a positive addiction. And it could take six months or more. Of course thirty days will give you an advantageous position. Don't feel overwhelmed by how long it may take. Do it for a day!”

“Not only do pre-decisions reduce decision fatigue, but they also have a ripple effect.

Is there any previous decision that you have to make?

Is there a parameter set that you need to change?

Is there a push you have to resist?”

“HOW DO I MAKE IT A HABIT?

Put it in writing!

That principle has hundreds of applications, but putting things in writing has **two main benefits. The first is clarity.** The process of putting things down on paper forces us to be precise. It is the way in which we take our thoughts captive with the twenty-seven letters of the Spanish alphabet and make them obedient to Christ. That counts for goals and also for gratitude!

The second effect is memory. Writing things down on paper has a generation effect: it has been shown that we have better memories for things we have written than for things we simply read.”

“The shortest pencil is longer than the longest memory. Writing encodes things in long-term memory.

Are your life goals in writing?

How about your core values? What about your personal definition of success? Do you keep a gratitude journal? A prayer journal?

“If you have a mobile phone, it's as simple as **downloading the Bible** in digital format. The key, and the best way to put it into practice, is **a daily Bible reading plan.** It's one

of the best prior decisions you've ever made. It not only serves as preventive medicine, but also creates a desire for the Word of God.

Lick the honey!"

Excerpt From

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