



# The Habit Shift

A practical guide to building healthy habits that stick—designed to help you feel stronger, more in control, and confident in your routine.

## WELCOME, I'M REALLY GLAD YOU'RE HERE.

Over the years, I've learned that healthy change doesn't come from overhauling your entire life overnight. It comes from small, consistent choices—habits that add up quietly, until one day you look back and realise just how far you've come.

I created this guide to help you build the kind of habits that actually fit your life. The ones that make you feel proud, not pressured. James Clear says in *Atomic Habits*, "You do not rise to the level of your goals. You fall to the level of your systems." That line stuck with me—because I know firsthand what it's like to have big goals and feel stuck about where to start. This guide is the start.

You'll also see ideas from *The Power of Habit* by Charles Duhigg, which explains how habits form, and why understanding the structure behind them makes it easier to change. It's not just about motivation—it's about understanding how habits work, and building the right ones with intention.

Whether you want to feel better in your body, get more organised, or just regain a bit of control over your routine, this guide is here to support you. Take what you need, go at your own pace, and don't worry about doing it perfectly. We're not chasing perfection here—we're building momentum.

Let's begin!

*Briony*

The Holistic Health PT



# THE HABIT LOOP

## *How Habits Work*

Before we can change our habits, we need to understand how they actually form.

In *The Power of Habit*, Charles Duhigg introduced the concept of the habit loop—a simple but powerful framework that explains how behaviours are triggered, repeated, and reinforced over time. This idea has since been expanded by authors like James Clear (*Atomic Habits*) to include the emotional and psychological drivers that keep habits going, good or bad.

This section will walk you through what a habit loop is, why it matters, and how recognising your own loops can help you build better habits (or break unhelpful ones). Once you understand the pattern, you can begin to rewrite it.

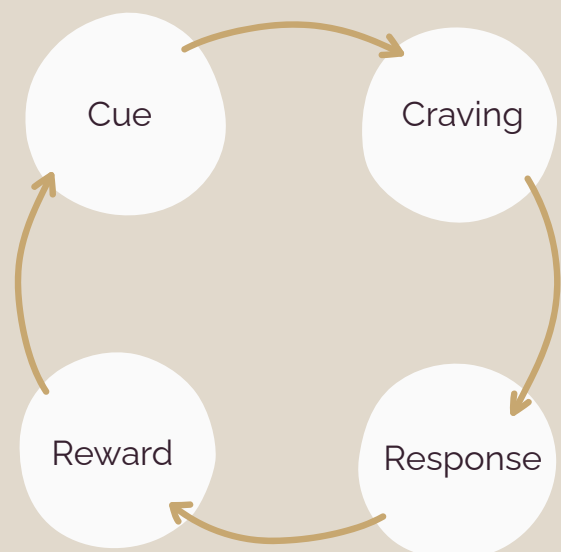
### Let's break it down.

In *The Power of Habit*, Charles Duhigg outlines the basic loop that drives all habitual behaviour:

- Cue – the trigger for a behaviour
- Routine – the behaviour itself
- Reward – the benefit or relief you get from the behaviour

James Clear builds on this by adding more nuance:

- Cue – what initiates the behaviour
- Craving – the emotional or psychological desire
- Response – the actual habit
- Reward – the outcome that reinforces the habit



# THE HABIT LOOP

## *How Habits Work*

Understanding this framework allows us to build good habits by designing intentional cues and rewarding behaviours—and to break bad ones by interrupting the loop.

### Positive Habit Loop (Morning Workout)

- Cue: Your workout clothes are hung up all together for the morning
- Craving: You want to get your workout done before work
- Response: You get dressed and go and workout
- Reward: You feel great after

This is a simple loop, but over time, it becomes automatic—and those small wins build real momentum.



On the other hand, if you aren't careful you could easily fall into a negative Habit Loop

- Cue: Feeling stressed
- Craving: A need to decompress
- Response: Grab a glass of wine
- Reward: Temporary relaxation

This loop may offer short-term relief, but it reinforces the pattern. The goal isn't to force yourself to break it—it's to swap in a different response that still meets the need.



# THE FOUR LAWS OF BEHAVIOUR CHANGE

*Make habits work for you*

James Clear's Atomic Habits breaks down habit formation into four essential laws. These are practical strategies to build good habits and break unhelpful ones—and they align with everything you've been learning so far in this guide.

If you've ever felt like habits are hard to build or impossible to break, these four laws offer a clear and actionable framework to make it easier.

## **1. Make it Obvious**

Clarity is key—your brain needs clear cues to know when a habit should start. The more visible and specific, the better.

- Good habit tip: Leave your gym kit by the door, or schedule your training in your calendar.
- Bad habit breaker: Hide the chocolate, turn off app notifications, or delete social media from your home screen.

## **2. Make it Attractive**

We're more likely to repeat habits we want to do. Pair your new habit with something you enjoy, or tie it to a personal identity that excites you.

- Good habit tip: Listen to your favourite podcast while walking, or train to a playlist you love.
- Bad habit breaker: Reframe it—think about how you'll feel after skipping that scroll session or takeaway.

## **3. Make it Easy**

The best habits are frictionless. If it feels like too much effort, your brain will look for an excuse. Simplify the process—shorten the time, remove barriers, or reduce the steps.

- Good habit tip: Use pre-written workouts, like the ones in your app, or batch-cook meals to make healthy eating easy.
- Bad habit breaker: Increase friction—log out of apps, put the wine in the garage, or unsubscribe from marketing emails.



# THE FOUR LAWS OF BEHAVIOUR CHANGE

*Make habits work for you*

## 4. Make it Satisfying

Immediate rewards help habits stick. Your brain craves feedback, so make it feel good.

- Good habit tip: Tick off your habit tracker in the app, or write down what you're proud of each day.
- Bad habit breaker: Remove the reward—swap “relaxing with Netflix and snacks” for a walk and a hot shower instead.

### **Bonus tip: Invert the laws to break bad habits**

If you want to stop doing something, flip the framework:

- Make it invisible
- Make it unattractive
- Make it difficult
- Make it unsatisfying

This isn't about self-control—it's about smart systems. Set your environment up to support your goals, and you won't have to rely on willpower alone.



# FOUNDATIONS OF BEHAVIOUR CHANGE

*Simple Shifts. Lasting Change*

## What Actually Makes Habits Stick

Lasting habit change doesn't just come from good intentions—it comes from understanding the foundations that help behaviour take root. Here are some of the most powerful, evidence-based principles from habit science to help you shift from stop-start frustration into sustainable, consistent change.

<b>Clarity Beats Motivation</b>	<p>Motivation will come and go. But clarity? That's what gets results. Vague goals like "I want to eat better" or "I should stretch more" don't give your brain a clear instruction.</p> <p>Instead, break it down. Be specific: e.g. "I'll prep my lunches on Sunday night."</p> <p><b>Clarity creates direction. And direction makes consistency easier.</b></p>
<b>Environment Shapes Behaviour</b>	<p>Your environment can either support your goals or sabotage them. In <i>Tiny Habits</i>, BJ Fogg writes, "Design beats discipline." If your journal's buried in a drawer, you won't write in it. If your gym kit is out and ready, you're more likely to train.</p> <p>Stack the odds in your favour: e.g. Want to drink more water? Keep a bottle on your desk.</p> <p><b>Small changes to your space can lead to big changes in your habits.</b></p>
<b>Repetition Over Perfection</b>	<p>You don't need perfect weeks—you need repeated action. The goal isn't to be flawless. The goal is to keep going.</p> <p>If you miss one day, it's nothing. If you miss two, it becomes a pattern. The solution? Aim for "never two in a row."</p> <p><b>That one mindset shift keeps the wheels turning—even when life gets messy.</b></p>
<b>Make It Obvious</b>	<p>The simpler it is to start, the more likely it is to happen. e.g. Want to write daily? Put your notebook on your pillow.</p> <p>When the cue is visible, your brain takes less convincing.</p> <p><b>This links back to the cue in your habit loop—and why it's the most powerful place to start.</b></p>
<b>Track Progress, Not Just Effort</b>	<p>Your brain loves seeing progress. Whether it's a tick on a habit tracker (like on my app), a weight lifted in the gym, or meals prepped for the week—it all counts.</p> <p>Tracking helps reinforce the identity you're building: the kind of person who does the thing.</p> <p><b>Don't just guess your progress. See it. Celebrate it. Let it fuel you.</b></p>



# KEYSTONE HABITS & HABIT STACKING

## *Catalysts for Lasting Change*

Not all habits are created equal. Some pack more punch than others. These are keystone habits—routines that, once established, naturally influence other behaviours. Charles Duhigg introduced this idea in *The Power of Habit*, highlighting how certain keystone habits act like dominoes. Start with one, and you'll often find other positive changes following behind.

### **So, what makes a habit 'keystone'?**

It isn't about how dramatic the habit looks—it's about its ripple effect. A keystone habit often:

- Builds confidence and identity ("I'm someone who follows through")
- Encourages structure and better time management
- Triggers other positive behaviours (like eating better after starting to train regularly)
- Reinforces self-efficacy—you prove to yourself that change is possible

### **How can you use them?**

Start by asking:

- What small action would have the biggest impact on the rest of my day?
- What makes me feel more 'on it', grounded, or motivated when I do it consistently?

For many of my clients, it's:

- Doing a short walk first thing
- Logging food once a day
- Getting into bed at a set time
- Scheduling workouts each Sunday

These aren't just habits—they're anchors. The kind that keep your day (and your goals) steady.



# KEYSTONE HABITS & HABIT STACKING

## *Catalysts for Lasting Change*

James Clear introduced habit stacking in *Atomic Habits* as a way to make new habits easier to remember and embed. The idea is simple: tie your new habit to something you're already doing.

### **The formula:**

After I [*current habit*], I will [*new habit*].

This works because your brain already recognises the cue of the existing habit, so you're piggybacking on a reliable routine instead of starting from scratch.

Examples:

- After I boil the kettle, I'll fill my water bottle.
- After I brush my teeth, I'll write one thing I'm proud of.
- After I close my laptop, I'll lay out my gym kit for the morning.

Over time, these pairings become automatic. You're not just building one habit—you're creating a chain reaction. This is especially powerful when you use it to reinforce a keystone habit.

Want to get stronger? Stack your strength training session with a post-workout reflection.

Want to eat better? Stack your food shop with a 5-minute meal planning check-in.

It's a small shift, but it makes consistency feel simple—and sustainable.



# MINDSET SHIFTS THAT MATTER

*Upgrade How You Think*

Sometimes it's not your routine that needs changing—it's your perspective. Lasting behaviour change isn't just about what you do. It's about how you think about what you do.

These mindset shifts aren't quick fixes—they're upgrades. Subtle shifts in thinking that make your habits easier to start, easier to stick to, and a lot more meaningful.

Here are some powerful mindset pivots to work with:

## **"I have to" → "I get to"**

Reframing your habits as privileges, not punishments, makes them more sustainable. You don't have to move your body—you get to move in a way that feels good. This shift is small, but it matters.

## **Progress over perfection**

A missed day isn't a failure. It's just part of the process. You're not aiming to be flawless—you're aiming to be consistent enough that it becomes automatic.

## **Discipline is kindness**

Setting boundaries, getting to bed on time, choosing the habit that helps rather than the one that numbs—these aren't punishments. They're self-respect in action.

## **Identity first, outcomes second**

From Atomic Habits: focus on becoming the person who does the thing, not the person who chases the result. Don't just aim to write more—be a writer. Don't just plan to lift weights—be a lifter. Behaviour follows belief.

## **Replace motivation with momentum**

Motivation is unreliable. Build friction-free habits that you can do even on the days you're not feeling it. Once you've started, momentum takes over—and that's where change happens.



# BUILDING YOUR OWN HEALTHY HABITS

*Your habits, your way*

The best habits are the ones that fit your real life—not some all-or-nothing version of it. Whether your goal is to feel stronger, get more organised, or just feel a little more in control, this is where it starts: with small, intentional actions you can actually stick to.

Inside The Holistic Health PT app, you'll find a custom habit tracker designed to support your fitness journey. We can build out daily habits together—tailored to your goals, your lifestyle, and what matters most to you. These habits are fully customisable, so whether you're focusing on mindset, movement, or something totally personal, you'll have the tools and reminders to help you stay on track.

I try to focus on five key areas—Mindset, Nutrition, Exercise, Routine, and Recovery—because real progress isn't one-dimensional.



Together, these habits create momentum—and that's where lasting change begins.



# TROUBLESHOOTING & STAYING CONSISTENT

*When Plans Go Sideways*

## Make Progress Feel Possible

Even with the best intentions, things won't always go to plan—and that's normal. Consistency doesn't mean never missing a day. It means learning how to respond when life throws you off course.

This section is all about helping you keep going when motivation dips, routines get messy, or the habit you picked doesn't quite stick. Because success isn't about never slipping—it's about always coming back.

Here are some practical strategies to keep in your back pocket:

- **Missed a day?** No drama. Just aim for “never two in a row.”
- **All or nothing?** Try “some is better than none.”
- **Feeling stuck?** Shrink the habit. Make it smaller, easier, or faster.
- **Accountability helps.** A study in *The American Journal of Preventive Medicine* showed public accountability significantly improves habit follow-through.
- **Make it visible.** Use a paper tracker, tick off your app habits, or just scribble it on a post-it.
- **Celebrate small wins.** They reinforce the behaviour loop and build belief.

The goal isn't perfection. It's momentum—and the more tools you have to stay on track, the easier that becomes.



# SMALL STEPS, BIG SHIFTS

You've made it to the end of this guide—and I hope by now you're starting to see that real change doesn't come from extremes. It comes from the quiet, consistent choices you make each day. You don't need to do it all. You just need to keep showing up.

The most powerful thing I've learned—both for myself and for my clients—is that you don't need more willpower or motivation. You need systems that support the kind of life you want to live. You need habits that feel like you.

So whether you're choosing one small thing to focus on or building momentum with a few, remember this: you are not starting from scratch. You're building from experience, intention, and self-respect.

Keep it simple. Make it doable. Let it evolve.

I'm cheering you on, every step of the way.

*Briony*

The Holistic Health PT

