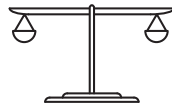
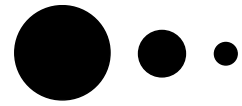
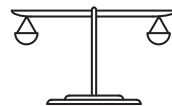


THE GROWTH MARATHON

— One Stride At a Time —



FOUR LAWS OF BEHAVIOR CHANGE



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———— **One Stride At a Time** ————

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Introduction

James proposes a framework that can allow one to create new habits or break old (unwanted) ones called **The 4 laws of behavior change** (Which are linked to the 4 stages of habit discussed in this [article](#)). The original 4 laws help in the creation of habits, while the inverses of the 4 laws help break habits.

The 4 laws are as follows:

- Cue, **The First Law: Make it obvious.**
- Craving, **The Second Law: Make it attractive.**
- Response, **The Third Law: Make it easy.**
- Reward, **The Fourth Law: Make it satisfying.**

The inverses of the 4 laws are as follows:

- Cue, **Inversion of the First Law: Make it invisible.**
- Craving, **Inversion of the Second Law: Make it unattractive.**
- Response, **Inversion of the Third Law: Make it difficult.**
- Reward, **Inversion of the Fourth Law: Make it unsatisfying.**

The First Law: Make It Obvious

When was the last time you mindlessly used your phone just because it was in your vicinity? For a lot of us it's probably within the past 5–10 mins. Many of our daily actions are driven by the most obvious option.

James provides an example in which just by rearranging the layout of a cafeteria and having water bottles at more conspicuous locations, the behavior of consumers changed, with the number of soda sales decreasing and the number of water bottle sales increasing. It is important to note that this was without any additional motivation.

We are more dependent on vision than any other sense, and visual cues are the greatest catalysts of our behavior. Hence, a small change in what we see can lead to a big change in what we do. I have a bass guitar for example, I have postponed learning how to play it for months now, partly because I have more important things to do, but mainly because it is in one of my cupboards, out of sight.

For every habit you want to build, determine what the cue of that habit is, and find a way to make that cue visible and in your environment. Make sure you can easily see it every day. You want to drink more water? Always have a bottle of water next to you (The bottle should have water, of course, if empty, refill it). Want to do yoga more often? Keep that yoga mat where you can see it every day. Want to snack healthily? Get rid of those Doritos and keep a fresh fruit basket where you can see it, etc.

the space). Take 5 minutes to think about a habit you want to have, and how to reduce the friction around it.

At the moment I am writing this, I write every weekday from 19:30 to 20:30 (this reduces the friction of figuring out at what time to write during the day). I have a desk, my laptop, and an extra monitor always ready (no friction associated with setting my space). I have a playlist set for writing to prevent me from being distracted from external noise (this takes care of the friction of trying to concentrate due to external disturbances). The final friction I get rid of before writing is my phone, I switch it off and keep it more than an arm's length away from me (It'll take me time to get to it and even more time to switch it back on). With all these in place, it is quite easy for me to get into the mood of writing once I am seated with my earphones on.

Another excellent way to make a habit easy is to break it down into a simple version and do that. Once mastered, you can increase its "difficulty" till you reach the level you want to achieve.

Making a behavior easy or less difficult than required is a good step towards repeatedly doing it. James discusses this law from Chapter 11 to Chapter 14. Some tools he provides to help make a habit easy are:

- [The 2-minute rule](#)
- [The 2-minute rule + Habit Shaping](#)
- [Commitment device](#)
- [Technology for automation](#)

The Fourth Law: Make It Satisfying

Our brains are wired for immediate gratification. Pleasure teaches the brain that a behavior is worth remembering and repeating. That is why scrolling on social media, snacking, drinking etc. are difficult habits to break. James has a general rule, which states that the more immediate pleasure you get from an action, the stronger you should question whether it aligns with your long-term goals. In this case, I think he means those behaviors that have an addictive property (super stimulants) like scrolling on the phone, watching porn, smoking etc.

Most behaviors that will be rewarding in the long run are associated with delayed gratification. I touch on immediate gratification vs delayed gratification [here](#). Even though we are not yet wired for delayed gratification, it is important to work with the grain of human nature, not against it. The best way to do this is to add a bit of pleasure to the habits that pay off in the long run and a bit of immediate pain to the ones that don't. As the cardinal rule of behavior change goes, "*What is immediately rewarded is repeated, what is immediately punished is avoided*". This ensures that the behavior is memorable and that the mind remembers that there is something good at the end of the behavior, hence creating a sense of craving.

Without making a habit satisfying, it is quite difficult to continue it over a long period. Personally, just completing a challenge is rewarding for me, hence I think we need to each understand what we consider a reward. Does the reward agree with who you are trying to be? If not, then maybe reconsider your reward. If you want to be an athlete and your reward after running 10km is drinking 5 cans of beer then maybe reconsider it, because that reward will just be a hurdle towards becoming an athlete.

James discusses this law from Chapter 15 to Chapter 17. Some tools he provides to help make a habit satisfying are as follows:

- [Reinforcement](#)
- [Habit Tracker](#)
- [Never Miss Twice](#)
- [Habit Contract](#)

Conclusion

In summary, James provides 4 laws that can be used to create/form sustainable habits. Doing the inverse of those laws helps in breaking habits you don't like.

Visit Jamesclear.com to see the great work James has put together. My advice is for you to also get Atomic Habits and pick ideas that might not have resonated with me but are relevant in your case. Let me know in the [comment section](#) what you think about this article.