

CRASH COURSE ON HABIT EVOLUTION

According to Behavioral Science



Habit is habit, and not to be flung out of the window by any man, but coaxed downstairs a step at a time.

— MARK TWAIN

When I studied Ayurveda, yoga, and enlightenment, I was told which habits I should be doing daily. Almost no attention was paid to behavioral science or how humans actually evolve their habits.

Before diving into the 10 Body Thrive habits, pick up a tactic or two from behavioral science and yoga philosophy. When you know how to evolve your habits, progress is informed, imminent, and easier. We'll start with the most basic strategies and build from there. Refer to this chapter and pick a tactic when you are stuck in a rut.

Identity Evolution + Your Hero's Journey

As Joseph Campbell would say, you are on your hero's journey. The call to adventure, the initiation, and the return with the elixir are the path of body thrive.

The common theme on your hero's journey is that you can't remain the same. The initiation into better habits will change you. Your identity must uplevel.

In the words of habit expert James Clear: "The key to building lasting habits is focusing on creating a new identity first. Your current behaviors are simply a reflection of your current identity. What you do now is a mirror image of the type of person you believe that you are (either consciously or subconsciously). To change your behavior for good, you need to start believing new things about yourself."²

You can expect all the trials, exasperations and pitfalls inherent in a hero's journey. Identify who you are becoming and who

you have been, and the call to adventure will carry you through a rewarding return to a better version of yourself. Use the identity evolution exercise in your free workbook.

First, you need to get crystal clear on what *you* want. Be particular about your energy, your weight, your flexibility, your strength, or how your body ages. There is so much you can intentionally design.

We all want to thrive. We all want to experience the bliss of our biochemistry. Check any that apply.

- Consistent energy
- Better sleep
- A toned, flexible body
- To wake rested, refreshed, clear-headed
- Smooth digestion
- Easy elimination
- To move easily
- Upbeat, relaxed emotions
- A more organized household
- Healthy, fast meal preparation
- Less stress, anxiety or depression
- To age gracefully
- Healthy cravings
- More time

Circle what you want the most from what you checked above. This is your potential, and this book will get you on track to experiencing exactly the kind of integrated health called thrive.

When you are thriving you will also experience:

- A robust immune system
- Heartfelt, intimate relationships
- A clear purpose to your life
- An open and expansive perspective
- Fired-up dreams that you stretch for
- Getting body-smarter as you grow older
- Reinforcement that you are an inspiration and a help to others
- That your speech reflects your depth, your care, and connectivity

Check off any of those results you want. Get clear on exactly what you want. Unless you know your *what*, you'll miss the mark. Now, get even more clear about what you want in these three ways:

1. **Specific and Measurable**—What you want needs to be specific and measurable. If it's a feeling, like less stress, you need to quantify it. Take a moment and get clear what this outcome will actually look like in real time. Less stress may turn into not working after dinner, bed by 10 p.m., training a housekeeper, setting an alarm for morning meditation, cutting work back to a predetermined 40 hours a week.

2. **Reality Check**—Are you sure, with certainty, that you want that outcome? Do you need to tweak it? Remember, design with the end in mind.
3. **Timeline**—Put it on the clock. Your *what* has to be time-bound to a *when*. When is your desired completion date? Reverse engineer your future self.

Know Your Why

Now that you know your *what*, what is your *why*? Why do you want body thrive?

Your *why* needs to be laser sharp, one-pointed, what the yogis term *ekagrata*. Take a moment before proceeding. What is your *why* behind your desire for body thrive? Write that down. If my what is: *I want to lose 12 pounds in 10 weeks*, my why is *so that I have more energy for my kids, so that my clothes fit better, and so that it's easier to work out*.

Get clear on your *why* and it will serve as rocket fuel to move you through resistance. Resistance is the momentum of our outdated patterns. Resistance can arise at any time in this process to pull you back to the starting line. Get clear on your *why* and you have a rocket in your pocket.

Trust your why. Don't let the part of you that puts a kibosh on your potential get any face time here. Receive your intention like you would a gift from a wise elder who is looking out for you.

Use an Anchor Statement

An *anchor statement* grounds your big *why* by reducing it to a few words that center you. In yoga, the first anchor statements were termed *mahavakya* and have been used for millennia to anchor people's perspectives in their greatest capacities. Examples of mahavakyas:

I am love itself.

I am the same as the universe.

All wisdom is available to me.

You can bring a mahavakya into your personal growing edge with an anchor statement:

I am healthy, lean and strong.

I am grounded and steady.

I rise and shine.

I am energy in motion.

I nourish myself.

I love water.

Take a moment and turn your *why* into an anchor statement. Make it pithy, short and reflective of the emotion you want to feel. You have decided. As Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "Whenever you make a decision, the whole universe conspires on your behalf."

Write your why on a sticky note. Put it on your bathroom mirror. Each morning it will form your intention, your *sankalpa*. Now you're using your high beams to get where you want to go and

avoid accidents along the way. When you don't know your *why*, you're myopic.

You have your mantra. Words crystalize into form. Speak it and it becomes you. Prompt what you want to increase. In the words of William James:

*Seize the very first possible opportunity to act on every resolution you make, and on every emotional prompting you may experience in the direction of the habits you aspire to gain.*³

By invoking the power of the word, you point your cellular vibration in the direction you want to go. Do this repeatedly and you travel by a direct route. Use the “what, why, anchor statement” worksheet in your free workbook at www.bodythrive.com/free.

Kaizen Your Habits

Kaizen means *good change* and refers to the philosophy of *applying continuous, daily, small improvements*. Kaizen (though not by this name) was developed in the U.S. during the Second World War to efficiently convert and optimize factories for wartime production. Eventually, the kaizen method was adopted with remarkable success by leaders in personal development and habit evolution.

We all know kaizen on some level. It's part of our ancestral folk medicine. Here are two:

- * *An apple a day keeps the doctor away.*
- * *Early to bed, early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise.*

Kaizen is the one-percent improvement per day that leverages the compound effect. Look at the “apple a day keeps the doctor away” example. Apples are chock full of apple pectin, which has

a nourishing, lubricating, soothing effect on the colon. The pectin is a water-soluble fiber surrounded by a juicy fruit which makes a slippery goop. It winds through your guts and stimulates peristalsis. When taken daily, the apple promotes a lifetime of terrific bowel movements which prevent the horrible diseases stemming from constipation and loose stools.

To accelerate your success with habit evolution, go black belt on kaizen. What are the easy upgrades—the smallest, most incremental improvements or baby steps—you can make today that will make your tomorrow a little better, a little easier? Write that down and commit to it. The step or new habit should *underwhelm* you.

The problem with kaizen, for most of us, is that it seems too easy. When you get inspired to change or upgrade a habit, you want big returns. You bite off more than you can chew, which guarantees you'll fail. The kaizen approach makes the bite small enough that you hardly notice as it nudges you in the direction you want to go.

B.J. Fogg's Human Behavior Model⁴

B.J. Fogg is the director of the Persuasive Technology Lab at Stanford University, where revolutions in behavior science are brewing. Fogg's breakthrough research on what makes us change behavior identifies that we need motivation, ability, and a trigger to converge in the same moment.

Fogg's three-step method to better habits:

1. **Get specific**—Translate target outcomes and goals into behaviors.
2. **Make it easy**—How can you make the behavior easy to do?
3. **Trigger the behavior**—What will prompt the behavior?

To find your trigger for a better habit, use this simple sentence from Fogg:

“Right after I _____, I will _____.”

For example, right after I wake up, I will scrape my tongue. Or right after I do the dinner dishes, I will brush and floss. (You are less likely to eat before going to bed.)

Notice how simple and specific the behavior or new habit is. Double check to make sure it’s specific and easy. The idea is to set low on the motivational scale. In the brush teeth example, you didn’t say “stop eating after washing dishes.” You don’t need motivation. You just need to set a trigger for a specific action.

Fogg states the best triggers are:

- * Location
- * Time
- * Emotional state
- * Other people
- * An immediately preceding action

B.J. Fogg invites us to remember the secret to changing human behavior—keep both your desired behavior and your trigger simple. This means a lot from the dude with a Ph.D. who runs the behavior lab at Stanford. As Fogg says, “*Simplicity changes behavior.*”

Trigger, Habit, Reward

There is one more teaching worth familiarizing yourself with to automate better habits. Charles Duhigg, the dude who made habits famous with his bestseller *The Power of Habit*, identifies three core

elements that make up a habit loop:⁵

1. A specific **trigger** or cue. Remember the five common cues: *location, time, emotional state, other people, immediately preceding action.*
2. The routine or specific **action**.
3. The **reward** or something that satisfies an urge.

Duhigg forewarns that redesigning your habits is a bit of a process. Figuring out your current undesired behaviors in terms of the actual cues and rewards requires sleuthing. When redesigning habits, you need to identify the current cue that is signaling the outdated habit and corresponding reward. But before that, you need to find a more appropriate reward.

“By experimenting with different rewards, you can isolate what you are *actually* craving, which is essential in redesigning the habit.” Once that is solved, you figure out your cue, and make a better plan. He gives a framework for the process:

1. Identify the routine
2. Experiment with rewards
3. Isolate the cue
4. Have a plan

“Yes, And”

“Yes, and” is a rule of improvisational comedy that requires members of a troop to say “yes” to whatever invitation they have been given, and to add to the building narrative. “Yes, and” is the opposite of “No, but.” The rule is similar to a yogic principle of

seeing the *Shri* or recognizing the good, the true, or the beautiful in any given situation.

As you read through the habits, the voice in your head will naturally resist some of the habit changes. The voice may say, “No, but I can’t do that. I can’t go to bed any earlier, I have so much that needs to get done.” That is classic “No, but.”

See if you can turn your “No, buts” into “Yes, ands.” “Yes, getting more sleep sounds great. And I can probably go to bed five minutes earlier this week.” For those responsible for children, teach them about “No, buts” and “Yes, ands.” You can make it a game with yourself and those with whom your habits intertwine.

Architect Your Choices, Design Your Environment

Set up your outer environment to encourage the budding habit. “Choice architecture” is the careful design of the environments in which you make choices.

You want to make your new pattern the default. You want to make your old pattern more difficult to reinstate. How can you design your environment to make that happen? Write down 10 ideas. Then take action. Your environment is malleable. Your home should continually shift as a reflection of your upgrading habits.

Read examples of how to architect your choices to stabilize budding habits:

- * If you want to eat healthier, stock your fridge with cut-up, ready-to-eat vegetables. Compost or give away the processed food.
- * If you want to start jogging in the morning, set out your running outfit and shoes the night before.

- * If you want to start drinking herbal tea instead of coffee, set out your teapot and teabag the night before. Put your coffee in the garage if you can't bear to part with it.
- * If you want to start meditating, start by creating a space to sit, and practice sitting there for just a moment at a time. Refine the space before you begin the habit.
- * If you want more space and time in your life, declutter your house once and for all with Marie Kondo's method.

If your home environment creates barriers to your new habit, you will fail. Architect your choices to gain traction.

Work Toward Automation

At some point in your body-thrive journey, you will become aware that the habits you longed to establish have become automated. You do them efficiently, without resistance, without deciding in the moment.

Making too many decisions creates decision fatigue. The beauty of habit automation is that you only decide once. You decide, "I will eat dinner by 6 p.m." You decide on your trigger. Now the work is automation.

When good habits are automated, you free up tremendous energy for creativity. Work toward automation and you smooth the edgy path of habit evolution.

Power of the Posse

Our peers can elevate or undermine us. In this process of upleveling your habits, you want to choose your peer support wisely. Connect with people who are on the wavelength you want to be

on. For me, that took consciously putting myself in groups (like our Body Thrive Groups), hiring coaches, and attending trainings. You can put together a local Body Thrive Book Group and plunge in together.

If at any time in the process of evolving your habits you feel stuck or overwhelmed, chances are you need the power of the posse. Otherwise, you'll feel frustrated and overwhelmed by the "running in place" conversations. When you try to evolve in isolation or against the momentum of your current company, you make it 10 times harder.

I place myself in specific situations—like coaching groups and training events—where I'm bound to meet people who inspire me. We become fast friends and intentionally look for ways to support each other. I like how investor guru Warren Buffett describes this basic teaching: "It's better to hang out with people better than you. Pick out associates whose behavior is better than yours and you'll drift in that direction."⁶ You may find your growth path is more in sync with new friends than folks you have known your whole life.

Discover Your Keystone

For those who aren't masons or architecture aficionados, the *keystone* is the stone in the top of an archway. The keystone enables the arch to bear the weight of the load above, which may include the roof or another story. It is the rock that holds the archway together.

In the journey ahead, you want to zone in on the habit that holds together the universe of you, at the level where you can bear the load of life. What is the key habit that allows you to be a better version of yourself?

I'll give you an example. My keystone habit is to eat an earlier, lighter dinner. If I eat an earlier, lighter dinner, I get tired earlier. I

get a great night's sleep, ergo I wake up early with plenty of time to myself. I meditate and work out before the day officially begins. Throughout the day, because my body is oxygenated and my mind is centered, I crave healthy food.

An earlier, lighter dinner is the keystone that holds my body thrive routine together. If I blow that habit, how I feel the next day is a risky, uncertain matter, aka a crapshoot. If I make this habit a priority, I can uphold mountains on a regular basis. As you move through the habits, use the keystone habit worksheet at bodythrive.com/free.