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CONSULTING

Engage • Inspire • Empower

Path to Equity

Self-Directed Learning Guide

Module 7 :: The Habit Foundation

Driving Client + Business Development

*This program contains one
Professionalism Hour.*



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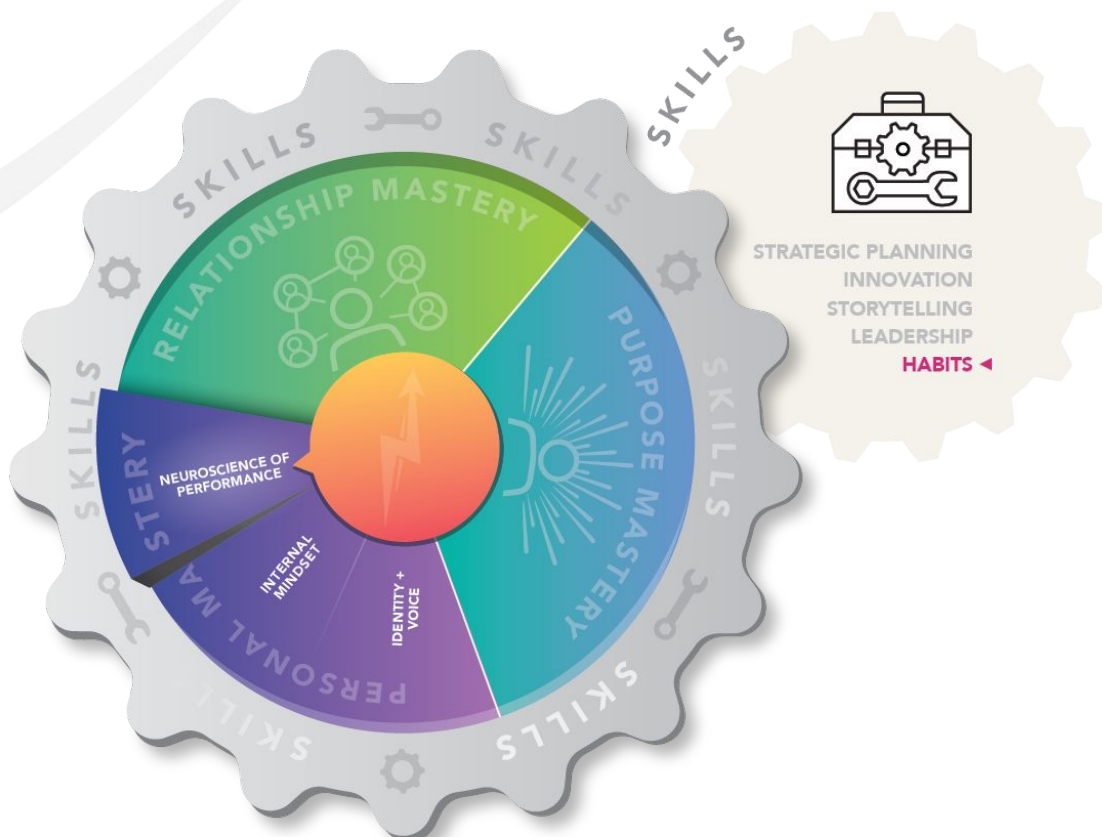
Placing Habits ::



Mastery Wheel™

Habits in Context ::

Habits is placed inside the *Personal Mastery Domain*, specifically within the Element of the *Neuroscience of Performance*. **Habits** are also one of the core **Skills**.



Why Habits Matter

Habits are vital to our success in virtually every aspect of our lives. The things we do consistently over time define who we are and how we live. The things we do consistently over time **without thinking about them** - habits - are those things that we have found to be effective and which we have put intention to, practiced again and again, and have simply become **habituated**, part of who we are and how we go through the world. For the sake of this Module we are focusing, of course, on **good habits**. Bad habits have their own effects - opposite and perhaps even more profound - but we will not be addressing those here. Below are two of the reasons that habits - good habits - matter to our success.

Compound Effect :: Developing the relationships that will provide you with a practice and a business that you love happens over time with consistent persistence, and your habits either **serve or sabotage** you along this journey. Your regular behaviours, especially those that become habituated, have more of an impact on your outcomes than do grand but sporadic behaviours. The outcomes that you enjoy as a result of behaviours you habituate exceed what would be a simple linear aggregation of the investment you make through them. Rather, their impact **compounds** over time in the same way that compound interest works - the outcomes grow exponentially.

You've heard us refer to this as a **Virtuous Cycle** before. Your actions or ideas or conversation don't just aggregate in a linear fashion; they actually improve in *quality* as well as *quantity*. Your actions/ideas/conversations lead to better actions/ideas/conversation which lead to better still actions/ideas/conversations. This is the compound effect of doing things over and over, with ever more intention and substance.

Identity :: Beyond the achievement of specific positive outcomes over time, your habits also shape and reflect your identity. Your behaviours need to be congruent with your self-belief or they will not last, and your behaviours also contribute to your sense of self. According to James Clear, what **you do** is an indication of the type of person you believe **you are** - either consciously or non-consciously, and your behaviours reinforce the identity associated with that behaviour. For example, if you are someone who sees themselves as a poor networker, you might resist taking actions toward connecting with people altogether or it may feel forced and awkward when you do take action. This then reinforces your self image as a poor or unnatural networker. But if you persist over time, you will become someone who doesn't just go to events or make a few calls, you will start to **see yourself** as someone who **is** a relationship builder. And this new identity will in turn affect the quality and quantity of your behaviours in this area.

Habits :: Definition + Deconstruction

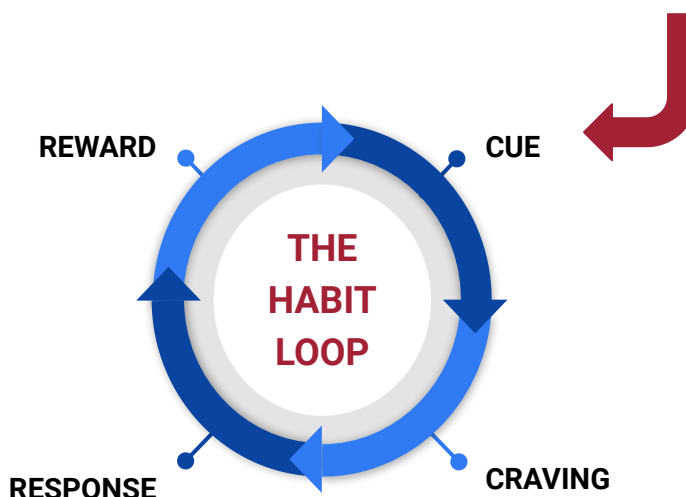
Habits are those behaviours that have been *repeated enough times to become automatic*. They are the things we do without conscious thought, for better or for worse. Think basic things like getting dressed in the morning to driving a car, to checking our phone before we even get out of bed. As Charles Duhigg sums it up, *“[w]ithout habit loops, our brains would shut down, overwhelmed by the minutiae of daily life.”* Imagine if we had to consciously think through the process of getting out of bed, using the washroom, getting dressed, eating breakfast every.single.day?! We’d never accomplish anything beyond that basic level of existence.

We know we need habits. So let’s deconstruct exactly what they are made of, so we can start to work with them.

Habits follow a loop pattern, and that loop is based on engaging in a behaviour to receive a reward.

1. The loop starts with a **cue** - something that triggers your behaviour or tells you it’s time to start your routine. The cue predicts the reward and encourages you to notice the reward.
2. The cue triggers a **response** - the actual thought or action you perform.
3. And finally the response delivers a **reward**, the end goal of every habit. The reward is WHAT you want. And the reward satisfies the craving.
4. **Cravings** are the motivational force behind every habit and they come between the cue and the response - you need to WANT the reward you’ve noticed. The craving is WHY you want the reward.

Ultimately, the craving and the reward become associated with the cue, prompting the loop to continue.



The Neuroscience of Habits

Our brains are optimally designed to create the habits which are so necessary to our functioning. Here's a primer on how the process works.

Subconscious Processing :: As you may remember our earlier Module on Neuroscience, your brain has three main processing systems: the conscious, subconscious and non-conscious. And you may also recall that the subconscious processing system actually drives 95% of your decisions, and hence your behaviours. Your subconscious brain is far more energy-efficient than your conscious brain, and so by default you're wired to drive as much as possible to that more energy-efficient subconscious brain and therefore free up bandwidth for other, higher-order processing. ***Your brain is literally wired to habituate as much as it can.***

Prediction :: The predictability of the reward or result of your actions is foundational to the habit loop. Your brain needs to know that your action will achieve the desired result more often than not in order to be interested in repeating that action. Your brain is a prediction machine. You continuously receive stimuli, analyse that information, and scan for what is important. When you experience something repeatedly, your brain notices what is important and files that away for future use, and uses this memory to decide when and how to act the next time it recognizes similar conditions. ***Rewards teach you which actions are worth remembering in the future.*** This continual scanning process involves not just what's important to you, but at a more basic level, risk and reward (think back to the SCARF model we introduced in the Neuroscience Module). Your brain is constantly scanning for rewards like pleasure or satisfaction, or the corollary risks of pain or disappointment. You seek rewards, and attempt to avoid risks. ***Rewards are the driving force of the habit loop,*** closing the feedback loop and completing the habit cycle.

Hebb's Law :: While your brain is built to entrench information - driving things under your consciousness, detecting, predicting and remembering rewards - your brain is also structured to change. Your brain is elastic, creating new connections and pathways all the time. The more you repeat an activity, the structure of your brain changes to become efficient with that activity. The strength of the connection between neurons in the brain increases with every repetition of an activity, and each time you repeat an action you activate that specific neural circuit. This is known as Hebb's Law - ***neurons that fire together, wire together - and this means that frequency matters more than linear time when creating habits.***

Doing something 30x in a month versus 5x in the same time period has a more significant impact. In fact, the brain scans of people who are masters in their fields show that their brain structure is physically altered by the effort they've put into achieving mastery. That 10,000 hours over 10 years matters more than the passage of 10 years.

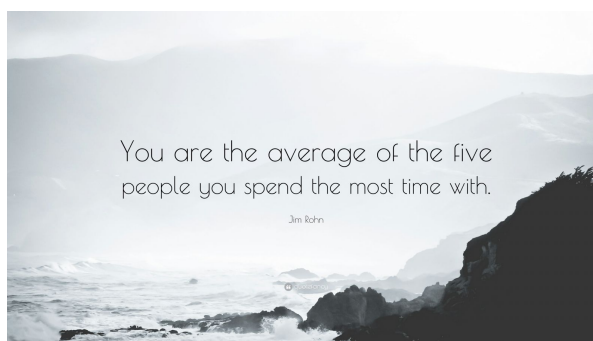
The Neuroscience of Habits, continued

Social Influence + Belonging :: Finally, our brains are wired for *belonging* which from an evolutionary perspective was predictive of our very survival. The need to belong makes behaviours that help us fit in attractive, and encourages us to imitate or mimic the habits of members of the group so that we will be recognized as a member of the group ourselves.

When we belong to the group, we participate in that shared identity. Aspects of that shared identity in turn reinforce our individual or personal identity. The impact of habits on identity, and identity on habits, was referenced earlier as a key reason why our habits matter.

Within the larger community in which we seek to belong, there are three groups of people who really matter, and we tend to imitate the habits of these three most often.

1. **People we are close to** - we pick up habits from the people around us - and the habits of the people around us reinforce our own thoughts and behaviours. It is often said that we are the sum total of the five people we spend the most time with (so choose your inner circle carefully!), and studies show that if, for instance, there are people in your immediate circle who are obese, you are more likely to be overweight too.
2. **Groups of people we are in proximity to** - these are the social norms of our communities. We are constantly scanning our environment and wondering what everyone else is doing, looking for clues of what is acceptable (what is rewarded and what is penalized), to understand the boundaries of our own behaviour. This is why social media is so powerful, and why tools like Trip Advisor or Homestars are so popular.
3. **'The Powerful'** - somewhat ironically, once we fit in we start looking for ways to stand out, and we look to copy those who we want to be like in some way for some reason. We often admire or aspire to be like others whose attitudes, behaviours, status and accomplishments look nothing like our own but who have rewards we desire (money, success, status, fame, admiration or adoration). In our effort to 'get what they have' we mold our daily habits in the image of those we admire.



Habit Types

There are several types of **habits**, and we're going to highlight two in this Module, both of which have the benefit of *leverage*. They are habit types that provide multiple benefits, both in the moment, and over time.

Keystone Habits :: Keystone Habits are habits that have an effect in and of themselves, but are also ***correlated to other habits*** so that when you initiate these habits they will ***influence other patterns and results***. For example:

- **Reading** - the habit of reading has an effect in and of itself, but the content of what you read can uplevel your own thinking, which can influence the quality of conversations you have, which can lead to positive results like connections and opportunities.
- **Exercising** - the habit of exercising has direct results on your physical and mental health, but it can also lead to better eating habits or increased energy, which can lead to increased productivity and so forth.

Micro Habits :: Micro Habits are habits that are ***often part of a larger habit***. They are behaviours that are ***small, easy, and cost relatively little*** in terms of time/energy/motivation. The low barrier to success for micro-habits as well as the way that these small acts accrue mean that they can also be a ***gateway to building a new habit***. For example, if you are wanting to build a new fitness habit, micro habits toward that might be changing into your running shoes at the end of your workday, or setting out your workout clothes before you go to bed at night, or doing just one pushup and then stopping.



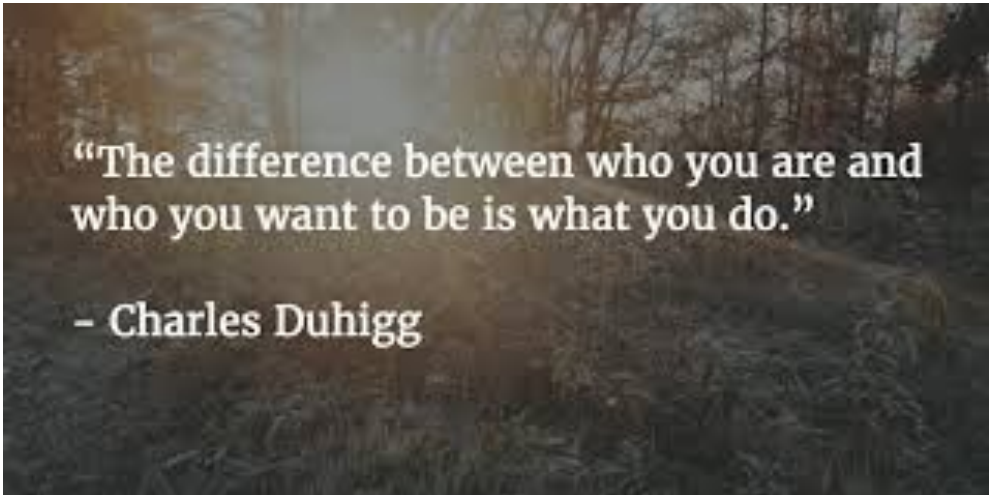
Habit Roots :: Goals vs Systems

Whatever habit you are wanting to create and inhabit, you will be more successful in sustaining that habit if it finds roots in a system rather than inspiration in a goal. A goal might provide the initial impetus for creating a habit - the reward that you identify and predict, and the craving of what that reward will satisfy in you - however, a goal is finite while **a system is an ongoing way of being.**

Goals are about the results you want to achieve. Systems are about the processes that lead to those results. Goals are about hitting a time specific milestone. **Systems are about becoming who you want to be.** If you're building a book of business, your goal might be a specific revenue amount by a specific date. That goal is finite and you might well be able to do the necessary behaviours to achieve that goal, but find yourself unwilling or unable to systematize them beyond achieving the goal. And if you fell short of the goal, you might well question the value of the behaviours you undertook.

If, on the other hand, you build the systems for how you connect with people, build your brand, collaborate with colleagues and peers and so forth, you are just as likely to achieve your goal in the short term as well as sustain that behaviour over time because it has become part of your identity and you see the ongoing and compound value of the behaviours themselves.

Goals focus only on outputs and results. **Systems focus on the inputs - fix the inputs and the outputs take care of themselves.**



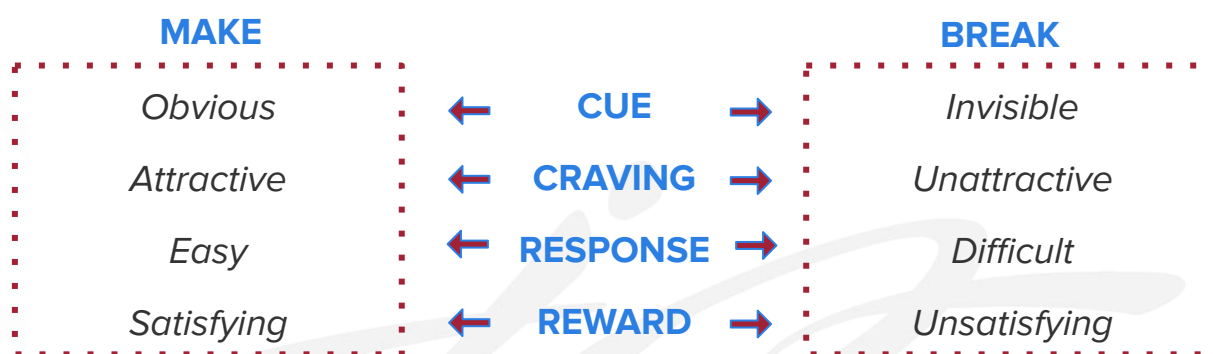
"The difference between who you are and who you want to be is what you do."

- Charles Duhigg

Habit Processes :: Making or Breaking Habits

To either make a new habit, or break an existing one, you must use the steps in the habit loop. Making a new habit tends to be a more straightforward process, so the example will focus on that for the purposes of this Module.

The process goes like this : **first**, bring awareness to your cues to make them obvious (awareness is the first step because so many of your actions are automatic or habitual!); **second**, make the desired behaviour attractive to create the craving; **third**, make the response something that is easy to do; and **finally**, ensure that the reward is something satisfying.



Let's look at the example of creating the business-building habit of engaging on LinkedIn daily. Here's how it might look:

- **Obvious::** your cue could be sitting down at your desk in the morning, or logging into the device you use at the beginning of your day, or creating a calendar reminder or sticky note to remind you that you want to go onto LinkedIn.
- **Attractive::** make the activity attractive by sitting in a comfortable chair or having a fresh coffee in hand while you're scrolling.
- **Easy::** make the icon or shortcut prominent and one-click; set a timer for when you want to start/stop engaging with the site.
- **Satisfying::** immediate hits of satisfaction from being on LinkedIn might include learning something new, getting "likes" on your posts, making new connections and fostering existing relationships. Longer term satisfiers might include getting more connections, making a specific connection, having an engagement that leads to a piece of business, or building your profile through your activity.

Habit Tools

There are a couple of key tools you can employ when you want to create a new habit.

Habit Stacking :: Habit stacking is a tool that uses the connectedness of your behaviours to your advantage. All you have to do is identify a **habit you currently have and stack the new behaviour on top**. The formula for habit stacking is “**after ____**, **I will ____**”. For example, if you have a habit of pouring a cup of coffee each morning before you log onto your computer, you could stack your newly desired habit of going on LinkedIn daily on top of your existing daily coffee habit.

This would look like : “**after** I pour my cup of coffee each morning, **I will** go on LinkedIn for five minutes.” You are tying your desired behaviour to something you already do. You can build on your stacks by chaining more small habits together. “After I pour my cup of coffee each morning, I will go on LinkedIn for five minutes” could build into “after I go on LinkedIn for five minutes, I will send one email to someone who’s name I saw in my feed”.

Temptation Bundling :: Temptation bundling is a variation of habit stacking that addresses your need to make something attractive, to create the craving segment of our habit loop. Temptation Bundling **links an action you want to do with an action you need to do**. It follows the same “after ____ , I will ____” formula as above, but this time the first action is something you need to do and the second is the reward for doing it. For example, “after I go on LinkedIn for five minutes (need to do), I will scroll Instagram for five minutes (want to do). Or, “after I send that networking email (need to do), I will refill my coffee (want to do).”

Temptation Bundling ::

“After (need) ____,

I will (reward) ____”

High Impact Habits Along the Path to Equity

Habit #1 :: Prioritize Business Development

Business development activities need to be a habit, routinized into your ongoing schedule rather than something that happens opportunistically, sporadically, or when you need business urgently. ***Block specific, repeated times in your calendar to focus on business-building activities, and treat that time like an investment and a non-negotiable.*** How you spend that time is up to you, but the idea is that you create the habit of a) focusing on business development, and b) seeing business development as part of your regular workflow.

Pro Tip : Create your community.

Find a partner or group of people that share this common goal of building their business. Habits are easier to create and stickier when they reflect the normal behaviour around you. This is why group exercise and masterminds work.

Look for a group of people who are committed to, or who are already mastering the habits you wish to cultivate.

Remember, we imitate the habits of the people closest to us, the groups around us, and the people we admire
- ***surround yourself with the right people.***



High Impact Habits Along the Path to Equity

Habit #2 :: Be a Conscious Consumer

Make a habit of **regularly consuming content and information, and being discerning about the type and sources** of content and information that will serve you and your vision. Reading is a keystone habit - the act of reading brings new information, new ideas, new things to share with others, which leads to better conversations which leads to new information, new ideas etc. - so consuming content and information through reading provides great leverage to your time. However, these same positive impacts can be achieved through listening to audiobooks or podcasts.

Choose the authors, thinkers and sources whose work you want to fill your head up with, and make the action of consuming that work a conscious habit. One of the ways you can make this easier for yourself (and ease is one of the steps in creating new habit!) is to leverage the subscription feature of most sources of content - sign up for what you want and let it be pushed to you.

Similarly, make a habit of consciously **collecting information about your contacts** to feed your conscious connection habit. Collect information about people wherever you can - did they reference a meaningful milestone in their life/career that you could catalogue or comment on - like a birthday, a marathon, a promotion or appointment? Can you infer from their posts what their interests/aspirations are and make note of that so that you could contribute something to those? Could you make a habit out of collecting information at events - eg. for every event you attend, can you collect 1-3 interesting facts about three people? Can you find a way to note the names of someone's children or pets or place of origin so that you can be specific when you next engage with them. **Details matter - they foster a sense of belonging.**

Pro Tip : Set your routines and systems.

Build your content habit around routines and systems rather than specific goals. It's about a lifestyle, a mindset, an identity NOT achieving a singular thing. Systems such as calendaring, subscriptions, automating certain tasks can facilitate the regular routines that change your daily life.



High Impact Habits Along the Path to Equity

Habit #3 :: Be a Conscious and Consistent Creator

Creating content of your own can be an impactful activity in developing your brand and your business. But it doesn't happen without conscious and consistent effort. Again, prioritize time in your week to work on your own material.

Many leaders advocate that you “create before you consume” - so you spend some time each day or week creating your own work before you let the ideas and opinions of others in.

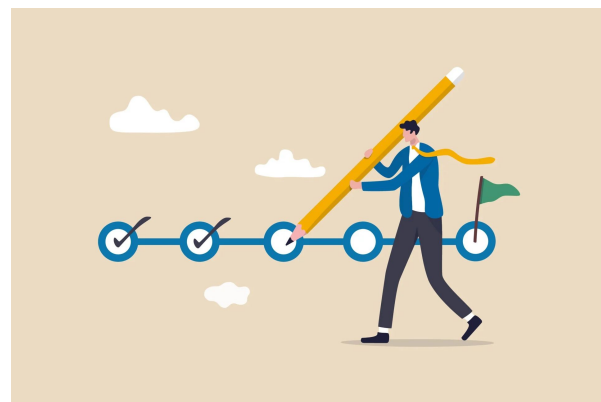
Micro habits along the way to creating this larger habit might include creating a place to jot down ideas or notes in the moment to be revisited in future, or writing just one line or paragraph per writing session.

Pro Tip : Repetition + Reward

Repetition matters when you're building habits.

Repetition is what changes your brain structure so that your new behaviours become hardwired. To increase the likelihood of repeating a behaviour, find a way to incentive or reward yourself to put in the reps.

Identify a want that you could bundle with a need, use some form of tracker to document and make your progress visible to you, or find an accountability partner to help you stay on track.



High Impact Habits Along the Path to Equity

Habit #4 :: Be Purpose Driven

Just as systems and routines are more likely to entrench a habit than are point-in-time goals, rooting your habits in your larger “why” will increase the likelihood of them sticking and having the desired impact. ***The habit of regularly checking in and reminding yourself of your vision for your career, your purpose(s) is a keystone habit.*** It has an impact of its own, but it is also connected to the choices you make in relation to your other habits and the results that flow from those choices.

Choosing the specific behaviours to habituate, or the individual activities to populate your broader habits with, will also be easier, more strategic and more meaningful if they are connected to your bigger picture. Your habits of connecting with others, creating and consuming content need to be populated with the specific connections you seek, the particular content you consume, and the distinct content you create.

Without the framework of your vision and purpose, the options could be overwhelming and never ending. ***Your ‘why’ becomes the filter by which you cut through all the noise of people, places, information and opinions.***

Pro Tip : Aligning activities with purpose is a two-way street.

- Cross-reference the activities you have planned for your week with your purpose
- - are the people you’ve planned to connect with, the content you’ve planned to consume and create aligned with your purpose? If not, what can you revise?

- Cross-reference your vision with your planned activities or the calendar placeholders you have for spending time on your development.

- Do you have things planned that will advance your purpose? If not, how can you fill this gap? What could you read or listen to that would fuel your purpose?
- Who could you connect with to build a loyal relationship?



Activity :: Deconstructing a Desired Habit

Identify a habit that either a) you currently have that is serving you, or b) you'd like to create.

Think about how this habit is/will serve you (ie. why is it desirable). To do this, think about two elements of the **Habit Loop** - **the reward and the craving**. What is the reward or end goal of this habit, and why do you want it (what change of state will it bring you?)

How does/would this habit contribute to your identity ?	
Is it a keystone or micro habit?	
Is it/could it be stacked to another habit or bundled to another reward?	
<p>If it's a habit you're looking to create, what could you do to:</p> <p>Make the cue obvious ::</p> <p>Make the habit attractive ::</p> <p>Make the response/action easy ::</p> <p>Make the reward satisfying ::</p>	

Challenge :: Implement a 'Pro Tip'

In addition to understanding the Habit Loop and how it corresponds to steps in creating a new habit, and the key tools of stacking and bundling, the **'Pro Tips'** we offered in association with each of the High Impact Habits for developing your business build on how your brain works in habituating behaviour.

Your challenge this Module is to apply one or more of the following **'Pro Tips'** to a habit you're looking to either create or strengthen.

Pro Tip #1 :: Create your Community

We know that we imitate the habits of the people closest to us and those we admire.

Can you create a supportive community for the habits that will serve you along your Path to Equity within this cohort? Peers at your career stage? Joining or creating an existing mastermind that includes those who are slightly ahead of you or have a different perspective on how to get to where you want to go?

Record your plans for or experience with this Pro Tip here ::

Pro Tip #2 :: Set your Routines and Systems

We know that routines and systems are more effective than goals in terms of creating and sustaining habits, and have them embed into our identity.

What routines or systems could you set up, initiate or tweak in support of the habits that will serve you along your path to equity?

Record your plans for or experience with this Pro Tip here ::

Challenge :: Implement a 'Pro Tip', continued

Pro Tip #3 :: Repetition + Reward

We know that repetition matters when we're creating the new neural pathways that support habituation.

How will you ensure that you're putting in your reps as you move towards making a behaviour automatic? Is it accountability (internal by recording progress or external by accountability partners or other public mechanisms) or is it rewards (we know that habits depend on us wanting the end state - the thing + the feeling or state that thing gets us).

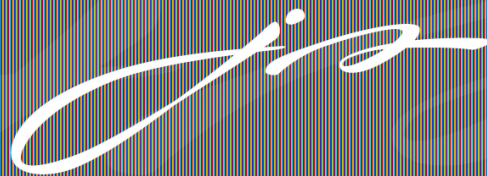
Record your plans for or experience with this Pro Tip here ::

Pro Tip #4 :: Align your Habits with your Purpose

We know that purpose is the cement for our loyal relationships and our daily actions. We need to know why we are doing something in order to sustain the level of investment of our time and other resources necessary to create and maintain the habits that will truly serve our vision for our careers and lives, and the purpose that gives our careers and lives meaning.

How are you 'cross-referencing' your purpose with your habits? How are you ensuring that how you spend your days is truly how you mean to spend your life?

Record your plans for or experience with this Pro Tip here ::



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