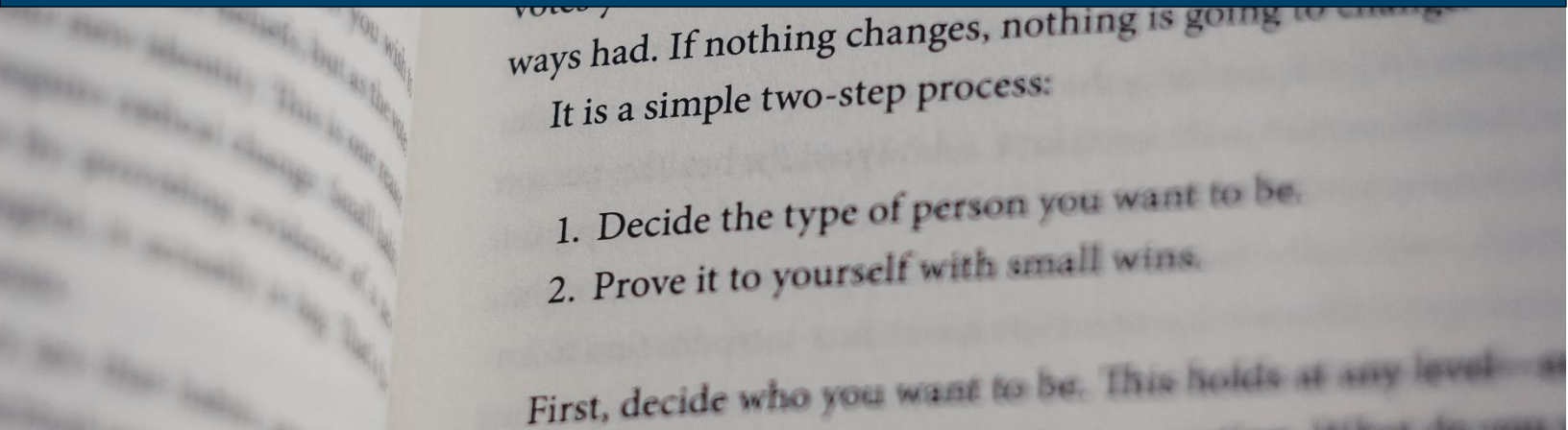


Key Takeaways and Book Review: *Atomic Habits* by James Clear

By Dr. Azeen Sadeghian



James Clear is a streamlined popular blogger and has intensively studied habits. He wrote a book to compile all of his personal research on habits. The book, called *Atomic Habits*, is a best seller on Amazon. Dermatologists have multiple habits that dictate their days. Our lives are filled with habits that can make or break our productivity. Because of this, I was eager to read this book.

This book is an interesting read and written in an easy, clear format. It can be skimmed quickly or it flows well to be read thoroughly if desired. Although habit formation appears obvious, many of us fail at fostering the right habits and we realize willpower alone is not the ticket. This book is full of brief yet practical stories of other individuals and their successes in arranging habits.

I have included some of Mr. Clear's high yield tips from this book but added some examples in pink that may pertain to Dermatologists, myself included!

Mr. Clear writes about high yield laws of creating a good habit. The inversion of these laws helps break bad habits.

1. Make it Obvious

- a. Know what your current habits are, good or bad! **Coffee, packing a lunch, watching TV, etc.**
- b. Be specific. "I will [*behavior*] at [*time*] in [*location*]." **For example, I will read one journal article every Saturday at 9am in my kitchen.**
- c. Link your new habit to a current habit. **Such as, "I will read one article after my first cup of coffee."**
- d. Create an environment that makes your habit cues easy and notable. **Perhaps you can leave the journal articles next to your coffee spot.**
- e. Break a bad habit by reducing cues and exposure from your setting. **For example, if your bad habit is social media, limit the cue of having notifications on.**

2. Make it Attractive

- a. Pair an action you *want* to do with an action you *need* to do. For example, I will only listen to my favorite podcast while on the elliptical. Or I can drink my favorite La Croix flavor out of an elegant crystal glass while doing CME.
- b. Place yourself in group where your new habit is a part of the norm. For example, reading is the norm in residency, but this can be lost in practice. Journal clubs or conferences can make it attractive. A fellowship or hobby group can make wellness time more attractive.
- c. Make bad habits unattractive by reframing your perception of it. Instead, focus on the benefit or attractiveness of avoiding that habit. For example, I think of how I feel after being on social media compared to how I feel when I take extended breaks, and I reflect on how I feel after eating ice cream compared to when I felt more energetic without it.

3. Make it Easy

- a. You want minimal steps to a new desired habit. Prep your environment to make things simple and easier. Like leaving a bowl of fruit on your counter or leaving a sun hat in your car.
- b. Downscale the habit to a miniscule first step that takes hardly any time. For example, a miniscule first step to reading journals is simply opening my JAAD. For exercise, it is simply putting on workout clothes.
- c. Automate habits to lock in future behavior. Such as setting an automated recurring delivery of local produce.
- d. Alternatively, make bad habits difficult by placing limitations against the habit. Such as technology that blocks social media. Or as another example, I used to sleep with a 'do not disturb' setting on my phone after 8:30pm. Only calls would be allowed to come through and my web browser usage was blocked. Also, limit bad habits by increasing the steps to do the habit and making it difficult. For example, place candy in areas you cannot access easily.

4. Make it Satisfying

- a. Some positive habits have delayed gratification, so reward yourself in the interim for the change and for completing the new habit. For example, a new shirt may be a good reward if you are trying to exercise more.
- b. Use habit tracking methods to visualize your habit streak. This can be as simple as a check in your calendar. Get back on track quickly if you miss the habit once.
- c. Alternatively, break a bad habit by making it unsatisfying or public to perform. For example, consider an accountability partner, share your proposed commitments with them and ask them to hold you accountable if you fail to do it.

Overall, I think this book offers adaptable steps to help the average Dermatologist reach their personal goals. I find the book has pertinent examples for common habit aspirations. It also has practical approaches to breaking bad habits.

Additionally, I can foresee someone extrapolating these tips to improve patient compliance. I recommend this book anyone who wants to motivate themselves to start a new habit or break a bad one!

I purchased this book of my own accord and share my personal opinions of it, I would recommend it to any WDS member. Happy reading!

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