

# THE JORDAN HARBINGER SHOW

## Worksheet for BJ Fogg | Tiny Habits That Change Everything (Episode 306)

January might just be the most wonderful time of the year to talk about behavior change. Like a lot of people, you may have made an enthusiastic new year's resolution at the beginning of the month to better yourself in some way. But now that the first month of the year gives way to the second, you've noticed that the behavioral changes necessary to make your pledged resolution stick aren't easy to maintain. Discouraged, you may have already given up, convinced that you're just not "wired" for the willpower essential to make a meaningful difference in your own life. *Other* people succeed with regimens that promote dramatic weight loss, responsible financial practices, and reading over a hundred books a year, but you never seem to catch a break. What are *you* doing wrong? Don't take it personally; creating good habits doesn't seem like an easy feat at first glance, but the good news is: it doesn't *have* to be hard.

In *this episode*, we talk to Stanford Behavior Design Lab founder BJ Fogg about the principles of his book *Tiny Habits: The Small Changes That Change Everything*. Here, you'll learn the secrets to breaking down the all-too-human resistance to change (even the change that's good for you) — sometimes resorting to downright self-trickery that ultimately serves your greater goals and has you making maximum lifestyle strides with minimal effort.

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## Why Behavior Change is Hard

Why is behavior change so hard? BJ shares a couple of the biggest reasons:

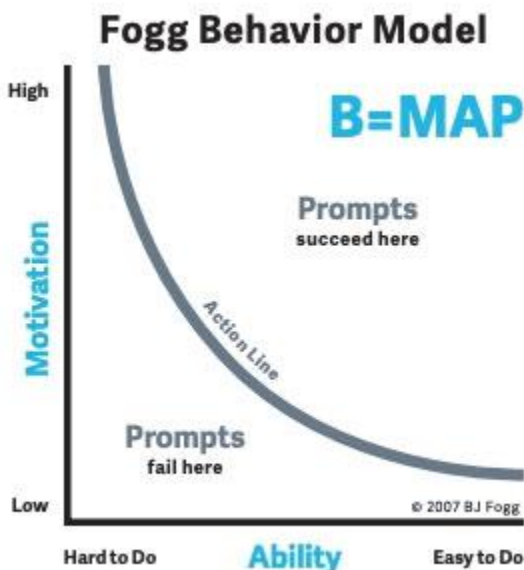
1. **We believe the hype.** “Forget everything you’ve heard about behavior change and habits [from news headlines and social media] and start over,” he says. “So much is either distracting or just taking you down the wrong path.”
2. **We try to motivate ourselves around an abstraction.** “People pick an abstraction like, ‘Oh, I want to be more productive.’ It’s not specific,” says BJ. “And they try to motivate themselves to the abstraction — that combo does not work. Our motivation goes up and down over time and we don’t have a ton of control over that.”

**What are some changes you’ve had a difficult (or impossible) time making in your own behavior? Are they tied in to one of these two reasons, or do you identify something else as the source of trouble?**

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## B=MAP Fogg Behavior Model

In the Fogg Behavior Model shown here, a **B**ehavior is brought about by a sufficient convergence of **M**otivation, **A**bility, and **P**rompts. **B=MAP**.



"When it comes to behavior, there are three components, and motivation and ability are two of them," says BJ. "What that curved line shows is they have a compensatory relationship. If your ability is weak -- if the behavior is hard to do -- then the motivation has to be high or you won't be above the line. So if it's really, really easy to do, then I don't need lots of motivation for it to happen. I just need a prompt."

When he first uncovered this model in 2007, BJ wondered if B=MAP could really be such a simple formula that governs all behavior universally, and he's since concluded that, indeed, it does.

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This model shows that:

1. The more *motivated* you are to do a behavior, the more *likely* you are to do a behavior.
2. The *harder* a behavior is to do, the *less likely* you are to do it.
3. Motivation and ability work together like teammates.
4. No behavior happens without a prompt.

In action, it can look like this:

- **Behavior (B):** You take out the garbage *as a result of the following*.
- **Motivation (M):** You want your spouse to stop nagging you and for your house to stop smelling like garbage.
- **Ability (A):** It's easy to tie the bag closed and walk it 10 steps to your garbage can in the backyard.
- **Prompt (P):** You were prompted by your spouse's gentle reminder (and perhaps your nose).

**What behaviors in your own life can you dissect and understand by using this formula?**

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## Starter Steps

When I lived in Michigan, I made the genius decision to train for a 5k run in the middle of winter. Of course, about half the time I meant to go on my daily run, I'd wake up in my dorm room, freezing cold, and just go back to sleep. But when I resolved to allow myself to go back to bed *only* after I made the effort to put on my gym clothes and step outside, I found that I would — more often than not — just follow through and go for my run. BJ calls this a *starter step*.

“Some people report that they trick themselves with starter steps,” says BJ. “Surprisingly, often people go all the way. And that’s the magic. With starter steps, you overcome your initial resistance, and once you’re started on the path, you just keep going. For example, opening your sketchbook is a starter step in drawing a picture. Putting on your gym clothes is a starter step for working out. Setting an apple on the kitchen counter is a starter step for eating it.”

**What starter steps can you incorporate into the sometimes-unpleasant routines you often talk yourself out of that might prove similarly effective in “tricking” you into compliance?**

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## Tiny Habits

The thought of flossing your teeth twice or doing 200 pushups daily might seem daunting, but what if you started by only flossing one tooth and doing two pushups on day one, increasing it to two teeth and three pushups on day two, and so on? Even these tiny habits that lead to big changes don't have to be done in lump sums, as BJ demonstrates.

"The pushups that I do, I do them throughout the day," he says. "I do anywhere from two, which is the tiny version, up to 25 or 30 if I want to push, but then I do it through the day. So that adds up. Flossing, I do twice a day. All my teeth. My hygienist loves me. My dentist comes in and I'm like, the star patient! What I learned in tweaking my own eating behavior was a whole banana is actually too much for me. My body doesn't respond well to that, so I snap it in half."

**What big habits do you want to cultivate that can be whittled down into tiny habits stretched out over the course of a day?**

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## Emotion, Not Repetition

Contrary to a bit of misinformation circulating online (thanks to popular misconception surrounding a 2009 study), repetition is *not* what creates habits. BJ and his colleagues point toward emotion as the real catalyst that makes habits possible.

BJ says: “You could run a headline like: ‘Spending time in the gym will lead to fitness.’ Somebody will read the headline, go hang out at the gym bar, and go, ‘Okay, I’m spending tons of time in the gym. I’m not getting fit.’ So of course it’s not time in the gym, it’s what you do in the gym, right? In the same way, it’s not repetition, it’s the emotion you feel when you do that behavior that sends a signal to your brain and goes, ‘Oh, my gosh, take note of this and wire this in.’

**While it sounds like bad news that you can’t magically create a new habit just because you dedicate yourself to suffering for 21 to 66 days, the good news is you don’t have to procrastinate the creation of habits you want in your life. The Tiny Habits approach allows you to begin making a difference in your behavior today by building up your confidence and competence over time rather than making you feel bad for not being quite there. BJ calls the positive emotion that compels habit formation *shine*. How does emotion compare to repetition as a catalyst for changes you’ve succeeded in making? How about failures?**

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## Behaviors Travel in Packs

Behavioral change has a snowball effect. If you succeed in making steps toward cultivating one desired habit, others are sure to follow. For instance, I started taking long walks to help me lose weight. And when I'd come home, I'd make healthier meal choices because I didn't just walk three hours so I could negate it by eating a whole pizza. I'd also listen to audiobooks on these long walks, which quickly helped me pare down my ever-growing reading list. Each successful change reinforced that I was a person *capable* of making change — generating that emotional *shine* crucial to habit formation — and BJ confirms that this correlates with his own findings.

“My data shows that over 70 percent of people [who are successful in making one change] report having changed other habits within five days. For better or worse, the behaviors — the changes that we make — seem to travel in packs. Start anywhere you want on the path to change, and if there's some behavior — like eating kale or meditating — that you don't want to do right now, don't focus on that. But as things change in your journey, there'll be times when you start doing the other stuff naturally. So start where you want to start.”

**What adjacent habits might form if you could succeed in focusing on the creation of just one habit?**



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## 3 Ways to Make Something Easier

“When it comes to making things easier to do, you can change the person, you can change the context, or you can change the action,” says BJ. Let’s consider what can be done to pursue a fitness-related habit.

You can change the person by skilling up and becoming more capable of the action. Maybe you can learn to cook more healthy meals, meditate, or read more books and articles related to what you’re trying to achieve.

You can change the environment or context by making the tools and resources you need easier to reach. BJ set up a CrossFit gym 20 feet away from his office so he can always put in a few minutes to work out.

You can change the action by establishing hacks, starter steps, or tiny habits to make what you’re trying to achieve less overwhelming. On a busy day, maybe BJ can’t take precious minutes away from work to work out, but he can always spare the time to do two pushups after every bathroom break.

**In pursuit of your own habit, which of these three things can you change to make it an easier achievement?**

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## Anchoring with Prompts

We know that certain things can trigger a relapse into a bad behavior. If you're an alcoholic, having just one drink could be a disaster. If you're addicted to gambling, you should probably stay away from casinos. In the B=MAP Fogg Behavior Model, these triggers would equate with prompts, and prompts can originate from you, your environment, another person, or a tiny habit. Just as triggers act as prompts that guide you toward an undesirable behavior, prompts can act as anchors that tether you to a desired behavior.

You can self-prompt. You can use your environment as a prompt by putting a Post-it Note to your alarm clock. You can ask another person to prompt you. Or you can use your existing action to prompt you as part of your overall routine — maybe flossing reminds you to brush your teeth, which reminds you to start your coffee maker, which reminds you to stretch.

“You're not relying on Post-it Notes or alarms or just your memory. You're designing it into your routine, and I call it anchoring,” says BJ. “So you attach the new habit, you anchor it to something very firm in your life, which should be a routine you already do very reliably.”

**What prompts can you add as anchoring to an already reliable routine?**

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## Behavior Design Flow Chart

The power to design your own behavior is actually pretty easy to summon if you use this flow chart from *Tiny Habits*.

### Are you feeling motivated enough to learn a new skill?

- **Yes?** Great — do it. And now go to the next question.
- **No?** Next question.

### Are you feeling motivated enough to find a tool or resource?

- **Yes?** Excellent, make it happen. And now go to the next question.
- **No?** Next question.

### Can you scale back the behavior to make it tiny?

- **Yes?** Fantastic. You're done. You can start practicing your new habit.
- **No?** Next question.

### Can you find a starter step for your behavior?

- **Yes?** Great. Make the starter step your initial habit, then do more later when you feel like it.
- **No?** Uh-oh. If you said no to all of these questions, you might need to go back and match yourself with a different behavior from *your Swarm of Behaviors*.

**Give it a try! See for yourself. We've only touched on the basics of *Tiny Habits*; there's a lot more in the book. And if you're so inclined, be sure to download BJ's guidance on using Behavior Design for business [here](#)!**

*Full show notes and resources for this episode [can be found here](#).*

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## About



Join us as we get deep into the untapped wisdom of the world's top performers – from legendary creators to intelligence operatives, iconoclastic writers to visionary change-makers.

We deconstruct the playbooks of the most successful people on earth – and learn new strategies, perspectives, and insights you can't find anywhere else. Then, take these valuable insights into your own life and live what you listen.

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