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HABIT STACKING

SKILL ENERGY VALUE ORDER RELAX HABIT GROWTH TIME
DELEGATION RULES ROUTINES HABIT PROCESS TIME QUALITY
PRODUCTIVITY SMALL HINGES OPEN BIG DOORS

Do you have a reach goal? Are you working toward something big and life-changing? Saving for a home? Training for a marathon? Earning a degree? If you don't have one right now, you can likely remember a time when you were chipping away at one. While I have had many reach goals, (getting two sons to college, remodeling a 40 year-old home), the process of writing my doctoral dissertation is a great example of how using a routine called habit stacking can help you accomplish your goal faster. I didn't know I was habit stacking, but according to S.J. Scott's "Habit Stacking: 97 Small Life Changes That Take Five Minutes or Less" (see book review), that is exactly what I did.

The doctoral dissertation is a research paper. It can take on several forms, but there are many milestones and standards governing its completion. Its defense is the last step in earning the PhD designation. Many candidates never complete the years-long process. It is solitary and daunting. To get mine done, I established a series of small habits that became my daily routine. Sticking to the routine created a sense of urgency and gave structure to an otherwise rudderless journey. I could easily still be working on it were it not for the routines that I developed then. I continue to use some of them today.

The first habit was to realize that my most productive hours were before noon. This discovery made it necessary to jettison all of my morning time wasters and get up earlier. I joined a daily 5:30am boot camp. I read the paper and did household tasks and shopping in the afternoons and evenings. I went to bed early and stuck to the same sleep routine during the week and on the weekends.

The second habit was to create the two-hour rule. The two-hour rule stated that after boot camp, shower, and breakfast, I had to spend two focused hours on the dissertation. If I couldn't get into a good writing or research flow, I would organize or do administrative tasks. I made myself spend a minimum of two hours on task and then would decide whether to stop or continue. Ninety percent of the time I would end up with six or more solid hours of progress.

The third habit was to delegate tasks that drove me nuts. I hated typing APA citations and formatting pages. I found a starving grad student to work on the APA citations. I accepted a friend's generous offer to format and proofread. Without their help, I could still be grinding away or locked securely in a rubber room. Instead, I earned my PhD designation and ended up with my dream job. Scott equates these small habits to the **small hinges that open big doors**. In my case, they literally did.



the supplement
FACILITATING VITALITY

BOOK REVIEW

“HABIT STACKING: 97 SMALL LIFE CHANGES THAT TAKE FIVE MINUTES OR LESS”

S.J. SCOTT



Scott and I are definitely reading from the same playbook. He maintains that small practices repeated consistently over time lead to big changes. The reason that people have trouble making life changes is they take on too much at once. Apparently, we all have a limit to the amount of information that we can retain in our short-term memories – he terms this our “cognitive load.” The average person’s cognitive load is seven “chunks” of information.

He gives 97 examples of changes in six different areas. Each must take less than five minutes, improve your life and make sense for you. Since reading the book, I have taken on a few more and am finding it helpful. My hope is that you find at least one that resonates with you.

PRODUCTIVITY	RELATIONSHIPS	FINANCES	SPIRITUALITY/ MENTAL WELLBEING	HEALTH/ PHYSICAL FITNESS	LEISURE
Drink a glass of water	Return a call	Put all of your change in a jar	Compile a gratitude list	Eat a mint	Get outside
Clear your desktop	Send an encouraging message	Know how much money you have and where it is	Perform a random act of kindness	Breathe	Read for five minutes
Remove distractions	Give a compliment	Know how much money you owe	Listen to your favorite music	Make an appointment for a physical	Cuddle your pet
Do the most unappealing task first	Smile	Write down every cent you spend for one day	Look at photographs	Eat breakfast	Doodle
*Do work uninterrupted in chunks of 25 minutes. Rest for five minutes and start again.	Leave a note	Pack your lunch	Meditate	Weigh yourself	Do something that scares you
				Perform five minutes of stretching first thing in the morning	

*I love this one. I even set a timer. It helps!

RESOURCES



PATRICIA M. FULLER, PhD,
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Patricia M. Fuller has dedicated the last 15 years to designing and delivering wellness programs as a project manager and contractor for PricewaterhouseCoopers, LLP. Her training events earn consistently excellent ratings for her holistic approach and her real world application.

Prior to concentrating in wellness, Pat taught accounting and auditing as an adjunct professor at the University of Tampa. She earned her CPA designation in 1992 as a senior associate for Coopers & Lybrand. She has a Masters in Business Administration from the University of Utah.

Pat has a PhD in holistic nutrition. In 2010, she was board certified by the Holistic Nutrition Credentialing Board. Her areas of research include stress management and eating habits. She is a Certified Wellcoach and a member of the Institute of Coaching. She is an annual attendee to The Harvard Medical School Conference, Coaching In Leadership & Healthcare.

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