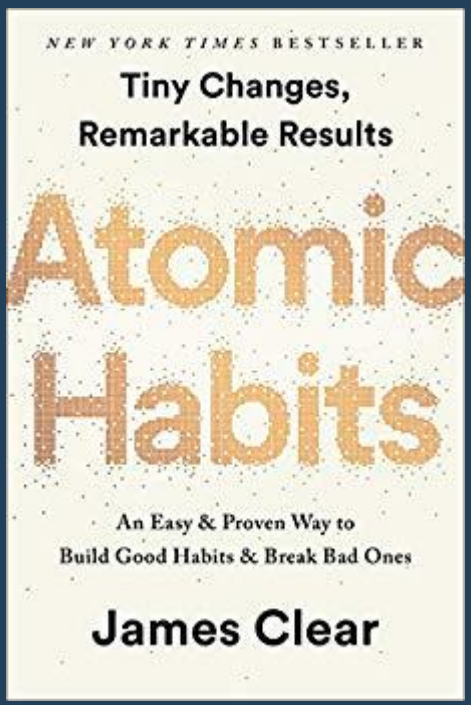

Atomic Habits

Year of publication: 2018
Author: James Clear
319 pages
Link for purchase: https://amzn.to/2X4zlDe

"Atomic Habits", the free translation "Atomic Habits", was published in 2018 in the United States by Avery Publishing. Quickly, it caught the attention of renowned authors and became a bestseller by the New York Times.
With a simple writing full of practical examples, author James Clear suggests in the book guidelines for disregarding bad routines and developing good ones, all through the improvement and identification of habits.
30 languages and has sold more than 1 million copies.

Score

9

8 Aplicability
9 Inspiration
9 Innovation
8 Impact on results
9 Structure

Main ideias of the book

- Habits are responsible for much of our behavior;
- In a transformation, you should not focus on your ultimate goal, but rather on the system used to get there;
- Context is essential to change the way we act;
- Major changes are built on minor improvements;
- The four laws of behavior change say that you should make the habit obvious, attractive, easy, and satisfying.

For whom is this book suitable?

The ideas of the author are useful for those who want to create better habits and avoid their worst habits, that is, practically everyone, right?
Practices can help those who want to be more productive and have more control over their lives, personal or professional.

Overview of the book

Part 1 - The Basics

At the beginning of the book, author James Clear explains how small changes (atomic habits) can produce great results. According to him, habits are compound interest of personal improvement. Improving 1% each day brings about a giant change at the end of the journey.
He cites a few examples of small changes that produce great results:

- Saving $ 250 per week may not seem like much, but this multiplies to $ 1,000 in a month and throughout the year you will have saved $ 12,000;
- Reading 15 pages a day is not much, but it accumulates at 105 pages per week, 420 per month and 5,040 pages per year. Considering that the books have an average of 250 pages, you can read 20 books in a year, just by reading a little each day.

You do not rise to the level of your goals. You fall to the level of your systems.

The author also cites the importance of systems. According to him, winners and losers have the same goals. What sets them apart is the systems they use to achieve those goals.
Finally, James explains how to build a habit, which depends on four stages: the trigger, the desire, the response and the reward. This idea was popularized by the work "The Power of the Habit - Charles Duhigg".
Thinking about it, he developed what he calls "The Four Laws of Changing Behavior," which are rules for creating good habits and destroying bad habits. Next, let's take a closer look at each of these laws.

1st Law: make the habit obvious

The first law relates to the first stage of habit-forming: the trigger.
Initially, you should identify your current habits so you can notice which ones are positive and which are negative.
The author points out that the main trigger for activating a habit is the context, so it is important to change the environment to stimulate your best habits. James offers some examples:

- If you want to drink more water during the day, fill up water bottles and place them in common places around your home / office;
- If you want to read more, always leave a book near your bed;
- If you want to play more guitar, leave the instrument in the middle of your living room.

In addition, you can use existing habits to stimulate a new habit. For example, after bathing in the morning, you will do 30 minutes of Yoga.
Basically, the lesson here is that you need to make the trigger obvious and identifiable, so you can build good habits.
Similarly, to fight against bad habits, you can do the reverse of this law: it must make the triggers invisible. The author provides some examples to make it clearer:

- If you waste a lot of time on your phone, leave it in another room and turn off notifications;
- If you think you're playing too much video game, turn off the console and store it in the closet every time you finish playing.

2nd Law: make the habit attractive

The next rule determined by the author has to do with desire. He explains that habits are closely linked with the release of dopamine, one of the neurotransmitters that impact our sense of pleasure.
That way, if you want to build a new habit, it should be fun. However, this is easier said than done. Therefore, James offers the following tip:
You need to match the habit you need with some that you desire. Let's see an example to get easier.
Let's say you want to watch sports but need to make sales leads. So, you need to follow the script:

1. First, I'll call three potential customers (Need);
2. Then I can turn on the TV and watch the sports channel (Desire).

In addition, the author cites the importance of entering into a culture that values the behavior you want to achieve. Thus, the adaptation becomes easier.
In contrast, to end the craving for a bad habit, you need it to no longer be attractive.
To do this, you need to understand the real reason for wanting that behavior, and from that, highlight the benefits of avoiding such behavior.

We often dismiss small changes because they don’t seem to matter very much in the moment.

3rd Law: Make the Habit Easy By

Following the construction of a habit, we are now entering the "answer" phase. It is in her that we initiate the action that composes the habit. And it is this attitude that will produce results.
Thinking about it, the author explains that it is necessary to reduce the impediments that exist between you and the action of the habit that you want to create, in other words, you have to facilitate the process.
The easier it is for you to make a habit, the greater the chance of creating and maintaining that behavior. So the author encourages you to start your habit with the easiest action to take.
Let's look at the examples:

- "Read before going to sleep" becomes "Read a page";
- "Studying for the test" becomes "Open my notebooks";
- "Folding the laundry that has been washed" becomes "Fold a pair of socks".

That way, you can establish the habit more easily and, from there, you can maintain and refine it.
The reverse of this law is that, in order to destroy a negative habit, you must increase your difficulty, that is, increase the steps necessary for you to take the action.
We can go back to the video game example: when you save the video game in the closet every time after playing, you increase the difficulty of starting to play next time, discouraging the habit.

4th Law: Make the Habit Satisfying

In the final part of the book, James talks about the reward. While the earlier laws provide guidelines for taking the action of habit first, this fourth and last law has to do with the repetition of that action.
It is difficult to build a new habit because often the beginning of the journey is laborious and unrewarding, like entering the gym, for example. You will only see results after months of effort, which can be demotivating.
This is because our brain prioritizes immediate rewards rather than future rewards. Therefore, you should find a way to reward yourself immediately while creating a new habit.
James explains that an efficient way to do this is to keep track of your habit. For example, you want to go to the gym three times a week. So every day you go to the gym, you'll score with a red X on your calendar.
In this way, it will be satisfying to mark the X (by the sense of achievement of the goal) and it will be easier to visualize your progress, which will keep you motivated to continue.
Likewise, to deconstruct a bad habit, you need it to be unsatisfactory. We do not like to repeat an action that is painful or negative. You can ask someone to observe your behavior, and when you notice that you are practicing an unwanted habit, you must punish yourself in some way.

Okay, but how can I apply this in my life?

The author's ideas throughout the book are quite practical, and can be applied in many spheres, from personal life to his professional career.
Therefore, it is interesting that you follow the rules proposed by the author in a disciplined and continuous way, because, as we have seen, a small change every day promotes a great transformation in the future.

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