

Habit Formation

Body & health

The loop behind a habit, and where to intervene in it.

The four-part loop that describes most habitual behaviour.

Cue

1

What triggers it — a time, a place, a feeling, a preceding action.

Craving

2

The anticipated reward. This is the motivation, not the behaviour.

Response

3

The behaviour itself. Its difficulty determines whether it happens.

Reward

4

What satisfies the craving, and teaches the loop to repeat.

TO BUILD ONE

Make the cue obvious

Make it easy — reduce steps

Make it satisfying immediately

Attach it to an existing habit

Median time to automaticity in one well-known study was about 66 days, with a very wide range. The 21-day figure is a myth.