Elevate Your Action

By Knowing How the Brain Works

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- Executive Director NOWCAP Services
- 28 years experience working in non-profits and serving on non-profit boards.
- Certified Brain Injury Specialist.
- Geek out on all things brain related when it's working well and when it isn't.

We are Assuming:

- Things you learned over the past day and a half are beneficial to you and your nonprofit.
- You want to start putting what you have learned into action to improve your skills and to elevate your non-profit's work.
- You want to share what you have learned with key stakeholders like staff, donors, board members.

Here's what can happen

Elevation ©

- A plan for what, when, how and where to implement change is developed.
- Key ideas and actions are started and focused on until they are part of the regular operations.

Stagnation ⊗

- Materials brought to office and are buried under a mountain of in-box work.
- Key ideas and actions are started but never really gain momentum.

...and everything in between.



Habits

We are going to talk about using habits to avoid stagnation and make change.

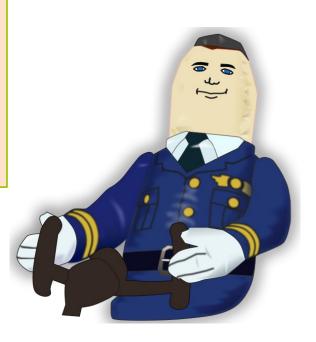
Why Habits?

Having habits or routines that one follows without having to think about about each step frees of the brain to ponder other things.

By adulthood, 40 – 80% of daily activities are done by habit.

Examples of Habits:

- > Tying shoes
- > Dressing
- > Brushing Teeth
- > Autopilot
- > AM routine at home & work
- > Bedtime routine



How it works in the brain



- Basal Ganglia takes a behavior that has been repeated and makes it a habit or routine.
 - Associated with OCD, Tourette
 Syndrome and addiction

How it works in the brain



- The Infralimbic Cortex controls habits.
 - Prefers to use habits and will continue to use even if no longer beneficial.
 - Examples:
 - Rushed morning
 - Road Construction

How it works in the brain



- The Infralimbic Cortex controls habits.
 - Will choose new habits over old habits, but old habits are still wired and can start back up again.
 - Examples:
 - Addiction
 - COVID changes
 - Meetings
 - Masks

Use Habits to Elevate New Knowledge into Action

- Repetition by definition, this is how you build a habit.
- Reminders so you don't forget to repeat, repeat, repeat.
- Linkage to fit a new habit into an existing routine.
- Accountability helps us stay on track.

Books about Habits

- Atomic Habits
- The Power of Habit
- Tiny Habits
- 7 Habits of Highly Effective People
- The Habit Blueprint
- Better than Before

Repetition – repetition – repetition – repetition...

- After brain injury, re-learning skills via the Holistic Habit Retraining model means to do the same thing, the same time, the same way over and over... until it becomes a habit.
- Is there a magic habit "number?"
 - 21 days, 30 days
 - NO magic number, but very likely more than 21 days.
 - Think about it, you have been doing something one way for 2 years, it is unlikely to change in 21 days.



Reminders – DON'T FORGET!

- Digital
 - Apps
 - Alarms
 - Digital assistants (Google, Alexa, Siri)
- Visual
 - Calendar
 - Signs
 - Sticky notes
 - Whiteboard
- People
- Location
 - In front of door
 - On top of keyboard



Reminders – DON'T FORGET!

- Watch out for habituation diminished response to a frequently repeated stimulus. (No longer hear traffic when living by busy road)
- Change it up if you are ignoring your reminders.
- Brain filtering information and deciding what's important – want someone to see the thing you put on the stairs and take it up – put it in the MIDDLE of the stair.



Linkage – Habit pairing, habit stacking – linking the new behavior to an existing habit

- AM Routine
 - Put stuff away/down
 - Make coffee
 - Check calendar
 - Check in at front desk
 - Check mail box
 - Check voice mail
 - Check e-mail

- AM Routine
 - Put stuff away/down
 - Make coffee
 - Check calendar
 - Choose one donor to call today
 - Check in at front desk
 - Check mail box
 - Check voice mail
 - Check e-mail

Accountability

To self

- If you MUST so easy to excuse yourself.
- Visual white board
- Daily tracking on calendar
- Make it something you
 DO and SEE

To others

- Board of Directors
- Co-worker
- Public display
- Meeting topic
- Accountabilibuddy



Pitfalls

If your new practice isn't urgent or deadline driven, it's easy to put off – create deadlines by reporting at meetings or emailing progress to someone weekly.

Waning motivation – use motivational signs and change them out, use visual progress tracking, use rewards.

Rewards – intermittent rewards work best (slot machines). It's hard to fool yourself, so flip a coin or roll a dice for rewards.

Use habits to elevate new knowledge into action.

- Repetition
- Reminders
 - Linkage
- Accountability