

An aerial, high-angle photograph of a city street intersection at night. The scene is illuminated by streetlights and building lights, creating a vibrant, multi-colored glow. Tall buildings with lit windows and balconies surround the intersection. The streets are filled with cars, their headlights and taillights creating streaks of light. The overall atmosphere is one of a busy, modern urban environment.

Using Habit Stacking to Reach Your Goals

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I've been having crazy great success with a new technique on habit forming. New to me at least. Its called Habit Stacking. The technique itself is not new. The idea is simple- pick one habit you already do consistently without fail in your day. Then add to the routine of the already ingrained habit your new habit you want to incorporate into your life.

Why does it work so well? Your brain creates neuron pathways each time you perform a task. For tasks you perform hundreds or thousands of times the pathways are so strong you can do the task without much thought or effort. Have you ever forgotten if you brushed your teeth or not because you are just moving through your morning without really thinking? You reach out to check your toothbrush or run your tongue along your teeth to double check yourself. Driving to work is another task that can easily escape your memory in much detail due to your brain being on auto pilot. This little bit of science can work to your advantage in forming new habits.

My first experiment with this was to incorporate doing something called Morning Pages. You can find out more about this powerful way to start your day [here](#), but in short its a daily journaling practice one immediately in the morning before your brain fully even awakens.

First thing I do in the morning after waking up, washing face and brushing teeth is make my cup of coffee. So, I tied the two together. Every time I get my morning cup of java I journal. No running to the computer and beginning work. I do my morning pages while drinking my coffee.

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It worked so well that after a month I stacked on another habit. I've had on my bucket list for sometime to read the entire bible cover to cover. I was raised Catholic, so have read many parts of the bible. But, I wanted to read the whole thing at least once cover to cover. I even bought a bible a few years ago that organized the readings just with this goal in mind called the One Year Bible. So I added to the morning routine the daily readings after my morning pages. I stacked a fragile new habit on top of the ingrained routine and it worked! I am almost 25% through the bible and right on schedule for the year.

The other area habit stacking has worked for me is finding time for meditation. This is a bit trickier as quiet is needed. As many moms, quiet time lacks at my house. The morning routine was already long enough and by the end of that 20-30 minutes the kids were getting up. So I opted to stack this habit onto my workout. Now I don't workout 7 days a week, but I am at least able to stack meditation on 5 days a week when I workout, which is much better than I've achieved in the past.

Here are the keys to Habit Stacking:

1. Decide on one habit to start with you want to begin, start small
2. List your current strong habits you always do without even thinking
3. Select which habit to best stack on to, attach to existing habits that are strongly ingrained
4. Small daily increments add to big accomplishments
5. Be willing to try different combinations to find what fits
6. Be observant to find out what works for you

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Daily writing time was another habit I wished I was more consistent with. Being observant helped me realize that I write more in the flow when using paper and pen. When I tried to sit down at a laptop and type to write my mind fought me. I work at a PC in my corporate job and tacking on more keyboard time in a creative mode just wasn't working. But if I sit on my couch with pen and paper the words flow easily. Then the next day once the creative work is done the typing can easily be done without the creative energy draw. I could even outsource the typing after the writing is done if I wanted to.

What habit do you want to have stick? Can you see a place in your day to try habit stacking?

Journal It! – Journal questions for you to use ~

What habits do I most want to have as part of my life? Which habits will help me meet my goals and add more happiness and joy?

What habits do I already have integrated into my day? Even if its as simple as brushing my teeth, drinking coffee or walking in through the front door after work?

Where do I want to start my first stack and when?

When will I re-evaluate my progress?

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Let's Connect

I would love to hear how this worked for you and what new habits you developed.

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