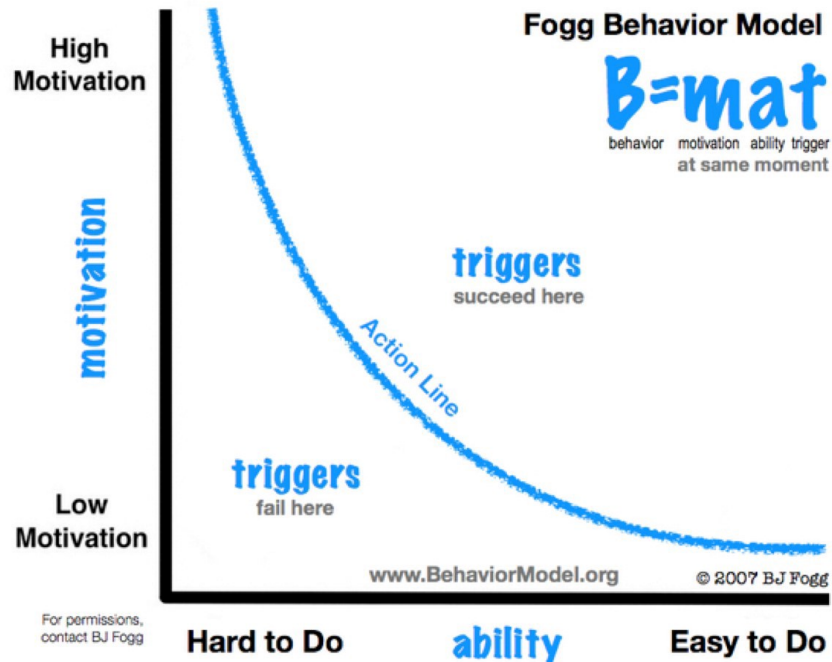# Tiny Habits from BJ Fogg

Source

[BJ Fogg](#) is a behavior scientist at Stanford who developed <u>the Fogg Behavior Model</u> (FBM) pictured above. It states that for a trigger (same as a cue in Duhigg's model) to succeed, the right levels of motivation and ability must come together. You might have a lot of motivation to do 100 push ups, but not the physical strength to do so. Eating a healthy meal of steamed broccoli is physically easier to do than the pushups. But you're still likely to fail due to a lack of motivation (assuming you don't love steamed broccoli).

To make sure triggers for the right behaviors succeed and those for the wrong ones fail, Fogg created an approach called <u>Tiny Habits</u>, which are habits…

- *"you do at least once a day,"*

- *"that take you less than 30 seconds,"*

- *"that require little effort."*

To change behavior using the Tiny Habits methodology, Fogg suggests using his habit recipe template:

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"After I [TRIGGER], I will [TINY HABIT]."
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The trick here is to use a so-called <u>anchor</u> as your trigger. An anchor is a solidified, routine behavior, like brushing your teeth, making coffee, or washing your hands. The anchor becomes the trigger for your new habit.

For example, flossing one tooth after you brush your teeth feels so dead simple that it's hard *not* to follow through.

In practice, most people find the tiny habit leads to a larger behavior change. In our coaching community, we talk a lot about momentum. In this Tiny Habits flossing example, you focus on just getting the initial momentum knowing that you're most likely to go well past flossing just the one tooth.

The Science

The Tiny Habits framework is rooted in the concept of implementation intentions. From <u>the premiere study</u> on the theory, <u>validated</u> by NYU psychology professors Peter Gollwitzer and Gabriele Oettingen:

> *"Implementation intentions are if-then plans that spell out in advance how one wants to strive for a set goal. For the if-component, a critical cue is selected (e.g., a good opportunity, an anticipated obstacle) that is linked to a goal-directed response in the then-component. Implementation intentions are known to enhance the rate of goal attainment. They do so by delegating action control to situational cues, thus endowing action control with features of automaticity."*

Case Study

The power of this methodology is that tiny habits quickly compound once you chain them together. In 2015, I read a book called *The Miracle Morning*, which outlined a six-step morning routine. It already came with an acronym to remember the steps, but chaining them together with habit recipes helped me consistently do them all in sequence. I turned the acronym into a habit staircase, and then spelled out my implementation intentions next to it.
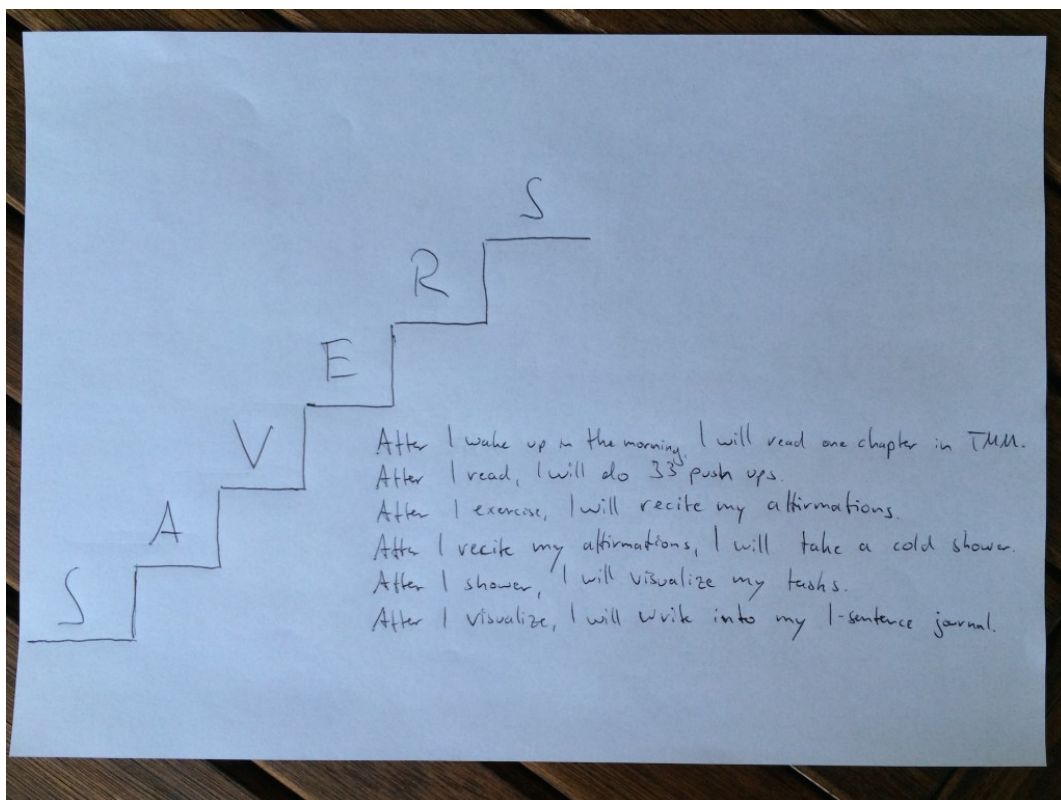
Source

Knowing which habit followed which, and that each one only took a short time to do, removed a lot of the mental effort usually required to adopt a new behavior—especially one that's supposed to happen right after getting up.

When to use this model

No matter whether you're a habit nerd, an intrigued skeptic, or you just want your kids to eat their vegetables, the risk-reward ratio of tiny

habits is excellent. They take little time to set up and close to no effort in executing.

A lot of clients who come to habit coaches are struggling with goals that are way bigger than their current capabilities. If this is you, a Tiny Habit is a nice alternative. You're making a guarantee to yourself to make one tiny step, knowing that enough of those tiny steps will eventually lead to your bigger goal.

The important thing here is to write down your habit recipe. Then, if you still have trouble with the habit, the most likely culprit is an anchor that either isn't consistent or which doesn't leave room for your new habit. In either case, just pick a new anchor.