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## Context to the nugget

BJ speaks about the Motivation Ability curve which lies at the heart of his thinking around tiny habits. He speaks about how they complement each other and one way for us to take the vagary of motivation out of the equation is to go up the Ability curve so that we reduce the friction to the extent that we could do the activity with minimal levels of motivation.

## Transcription

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Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): Let's talk about the three pieces of the puzzle: motivation, ability and prompt and let's start with prompts. You call prompts the... maybe actually just to pause even before we dive in you talk about the way, I mean, to phrase it using finance terms the motivation ability indifference curve if I may call it that, you know, the way the curve... could you sort of maybe visually paint the picture for us on how that curve plays out and then we...

BJ Fogg (BJ): Yeah, I have a kind of teacher who loves the whiteboard so... but it basically works like this. So, in the behaviour model you have motivation, ability and prompt. So, let's talk about just motivation and ability. Those two components work like teammates and if the motivation is really high for behaviour, you can do hard behaviours, but if the motivation is really low, you can't do hard behaviours. Therefore, it has to be really easy or in other words you have to have a high ability to do the behaviour. So, one of the breakthroughs in that model is the understanding that motivation and ability can compensate for each other, so it's a compensatory relationship and talking about them as teammates is a little more straightforward. Let's say you are playing volleyball and there are two people on a team. If your teammates are really strong you can be weak and you can still win, you both can be strong but you both can't be weak otherwise you won't win. So, if motivation is low and it's hard to do then despite how many times you are prompted you won't do the behaviour. So there is a curve that I called the action line on a landscape that the visual version of the model and if you are above that line... so if motivation is high and ability is high enough, you are above the line, you will do the behaviour when prompted. If either one is zero, if you have no motivation or you have no ability then of course you won't do the behaviour when prompted. And if they are both relatively low, you are probably below the action line and even if when prompted you don't do the behaviour. So, what's really exciting I think, I mean, it looks so simple graphically, but the implications are enormous. It helps you understand that in order to do hard things you have to have high motivation. But then when you look at the reality of being a human being you don't always have high motivation. So, that means to be consistent in doing any behaviour it needs to be easy to do and this was the insight that led to tiny habits. If the habit, the new habit is really easy to do then you don't need high levels of motivation, your motivation can sag and it can be pretty low and you will still do the behaviour when prompted. So that tiny habits method came for me looking at my own model and seeing that, you know, acknowledging that motivation goes up and down over time we don't

have lots of control over levels of motivation, but we can make things easier to do. In fact, let's make them so easy to do that the motivation needed is miniscule and that's really what tiny habits is about. It's about consistency of doing the habit not the size or the difficulty of the habit.

## Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: This piece reminds me of my conversation with James Clear (JC), the Author of Atomic Habits. He makes the link between sowing a new habit and small changes in our identity as a result.

JC: *“every action you take is like a vote for the type of person you want to become. So in a sense your habits are how you embody a particular identity like every time that you make your bed you embody the identity of someone who is clean and organized, every time that you make a healthy meal and cook that at home rather than eating out you embody the identity of someone who is focused on eating healthy. Every time that you write one sentence you embody the identity of a writer and know those little actions, those tiny habits do not radically transform your body overnight, they don't lead to a written book in a single day but they do cast a vote for being that kind of person. So early on that's really powerful because those habits provide evidence of this new identity that give you a reason to root that belief in something.”*

DJ: James basically talks about how the small habit whether you call it atomic habit or tiny habit starts moving the needle with how we think about ourselves and that slowly starts turning into a slow but steadily evolving virtuous cycle. For more do look up my conversation with James Clear.

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## End of nugget transcription

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Nugget from James Clear that is referenced: [Keeping the identity small](#).

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### BJ Fogg - Nuggets

- 58.00 BJ Fogg - The Full Conversation
- 58.01 BJ Fogg - The ABC of tiny habits
- 58.02 BJ Fogg - The MAP of behaviour change
- 58.03 BJ Fogg - Prompts - the low hanging fruit of change
- 58.04 BJ Fogg - Action versus Context Prompt
- 58.05 BJ Fogg - Build ability to beat motivation cycles
- 58.06 BJ Fogg - Celebrating to wire in a habit
- 58.07 BJ Fogg - Tiny habits to big change
- 58.08 BJ Fogg - Untangle (not break) bad habits
- 58.09 BJ Fogg - Getting out of screen addiction
- 58.10 BJ Fogg - The knowing-doing gap

### About Deepak Jayaraman

Deepak seeks to unlock human potential of senior executive’s / leadership teams by working with them as an Executive Coach / Sounding Board / Transition Advisor. You can know more about his work [here](#).

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Podcast Transcript [58.02 BJ Fogg – The MAP of behavior change](#)

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