



The banner features the 'play to potential' logo on the left. To its right are contact details: a WhatsApp icon with the number '+91 85914 52129*', a Twitter icon with the handle '@PlayToPotential', and a globe icon with the website 'playtopotential.com'. Further right, under the heading 'Also available on:', are icons for Spotify, Apple Podcasts, and Google Podcasts. On the right side of the banner is a portrait of the host, Deepak Jayaraman, with the text 'Podcast Host' and his name 'Deepak Jayaraman' below it. At the bottom left, a small note reads: '*Just send us a Whatsapp with your name, number and email and we will add you to our distribution list.'

Context to the nugget

BJ speaks about the role of a prompt in getting us to perform a habit. Prompt is often the trigger that ensures that we perform the habit (assuming we have adequate motivation and ability – something that we discuss later in the conversation)

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): And to maybe bring the third variable in, prompts and you call prompts the low-hanging... you call it the low-hanging fruit of behavioural change, why so?

BJ Fogg (BJ): Oh, because it's just... we can design prompts in and out of our life pretty easily. So, a prompt is anything that reminds you or cues you or triggers you to do behaviour. I am using all of those as synonyms. It's the thing let's just do this now and there are various sources. There's basically three categories of prompts and in tiny habits the category we use is you use your existing routine to be the prompt and that's different and that's a breakthrough and that means you don't use the other category what I call context prompts, which is post-its, alarms, other people, notifications all those things that annoy us, you don't use that in the tiny habits method, instead you use something that's natural, something that's already built into your life, an existing routine and then you anchor your new habit to that existing routine. And so, it's... and that insight didn't come to me for a while later. So, I knew motivation ability how they work together and I knew that making something super simple would let you be consistent in creating a habit but then it was like, how do you prompt it? How do you prompt it? And then that just happened like a lot of breakthroughs, you know, literally it was getting out of the shower and it's like, oh my gosh, it's after you figure out what this comes after and use you the preceding behaviour to remind you of the next thing this new habit that you want. And so, then it was, then it all clicked and then I knew I had all the pieces in place because it always comes back this motivation ability prompt and then I knew I had... here is this breakthrough way of habits where you are hacking three things. One, you are making the behaviour super tiny, so you don't need much motivation. Two, you are prompting it through something you already do, an existing routine that we call an anchor in tiny habits. And then three, you manipulate your emotion, so your brain takes notice and goes, wow that feels good, I want to do that again in the future. And so, you don't leave that to chance, you deliberately celebrate and cause that emotion to fire off which then changes the regulation of dopamine in the brain.

DJ: Got it. And maybe... you talk about the, you know, brushing and flossing analogy, right, and if I apply to my life, I often tell myself that yes after I brush I should floss and maybe start with one tooth. But sometimes my memory fails me and I just sort of move on to something else. Even if we stick with that notion of attaching a tiny habit on the back of an action that we already do, how do

we remind ourselves to do the tiny habit? Is there some nuance there in the way we make that connection?

BJ: Yeah, like there is... all of this is a system. In fact, that's I think what I am proudest about, about the book *Tiny Habits* is like hey everybody, there is this system behind human behaviour. It's not guesswork. There is a way to systematically understand and it's systematically designed for it and so on and it's simpler than you think. So, let me touch two parts of the system of how to get an effective anchor that will remind you doing a habit. First, from the beginning as you are designing the tiny habit what's called the recipe. It's like okay, how do you make it super tiny, I'll floss one tooth, what does it come after? And so, this is a design challenge not a willpower challenge. So, you look around and say well, what does flossing naturally come after in my life and for pretty much everybody it's after you brush. Now for other types of habits that may not be so obvious let's say somebody wants a meditation habit and they scale it back to just three breaths and they go okay when those taking three meditative breaths or at least calming breaths, where does that fit, what does it come after? And so, they have to do some a bit of design and maybe a bit of exploration and it probably doesn't come after you turn on the TV, that's not going to... I will try to turn on the TV, I'll take three calming breaths, nah not the right place. It might be after you empty your spam folder, after you sit down at work, it could be after you start the coffee maker. So, you design just like you would say, where does this new painting go in our home, you consider options and you pick one and if it doesn't work there then you try another one. And that's a big part of the tiny habits method is you design the new habit and if it doesn't work you redesign it, you don't beat yourself up, you don't cause yourself to feel bad because you are... it's not a willpower or a discipline issue, it's a design issue. Just like putting a new painting on a wall where it doesn't work well, that's not a discipline or a willpower flaw, that's a design issue. So first of all, you get better and better how to design things in your life. Then if it's really not sticking like you are really not remembering to do the flossing then there is a technique that this... I am just warning everybody listening you are going to think this is crazy at first, but you rehearse the sequence of behaviours with a celebration. In other words you accelerate habit formation by drilling over and over and I don't mean like a hundred times, I am talking 7 to 10 times where you would pretend like you are done brushing, you would set your brush down, you would pick up the floss, you would floss one tooth and go, good for me and smile in the mirror or whatever your celebration is. And then you would do it again immediately, pretend like you are brushing, put your brush down, pick up your floss, celebrate and drill that sequence with the celebration and do that 7 to 10 times. Now, I know people are going to think I am crazy for suggesting this, however, if you understand that habit formation is a skill and the way you nail habits is the same way you nail other skills where like if you want to be great at golf you practice putting, if you want to be great at tennis, you do serves over and over, basketball you practice the three-point shots over and over. Same thing with habits, you can actually drill and practice but in this case, you also celebrate, so you are accelerating the speed of habit formation. Now that's what you do if it doesn't wire in naturally. There's some habits you design and bam they just click just they're done one and done. But the ones that just don't seem to be sticking and you don't want to redesign it then you go to this drill. Now, I think in the future, this might be 10 years from now, it will be common practice that you do this from the beginning, any new habit you want great, walk through the behaviour sequences, do the anchor, do the new tiny behaviour and celebrate and do it over and over and I am going to predict that is going to just be standard practice at some point in the future and that is what you do at the beginning to wire in a habit not as you know, end of your rope troubleshooting technique.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: There is a personal reason I asked this question. I have believed in the system of homoeopathy to cure some of the chronic issues I have faced such as wheezing when I was a child. I once went to the homoeopath to get some medicines to improve my memory because I was forgetting things and had to excessively rely on devices and reminders. The lady duly prescribed some medicines for me to consume. But the paradox is that I kept forgetting to eat the medicines.

So, back to the question I asked BJ, I have bad teeth and I know that flossing is good for me and I should do it after I brush my teeth. But I often forget to make that connection. So, BJ emphasizing on a mini celebration is an interesting point. It sounds silly but if years of neuro-science research support it then, might as well put up with the silliness and do it.

Thank you for listening. If you find this of value, do take a moment to visit the podcast archives at playtopotential.com. You might specifically like the section – Curated Playlists, where 500+ podcast nuggets have been painstakingly curated by theme for easy access.

End of nugget transcription

RELATED PLAYLISTS YOU MIGHT LIKE

Habits: Habits are routine behaviours done on a regular basis. They are recurrent and often unconscious patterns of behaviour and are acquired through frequent repetition. Guests on the podcast share their experiences in baking habits in their lives. You can access the playlist [here](#).

SIGN UP TO OUR COMMUNICATION

Podcast Newsletter: Join 1000s of leaders who benefit from the Podcast newsletter. Not more than 1-2 emails a month including keeping you posted on the new content that comes up at the podcast. High on signal, low on noise. Sign up for the podcast newsletter [here](#).

Nuggets on Whatsapp: We also have a [Podcast Whatsapp distribution group \(+91 85914 52129\)](#) where we share 2-3 nuggets a week from the Podcast archives to provoke reflection. If that is of interest, please click [here](#) and send a message stating “INTERESTED”. Do also add this number to your Phone Contacts so that we can broadcast our messages to you when we share a nugget.

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](#).

Disclaimer and clarification of intent behind the transcripts

This written transcript of the conversation is being made available to make it easier for some people to digest the content in the podcast. Several listeners felt that the written format would be helpful. This may not make sense as an independent document. Very often spoken word does not necessarily read well. Several of the guests have published books and the language in their books might be quite different from the way they speak. We request the readers to appreciate that this transcript is being offered as a service to derive greater value from the podcast content. We request you not to apply journalistic standards to this document.

This document is a transcription obtained through a third party/voice recognition software. There is no claim to accuracy on the content provided in this document, and occasional divergence from the audio file are to be expected. As a transcription, this is not a legal document in itself, and should not be considered binding to advice intelligence, but merely a convenience for reference.

The tags that are used to organize the nuggets in the podcast are evolving and work in progress. You might find that there could be a discrepancy between the nuggets as referenced here and in the actual podcast given this is a static document.

All rights reserved. No part of this document may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, or stored in any retrieval system of any nature without prior written permission.