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## Context to the nugget

James speaks about how he got injured as a player and had to focus on small wins that eventually put him on a path of recovery and regaining of fitness. He goes on to talk about how he got curious about habits from a consumer behaviour standpoint in the context of the business he had started. He speaks about how those two came together and led to him becoming a bridge between academic research and practical application

## Transcription

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**Deepak Jayaraman (DJ):** Maybe before we dive into the specific James about Atomic Habits, I would love to get a sense of how you got here? Tell us a little bit about the why behind the what you do.

James Clear (JC): Sure, so I sort of came to this topic through two different ways. One is personal and one professional. On the personal side I played sports while I was growing up and ended up suffering this serious injury when I was in high school; I was hit in the face with a baseball bat and the fallout from that injury was significant and extended, it took 8 or 9 months for me to recover, I wasn't able to drive a car for that time, I was practicing basic motor patterns like walking in a straight line and I was taking my physical therapy sessions. And it was a period in my life where I was forced to start small. It was the first time where I really didn't have a choice, I couldn't try out to attack a habit in a bigger way. And so, I started focusing on the small things like going to bed at the same hour each night or preparing for class for an hour each day or this was the first time in my life when I wanted to gym consistently, first once or twice a week and then three or four times. And individually those habits don't really sound very significant but collectively they gave me a sense of control over my life again and I was able to continue those habits and follow that arc and I didn't get to play very much in high school but I did make it to my college team and continued to progress throughout university and ultimately felt like I was able to make the most of the potential that I had as a player and ended up being in the American team which is, about 30 players around the country are on that team. So, I have this personal side that I have been exposed to small habits and then there was a more professional side. So, I studied science in undergrad mostly heart sciences, chemistry, physics, biology and then I went to business school and got a graduate degree and afterward I started my own business and for the first two years I tried things but just kind of flopped around and didn't really make much progress and I realized that one of the reasons I was struggling was because I didn't understand how to market anything, I didn't know like why would somebody buy a product, sign up for an email list or basically why do customers take action. So, I started studying consumer psychology to see if I could improve my business in some way and that started to naturally uncover and reveal some ideas around behavioural psychology and habit formation and the more that I read about that the more that those two sides of habits my personal side and experiences as an athlete and then my professional side and interest in science started to merge. So, I started to be

interested in the science of how habits form and the biology and nerve science and other work, what regions of the brain are involved and the more that I studied those topics the more I started to see oh, I can actually use some of those ideas and apply them to my current weight lifting habits or diet habits or creativity habits and those were ideas that I had used when I was an athlete and so on. And I think that kind of summarizes where I am at now and the role that my work plays which are my articles and certainly Atomic Habits. When I wrote the book, I wanted to be a bridge between academic research and practical application. So, I kind of view that as my job to take scientifically grounded ideas about how habits work and how behaviour changes and then distil that in some way that we can use in a practical sense or how do I actually use this in my daily life more. So, that's how I came to the writing and work that I do now.

## Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: It is fascinating to see how James has followed his curiosity and how that has been shaped by his life experiences professional and personal. People often see career choices as a professional pursuit and often don't seek data from the personal side of the journey. But there is so much to be mined from our journeys on the non-work front that it can truly inform our choices in the world of work. If this is a topic of interest, you might like the Playlist on Curiosity. Please go to [Playtopotential.com](http://Playtopotential.com) and to the Curated Playlists section. You will find Curiosity under the theme Leadership. Alternatively, you could just go to [playtopotential.com/tags/curiosity](http://playtopotential.com/tags/curiosity)

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## End of nugget transcription

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### James Clear - Nuggets

- 52.00 James Clear - The Full Conversation
- 52.01 James Clear - Journey to studying habits
- 52.02 James Clear - Building habits in the right areas
- 52.03 James Clear - Keeping the identity small
- 52.04 James Clear - Plateau of latent potential
- 52.05 James Clear - Systems versus Goals
- 52.06 James Clear - Building habits with awareness
- 52.07 James Clear - Environment and habits
- 52.08 James Clear - 2 minute rule - the gateway habit

### 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 [52.01 James Clear - Journey to studying habits](#)

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