

# Patty's PT Tips

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## Tiny Habits towards Better Health

Resources:

[Tiny Habits-The Small Changes that Change Everything](#)-BJ Fogg, PhD

Behavior Design Lab at Stanford University    Published 2020

**Habits are like plants**



Forming a habit is like **growing a plant**. Let me explain . . .

1. You start with something **tiny** (a seed or a sprout).
2. You find a **good spot** for it in your garden (proper soil, light, moisture).
3. You nourish your tiny plant so the **roots get established**.

*As you do these three things, your tiny plant will take root and thrive.*

Let's apply the points above to how habit formation works:

1. You start with a **tiny behavior**.
2. You find a **good spot in your daily routine** for this tiny behavior.

3. You nourish your tiny behavior so it gets **firmly established** in your life.

*As you do these three things, your new habit will take root and thrive.*

With practice, you will form habits quickly and easily.

Of course, you won't be perfect. Just like with gardening, there is some trial and error -- always something to learn. But you will get better. You will learn new skills and gain confidence. And this, in turn, can change your life in big ways.

Focus on tiny

In the Tiny Habits method you always **start with a tiny behavior**. Below are some examples:

- Floss one tooth
- Pour a cup of water
- Read one sentence in a book
- Put on walking shoes
- Take one deep breath

At the end of this page, I'll explain how to translate a difficult habit (like 25 pushups each morning) into something tiny. But first, let me explain why tiny matters.

Why start tiny?

As a behavior scientist, I know this is a fact: **difficult behaviors require a high level of motivation**.

You've seen this in your own life. If there's a tough task facing you, such as cleaning your entire home, you won't do it unless your motivation level is high.

In fact, one person told me this: When she needs to clean her home thoroughly, she invites friends over for a party. She knows this will boost her motivation, and she'll get the tough cleaning task done.

Well, I like parties and a clean home, but my friend's technique is not the Tiny Habits method. She is not creating a cleaning habit; she is creating a cleaning emergency.

As human beings, our motivation level for any behavior goes up and down over time. That's natural. And you can't always rely on having a high level of motivation. Your motivation is often low for cleaning or exercising or cutting vegetables. That's reality.

Relying heavily on motivation to create a habit **does not work**.

Tiny gives you success

When a behavior is really easy, like putting a magazine back on the shelf, you don't need to throw a party to succeed. In other words, **when a behavior is easy, you don't need to rely on motivation**. You simply put the magazine back on the shelf, and you are done.

In creating the Tiny Habits method, I realized that if I started my change process with a simple behaviors, then I wouldn't need to worry about my swings in motivation. Instead, I could focus on making the tiny behavior automatic. I could focus on creating a habit.

This was my insight: *"Okay, BJ. You already know how to floss all your teeth. That's not the problem. You don't yet know how to do this automatically."* So I scaled back flossing to just one tooth. I then focused on making this tiny behavior automatic in my life. Soon I created a solid habit, and then I grew the habit to include all of my teeth (hooray).

Simple is powerful

Simple is powerful. You'll experience that next week.

You can grow your tiny behaviors in later weeks (for example, expand from flossing one tooth to all your teeth). But for this next week, to benefit your own success and learning, please, **please** keep it simple.

Just like with plants: You start small. It takes root. And then it can grow.

**Simplicity changes behavior.** The most important three words you'll read today.