

The science of habits - why willpower is not the answer

Anglický text s pracovním listem · Úroveň: Středně pokročilý (B1-B2) · 5 otázek · Klíč na samostatné straně



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Jméno: _____ Třída: _____ Datum: _____ Skóre: _____ / 5

Text

In a pair of diary studies, the psychologist Wendy Wood asked students to write down what they were doing at every waking hour. Roughly a third to a half of the behaviours they recorded were repeated almost every day, usually in the same place. In other words, a third or more of what you do is not chosen at all – it is simply replayed.

Neuroscientists at MIT have shown that the brain packs a repeated sequence of actions into a single unit, a process Ann Graybiel calls chunking, a term she borrowed from memory research. Once a routine has been chunked, it no longer needs your attention: a cue in the environment starts it and a small reward tells the brain to keep it. That loop of cue, routine and reward is remarkably efficient, which is exactly why unwanted habits are so hard to switch off.

You have probably heard that a new habit takes twenty-one days to form, but that number comes from a plastic surgeon's book published in 1960, not from research on behaviour. When Phillippa Lally's team at University College London followed volunteers who were building a new daily routine, the median was sixty-six days, and their model suggested that some people would need far longer. Her data held better news too: missing a single day did not materially affect the process, though other work suggests a whole missed week does.

If willpower were the answer, the people with the most self-control would be the ones resisting temptation all day long. Studies of self-discipline suggest the opposite: people who score highly on self-control report fewer struggles, because they have arranged their lives so that temptation rarely appears. Wood refers to this effect as friction: make the behaviour you want to build slightly easier and the one you want to drop slightly harder.

Peter Gollwitzer's research points in the same direction, with a technique called implementation intentions. Instead of promising yourself that you will exercise more, you write a specific if-then plan and let the situation do the remembering for you. Habits are built by repetition rather than by motivation, so the useful question is not how badly you want to change, but what your kitchen, your phone and your morning routine make easy.

Slovíčka z článku

Anglicky	Výslovnost	Česky
cue	/kju:/	podnět, spouštěč
reward	/rɪ'wɔ:d/	odměna
routine	/ru:'ti:n/	rutina, zaběhaný postup
chunking	/'tʃʌŋkɪŋ/	slučování úkonů do jednoho celku
willpower	/'wɪlpəʊə/	vůle, síla vůle

Anglicky	Výslovnost	Česky
self-control	/ˌself kən'trəʊl/	sebeovládání
self-discipline	/ˌself 'dɪsɪplɪn/	sebekázeň
temptation	/temp'teɪʃn/	pokušení
friction	/'frɪkʃn/	tření, odpor
median	/'mi:diən/	medián, prostřední hodnota
to affect	/ə'fekt/	ovlivnit
to drop a habit		zbavit se zvyku
implementation intention		implementační záměr

Otázky k textu (zakroužkujte správnou odpověď)

1. What did Wendy Wood's diary studies find about everyday behaviour?

- A) A small part of it, mostly what people plan in advance
- B) About one fifth of it, and always in exactly the same place
- C) A large share of it, usually tied to one place
- D) Nearly all of it, except for what happens at work

2. What happens to a routine once the brain has chunked it?

- A) It runs without needing the person's attention
- B) It becomes much easier to describe in words
- C) It is stored as a series of separate decisions
- D) It stops working unless the reward gets bigger

3. What does the article say about the popular twenty-one day figure?

- A) Lally's volunteers in London confirmed it
- B) It applies only to habits involving exercise
- C) It describes the fastest case Lally recorded
- D) It goes back to a surgeon's self-help book

4. Why do people with strong self-control report fewer struggles?

- A) They enjoy the feeling of resisting temptation
- B) They meet temptation less often in the first place
- C) They rely on fresh motivation every single morning
- D) They fight their own habits throughout the day

5. What does an if-then plan do, according to the last paragraph?

- A) It measures how much motivation you have left
- B) It replaces the reward at the end of the habit
- C) It hands the job of remembering to the situation
- D) It shortens the time a new habit needs by half

Klíč - řešení s vysvětlením

1. C) A large share of it, usually tied to one place

První odstavec: zhruba třetina až polovina zaznamenaného chování se opakovala skoro každý den, obvykle na stejném místě.

2. A) It runs without needing the person's attention

Druhý odstavec: jakmile je rutina slepená do jednoho celku, už nepotřebuje pozornost – spustí ji podnět z okolí a odměna ji udrží.

3. D) It goes back to a surgeon's self-help book

Třetí odstavec: číslo pochází z knihy plastického chirurga vydané v roce 1960, ne z výzkumu chování. Tým Phillippy Lallyové našel medián šedesát šest dní.

4. B) They meet temptation less often in the first place

Čtvrtý odstavec: neodolávají pokušení častěji než ostatní – zařídili si život tak, aby se pokušení skoro neobjevovalo.

5. C) It hands the job of remembering to the situation

Pátý odstavec: místo slibů si napíšete konkrétní plán „když – tak“ a to pamatování necháte na situaci.