STEPPING STONES EXPERIENCE

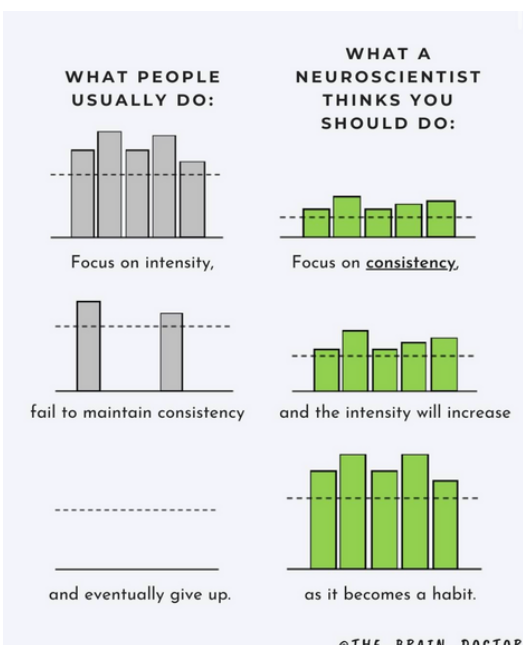## The Wellbeing Edit

BETTER HABITS

How are you?

The Stepping Stones Team wish you a happy and healthy 2023 and hope you enjoyed a restorative break. Often we find that we come back from a break with the intention of working differently, smarter, better.

WHAT PEOPLE USUALLY DO:
Focus on intensity,
fail to maintain consistency
and eventually give up.

WHAT A NEUROSCIENTIST THINKS YOU SHOULD DO:
Focus on consistency,
and the intensity will increase
as it becomes a habit.

@THE_BRAIN_DOCTOR

Sound familiar? January, of course, brings with it even more expectation with resolutions or goals being set for the year ahead. Often we can't wait to start with a clean slate, setting off with high hopes only to find ourselves quickly feeling frustrated. The Brain Doctor explains how this tends to come about. Her graphic shows where we often go wrong when we try to start a new habit – we focus on intensity rather than consistency.

There is a lot written about habits but one of my favourites is Atomic Habits by James Clear. In his book, he shares what he identifies as the 4 rules to building better habits:

Make it obvious

Make it attractive

Make it easy

Make it satisfying

The best way to start a new habit is to create an implementation intention – 'when situation x arises, I will do y'. Basically, this is a plan of when and where you will do the thing, it brings clarity and reduces the need for decision making.

e.g. on Tuesdays and Thursdays I will leave work at 4.45pm

Another great way to introduce a habit is though 'habit stacking'. Often we decide what to do based on what we've just done so attaching a new habit to something you do regularly or automatically means you are more likely to do it.

e.g. after I take off my shoes I immediately change into my workout clothes

As humans we are hugely influenced by others and have a tendency to align our behaviours to 3 social groups:

- The close – family and friends
- The many – peers and colleagues
- The powerful – those with 'status' of some kind

The behaviours and habits of those around us have an impact on us, which can be supportive but it can also challenging. It's helpful to be aware of these influences and think about how they might help or hinder your intentions and habits.

e.g. if you work in a school where everyone leaves at a similar time you are likely to align with that

The key to building new habits is to keep going, keep moving forward even if it is slowly. **The key is repetition**. Repetition leads to physical changes in the brain – each time you do the thing, you are activating the neural circuit associated with that habit. This is a critical step in building automaticity – doing it without thinking about it. For a habit to become embedded you need to string together enough successful attempts at doing it.

Using a habit tracker (see below) can help build stick-ability of new habits. Firstly, it acts as a reminder but it's also motivating as you can see your progress and this gives you a sense of satisfaction. It can also help you to get back on track if things get in the way and we lose a little momentum. If you miss a day, get back on it the next day (try not to let one day become two!) Accountability partners can also be helpful, having someone to check in with, support one another, challenge one another.

The 2 Minute Rule

Start small – break it down until it's something you can do in less than 2 minutes. Almost everything can be scaled down to 2 minutes.
e.g read 1 page, meditate for 1 minute, do 1 thing

WANT TO LEARN MORE?

Learn more about habit trackers

How to build good habits and break bad ones – James Clear & Dr Chatterjee
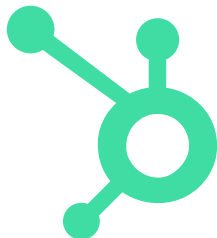
Atomic Habits by James Clear

INSIDE STEPPING STONES

Find out more about what **Stepping Stones** has to offer by completing the short the <u>pre-engagement module</u>.

Deepen your knowledge with **Education Scotland** this month with our curated selection of <u>Professional Learning Activities (PLA)</u> in the Discover & Connect Section.

The **General Teaching Council Scotland** have an excellent <u>wellbeing hub</u> of resources and advice.

Please forward this to a friend or colleague if you think they might find it find it useful too.

Until next time...

Sarah

(& the Stepping Stones team)

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<u>READ PREVIOUS EDITS HERE</u>   🏠