

THE 
SELF HELP
HIPSTER

Habits

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THE BASICS:

Hello, I'm Autopilot.

Changing or creating your habits to such an extent you can rely on them almost completely. And that's what I'm striving to do and that's what I hope I can help you do too.

Your brain is a very interesting organ. Incredibly effective and capable of amazing things such as language, creativity, social skills and planning. We wouldn't be able to use these functions though, if it weren't for our built-in Autopilot. It's exactly what it says: your Autopilot makes it possible for you to do things automatically. It's systematic and strong as fuck.

Our Autopilot is responsible for all our automatic behavior, action patterns and habits. It's where all our go-to behavior is stored. And it is absolutely crucial for our survival and functioning. Here's why.

Learning

Without our Autopilot, we would not be able to learn anything. For example, driving a car would be impossible without our Autopilot:

Learning how to drive a car is where you can see our Autopilot at work at its finest. With the help of our instructor and doing things over and over again, Autopilot uses the information we get about the different aspects of driving integrating it into patterns. These patterns we practice until we can use them relatively easily. With enough time eventually an examiner decides we are skilled enough to drive a car without mayhem ensuing. That's usually when we get our driver's license.

The more we drive, the more engrained these patterns become. Before we know it we can easily manage to have a conversation while we're driving, we know all these different routes to places. We start doing things without thinking, like turning the headlights on and off, putting on our favorite

radio station and clicking the doors locked with our fancy little electronic key.

Any other behaviors you also learn through Autopilot.

Whether it's speaking, writing, cooking: it's repeated behavior that your Autopilot eventually installs as go-to behavior. Once these learned behaviors are in Autopilot, you can do them without thinking. And so, you constantly reply 'yeah whatever' when someone asks you something, you write you're and your correctly when you need to, and you make a mean pasta carbonara without even batting an eyelid.

Freeing up cognitive space and energy.

The reason we learn things through Autopilot is convenience. Once behavior can be done without thinking, we can use our brain for other stuff. Which is kind of necessary if you want to get somewhere in life.

We have an autopilot because it would be *super* inconvenient if we had to have all our attention on what we were doing that exact moment, all the time. It would be very limiting if we had to focus entirely on all these tasks we do over and over again anyway.

We would be too busy keeping our eyes and attention on the keyboard as we're typing, using our utensils while we're eating or the phone as we're trying to use it. It would be huge pain in the ass.

Our cognitive space would be extremely limited. We would never have any free brain capacity. We wouldn't ever be able to use our brain for analyzing, thinking ahead, fantasizing or philosophize. Ever.

Without our autopilot we wouldn't be able to learn anything and we would always have to focus on the task in front of us like it was the very first time doing it.

Imagine always having to drive your car like it's your first time. Imagine always having to think about the route to your work every day, figuring out the gears and the brakes and when to use them.

It would be inconvenient, limiting and exhausting.

Which is why we are wired to memorize certain behaviors or action sequences up until a point where it doesn't require any (or hardly any) conscious effort on our part.

It frees up our brain so it can do other stuff for us. Crucial stuff like motor functions and speech, but also being able to fantasize about that hot guy in class, recite music lyrics, plan your outfit for the next day.

In a nutshell, this is what our Autopilot does. After you've repeated a behavior enough times, it goes into Automatic Mode. And next time you're at the gym, you automatically do the 5K on the treadmill *because that's what you did all the other times*. The next time you are at your parents' house without thinking you grab an iced tea out of the refrigerator. *Because that's what you've been doing since you were six years old.*

Your Autopilot takes over for you as soon as it can. A certain behavior gets wired into your system, to free your brain for other things. In a sense it wants to help you. It wants to help you by creating more free mind-space you don't have to spend on things you do a lot anyway. It's a clever, very straightforward trick.

But don't be fooled: Your Autopilot isn't smart. It doesn't think. In fact, your Autopilot doesn't think about long-term things and it doesn't even care that much about the potential costs and benefits. It's just practical. And it just uses calculations.

There are three factors it takes into account: *Repetition, time and consequences.*

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