

www.makeitmemorable.studio | danielle@makeitmemorable.studio

MAKING IT A HABIT

How to make presentation skills that last through goal setting and habit building

Go to bit.ly/presworkshop to register for presentation workshops



Why are we talking about goals and habits?

When it comes to goal setting, it can be easy to postpone making goals, be too ambitious, or not be specific enough. This handout walks through some common stumbling blocks people trip over when making goals. These problems typically center around the habits we have and maintain, how our goals are created and structured, how we plan to work towards those goals, feeling unmotivated to do them, or procrastinating instead of progressing.

If your goals are related to presentations, design, teaching, habits, or feedback, we'd love to help. [Make It Memorable, is offering workshops from March through May to help you craft your presentations, design your slides, and present your content.](#)

Since the quarter is coming to an end, I'd like you to reflect on some professional development goals you established at the beginning of the year, a new year's resolution you've been working toward, or something you have had in the back of your mind as a wish that you'd like to realize.

How have your goals gone so far?

If you didn't set any goals recently, think back to some goals that you've set for yourself in the past. How have you done?

- Have you found it difficult to feel like you've made progress? [Consider making it more attainable](#)
- Do you feel like you set the same goals year after year or find yourself wishing you could "just get it together" and stop procrastinating? [Click here for tips to help with procrastination](#)
- Do you find yourself motivated to complete your goal, but forget to do it? [Here are some tips on what to consider.](#)
- Do you find your goals are too big and ambitious? You get really excited about them, but then they start to fizzle out? [Here are some things to think about.](#)

If you are currently working toward a goal, how would you describe your current state?

- If you're still going strong, good for you! Celebrate your wins and recognize your hard work. Make sure you pause and acknowledge the work that you've done this far. This isn't easy to do, and you should be proud of your accomplishments. Well done!
- If you've started to wane or have already quit on your resolution/goal, don't be too hard on yourself, most people have trouble with goal setting. [Go here for some tips to help problem solve your goal](#)



Goal setting

We're going to dive into problem solving goals that don't stick, and address what could make them easier maintain. But first, what are some goals you're working towards? If you don't have any goals you're working on, let's make some! Take a moment and think about a goal that you really want or are working towards (personal or professional). If you could change one thing about yourself or your life, what would it be?

If I could do anything, I would wish for:

As an example, my wish is to make my next presentation awesome.

This is a great starting point, but it's not quite specific enough. So, if you're wishing for "more confidence", "to lose weight", "to be healthier", "to be happier", "to learn another language", etc. that's great, but let's make it a bit more tangible.

How can you make this quantifiable? You want to make it something that you could look at and say, "yes, I've achieved that!"

List your measurable goal:

I want to create a useful presentation for participants to understand slide design better by September.

My example in the blue box above is better, but still not quite quantifiable. Can I check this off? Maybe, but I should be a bit more specific. Make it measurable.

Do you need to adjust your goal?

I want to create a presentation on slide design that receives at least 4 out of 5 stars by attendees when asked if they would recommend it to colleagues



Great, now you're ready to focus on making your goal attainable. Focus on shorter periods of time, so you can see more successes and experience gratification more often. I like to work backwards and create a "reverse schedule."⁴ Start from the project's end, and add in all of your other commitments to your calendar. Then work backwards in time to figure out a schedule that works for your goal and your life.

For my goal, I'm looking at an seven-month plan. First, I consider what else I already have planned:

- In March, I'm working on a large client project, which will take up a lot of my time that month.
- I'm going to remove May from the calendar because I have vacation planned.
- In June I have a hiking trip planned, so I need to keep in mind I won't have as much time.
- In August and September, I will be teaching classes, so my time might be more limited.

Working backwards and breaking my goal down, I have something like this:

- September 15: Presentation day
- September 13-14: Practice
- September 9 and 12: Add final revisions based on feedback
- September 2-8: Practice and get feedback on presentation
- September 1: Finish the presentation and schedule run throughs
- August: Slide design
- July: Outline and storyboard
- June: Review research and start outline
- April: Research
- March: Review previous presentation and determine what additional items need to be added to it to create the second in this series

Then break it down into week and day as illustrated below:

This week, my goal is to review my old presentation and outline. I will print the outline and tape it to the whiteboard in my office. I will then use the whiteboard for brainstorming additional areas that could be added to this topic.

Notice how this is specific and includes where it will take place.

Today, after I eat lunch, I will spend 30-45 minutes finding and printing out my old outline and presentation on my old computer. Notice how this is a small section of time (best to work in small chunks at a time), it is specific about when this will take place, and how I will go about the task. If you are worried about sticking with your plan, think through what might distract you and come up with pre-planned ways to prevent you from being deterred. For example, I will keep my phone plugged in next to my bed and not bring it into the office from 1:00-2:00 while I am working on this task.

⁴The Now Habit by Neil Fiore, PhD



Including when, where, and how is critical.

Research shows that if we pre-plan how we will do an action, think through when we will do it, and know where it will take place, we are substantially more likely to complete our goals.⁵ If we can “script the critical moves” as Chip and Dan Heath mention in their book, *Switch*, it will be easier for us to stick with our plan or intentionally change course.

To do so think about the aspects that need to happen for your goal to be achieved. Be specific about the actions that need to take place. You don't want to be overcome with decision paralysis in the moment (when you're overwhelmed by too many choices). Instead, create a guide now that will help you decide what to do if life throws curve ball in your direction. By preplanning when, where, and how, we can make a quick decision about how best to proceed in moments of uncertainty. It will also make it easier to see and celebrate your success along the way.

Break your big goal down into measurable goals. Choose the timeframes that make the most sense for your goal. Be sure to think about any prior commitments or planned time off.

- In one year:
- In 6 months:
- In 3 months:
- This month:
- This week:
- Each day this week (consider which days you'll take off):

⁵*Switch* by Chip and Dan Heath



Tiny Habits⁶

Now, take a look at your week and day goal. Is it small enough that you can reasonably fit this into your day/week? What about days when you're sick, stressed, overworked? Consider making a tiny habit. BJ Fogg, a researcher at Stanford and founder of the Behavior Design Lab, wrote *Tiny Habits*. He argues that by breaking your habit down into a tiny action, you can do a little bit every day, and in the end you can do more than if you try to do a lot at once. By having a tiny habit, he has found people are more likely to succeed because they're always doing one small step towards their goal regardless of what else life throws at you.

Some examples of tiny habits are:

- Want to focus on getting in shape? Try one pushup each day.
- Want to read more? Read one page every day.
- Want to learn French? Practice Duolingo for 3 minutes daily.

The idea is, if the habit is small enough, even on your worst days, you can encourage yourself do one pushup, read one page, or spend 3 minutes on Duolingo. Look at your daily goals this week. Is there a smaller version of the goal you can allow yourself to do if that day is particularly miserable outside, full of meetings, or your kid(s) gets sick?

My tiny habit is:

My tiny habit is: Reading for 5 minutes from one of the books I've selected as research for my new presentation.

My habit in the above blue box works as a tiny habit because:

- It doesn't take much **time**.
- It doesn't cost much **money**. Technically, physical books cost money, but I normally rent them through the library or buy used copies.
- It doesn't take a lot of **physical effort**.
- It doesn't take much **mental effort**. I don't find reading difficult, but if you find it taxing, you may need to choose a different goal, or think of another way to incorporate it (for example, audiobooks).
- If I'm consistent, it can be implemented into my **routine** easily.

⁶*Tiny Habits* by BJ Fogg



These **five items** will help you think through your tiny habit. If one of these aspects is difficult, it may be hard to maintain this habit. Think through whether you have enough time and money, whether you are physically and mentally able to maintain this habit, and whether it will be easy for it to fit into your routine. If you answered no to any of these, brainstorm some alternative solutions.

Some solutions for my habit might be:

For my tiny habit, the biggest problem was my routine. Without a designated time, I told myself I would read before I went to bed, but because I was trying to do something *before* something else, it tended to be forgotten. I had nothing prompting me to ask whether I had read before I got into bed, which meant I typically remembered as I was drifting off to sleep. Annoyed, I would then wake myself up trying to decide whether or not I wanted to get out of the warm cocoon of my bed to go find my book (typically, the answer was “no”), then feel guilty and had trouble falling asleep.

So, I brainstormed some questions. If you're struggling with your habit, consider these as well:

- **Could you do your habit consistently at a specific time?** Yes, I could designate 5 minutes when I first woke up or just after I crawled into bed.
- **Could you start your habit consistently after a specific event?** Yes, I could listen to audiobooks while I walk, I could also read while I was waiting for the water to boil for tea, while I was waiting for my computer to boot up in the morning, or during or after lunch or dinner.
- **Is there something you could do to prompt yourself to do your habit throughout the day?** Yes, I could leave my book on the coffee table.
- **Is there something that could prompt you to do your habit before the end of the day?** Yes, I could put up a sign next to my toothbrush, or put a sticky note on my phone charger.

It's easier to use a previous habit as a prompt for an upcoming habit. This is often called habit stacking (i.e. every time, I eat lunch (already a habit), I read (what I want to be a habit)). Habits are more easily formed if you can have a prompt that reminds you to do the event.^{5,7,8} Prompts don't have to be an alarm or time of day. They can also be other habits, consistent events, people, and even animals.

My prompt for my tiny habit will be:

⁷Atomic Habits by James Clear



What if I can't seem to make the habit work?

1. **If you have trouble remembering to do the habit, consider first whether your prompt should change.** Can you make the prompt easier or harder to see? If you're trying to stop a habit, can you remove the prompt entirely (hide your cellphone, turn it on do not disturb, etc.) For example, I struggled to remember to take my vitamin D pill, so I moved it to various places around the kitchen. I put them by the sink, on top of the microwave, by the stove, and in the fridge. I was supposed to take one after I had eaten, so I had to think about where I would be after I ate. I've moved them to the kitchen table, and it seems to be going better.

Other prompts include: other habits that you do (habit stacking), timers (that you schedule or that are already a routine (the dog barks when the mailperson comes)), or events that are done consistently (waking up, eating meals, baby needs diaper changed, etc.)

2. **If you've tried changing the prompt and that's not working, think about whether it's easy enough (go back to time, money, physical effort, mental effort, and routine).** Maybe you need to change the time of day you do the habit or make the habit smaller. Brainstorm some new ideas about how you can make the habit easier. Some things to consider:
 - a. Would this habit be easier if it were at a different time? For example, mornings tend to be easier for people to stick to habits, but if you're a night owl, you might want to change times to after dinner.⁹
 - b. Would this habit be easier if I shortened it to take 1-5 minutes? For example, instead of trying to walk 2,000 steps for each walk, could you do 200 at a time?
 - c. Would this habit be easier if I changed my environment? For example, put water next to your bed or computer to remind you to drink more.
 - d. Would this habit be easier if I broke it into multiple habits? For example, instead of trying to clean up the entire kitchen after cooking, you could put the pans in the sink after cooking and turn on the water to soak them, then after eating, put away leftovers, then after watching television wash one pan, etc.
 - e. Would this habit be easier if I bought something different? For example, shoes that are more comfortable will make it more likely for you to walk, a different book to teach yourself a topic that is less confusing will make you more likely to read, or a lunchbox that makes you smile will make it more likely that you will want to use it.
 - f. Would this habit be easier if I lessened the mental effort or removed a decision that's making this hard to do? For example, going to cook and not knowing what to make could become: meal planning separately from cooking. Or, if your inbox stresses you out because you have to craft replies, you could consider writing one-line responses to the stressful emails in your inbox and then go back and make them nicer later. You could also start anywhere in the inbox, so you could respond to the easiest ones first.¹¹

⁹When by Daniel Pink



3. Consider your personality type. Gretchen Rubin asserts that there are four types of people, and each type goes about goal setting and habit formation differently.¹⁰ There's a description below, but [you can take a test on her website](#). Most people are either Questioner or Obligers.

Categories:

- a. **Upholder:** Meets outer and inner expectations. Upholders are your to-do list makers, schedulers, and mistake avoiders. They stick with the schedule and expectation that is set regardless of what life throws at them.
- b. **Questioner:** Resists outer expectations but meets inner expectations. Questioners in general question all expectations and will only agree to meet it if they determine the expectation is justified and makes sense. They don't just agree to a schedule or assignment but need to know why. They hate arbitrary rules.
- c. **Obliger:** Meets outer expectations but resists inner expectations. Obligers can be relied on to do a task for another person, but if an obliger sets themselves a task, they might have trouble following through with it. They are highly motivated by external accountability (group fitness, supervisors, teachers, etc.).
- d. **Rebel:** Resists outer and inner expectations. Rebels want to choose things for themselves. They hate being told what to do or how they are supposed to do it. They prefer to work in their own way and on their own terms.

Ideas to shift based on personality type:¹⁰

1. **Add in accountability** (accountability buddy, hire a professional, or find a group). This is necessary for Obligers and can be helpful for the other three categories.
2. **Find a way to monitor your actions** (food tracker, pedometer, time tracking system, etc.). This is great for Upholders. It can work for Questioners as long as you understand why you're doing it and don't see it as "busy work". For Obligers, it won't be as effective unless someone is also monitoring your monitoring (i.e. you have a nutritionist who is checking your food tracker or a personal trainer who is looking at your pedometer). For Rebels, monitoring can work as long as you want to do it.
3. **Schedule events** (setting a specific time, putting it in the calendar, or using [habit stacking](#)) is great for Upholders. This can work for the Questioners if they see the value in it and Obligers if the schedule is related to someone else (for example, meeting a friend to go on a walk). For Rebels, try creating a fluid schedule. For example, when I start work, I will work on one of my 3 most important tasks for the day, after lunch I will follow up with 3 clients (you get to choose who) either by email or on the phone, etc. For Rebels, give yourself guidelines, but not hard and fast rules.
4. **Think through what could go wrong** (using "if _____, then ____" statements) For example, **if** it rains tomorrow, **then** I will do circuit training inside. If _____ then _____ planning can help any of the categories strategize on how to avoid common pitfalls.^{6,11}

¹⁰ *Better than Before* by Gretchen Rubin



5. **Ask yourself “why?”** Reminding yourself of the main purpose of the goal can be helpful especially for Questioners and Rebels. This is a goal you’ve chosen to do, and this small task may seem annoying, but it’s part of a bigger picture.¹¹
6. **Make the goal part of your identity.** If you see yourself as a runner, you are more likely to run. If you see yourself as a dependable employee, you will be more likely to complete tasks on time. If you see yourself as an artist, you will make time to draw. This is especially helpful for Rebels, but can be used for any of the categories.^{8,11}
7. **Give yourself choices.** When faced with tasks we find difficult, tedious, or boring, give yourself a choice. For example, I can either walk outside or do yoga, I can answer 5 emails now and 5 emails after my next task instead of all of them at once, I can grade class one or class two. When we feel like we have choices we are more likely to stay motivated and get excited about tasks.¹¹

Do you struggle with procrastination?

Neil Fiore in his book, *The Now Habit*, emphasizes that procrastination often comes from some source of fear, anxiety, or worry. You don’t procrastinate because you’re lazy, rather you postpone starting because you are stressed or anxious. You want your work to be perfect, you’re worried about failing, or that it won’t be good enough and these feelings are ones that you’d rather avoid, so you switch to a different task to take your mind off the fear. Momentarily, this works, but then when you come back to the task at hand, you have less time and your stress increases.

To combat this, he suggests⁴:

1. **Focusing on your self-talk.** Change “I have to” and “I should” to “I will,” “I decided to,” or ask yourself “when will I start?”.
2. **Scheduling in “play.”** Build into your schedule things you enjoy doing or things you find relaxing. By adding in scheduled “play” you aren’t turning to those items when you are trying to run away from your stress and anxiety, but instead you’re working around your “play” time.
3. **Starting.** Before you start, which can often be the hardest task, divide your task into manageable pieces, and think about a “[reverse schedule](#).” Start from your due date and work backwards. Leaving time for vacation, your scheduled play, and other commitments. Review the [tiny habits](#) section for more tips on starting small.
4. **Remembering that failure is an inevitable aspect of learning and growing,** and that by allowing yourself to fail, you’re allowing yourself to be perfectly human.

¹¹*Smarter, Faster, Better* by Charles Duhigg



How does this relate to presentations?

Presentations, just like any goal, take time, effort, and consistency.

Think about what your goals are with your presentations and make them SMART goals by thinking through how they can be Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Time-bound by using the reverse schedule, creating measurable goals, and then breaking them into tiny habits.

- **If you want to feel more confident when you present**, you may want to practice presenting more. Create a goal to present more and focus on specific aspects that make you feel more comfortable leading up to it. Consider attending [Presenting Confidently](#) where Make It Memorable discusses various techniques to help you feel and appear more confident.
- **If you want to have more visual slides**, you might want to practice thinking visually with various aspects of your work. Find ways to add in tiny habits where you sketch out ideas for papers you're writing, emails you're sending, or presentations you're creating. Consider attending [Decoding Slide Design](#) where Make It Memorable discusses the principles behind graphic design and how this can relate to your presentations.
- **If you want to learn how to use PowerPoint better**, you may want to dedicate 5 minutes a day to practicing. There are a ton of YouTube tutorials on different aspects of PowerPoint. Consider a tiny habit of doing one a day until you start to feel more comfortable, and then switch from following tutorials to doing one slide a day on your own. Consider attending [Demystifying PowerPoint](#) where Make It Memorable discusses various techniques to use in PowerPoint to make your presentations shine or follow me on social media where I give followers PowerPoint tips.
- **If you're struggling with how to tell your story**, you may want to practice finding the story arc in smaller aspects of what you do. Create a goal to "find the problem/solution" in emails you send and stories you tell your friends and family about your day. Practice spending more time talking about the problem before you jump into the solution. Consider attending [Making Presentations Stick](#) where Make It Memorable discusses the principles behind storytelling and how you can apply these to your next presentation.

Struggling with your presentation habits?

[Let's chat](#) about how we can create some tiny habits to help you.

Are you trying to get your team on the same page?

[Let's chat](#) about how Make It Memorable can help your team create more memorable presentations that connect with your audience.

Want to learn more?

[Come to one of my workshops!](#) Currently we have several running from March to May 2022.