

EXECUTIVE BOOK SUMMARIES

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Small Move, Big Change

THE NUTSHELL

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Why Resolutions Fail

Why is it so hard to keep our resolutions? We begin with enthusiasm and determination, yet our will falters and our resolutions fizzle. The purpose of this book is to teach you how to translate broad personal goals into *microresolutions* that can be managed, measured, and kept. Rather than suffering a collapse of willpower after weeks of exhausting effort, you will learn how to overpower your objective through strategic focus and targeted self-control.

THE SEVEN RULES OF MICRORESOLUTIONS

Start by asking yourself what you'd like to improve about your life. Your goal might be framed in broad terms—"I'd like to be neat." Then identify a discrete change in behavior that will make a difference, and drill that behavior with single-minded purpose until it becomes second nature. If you stick to the microresolution rules, you'll be able to make instant progress in any self-improvement category, from weight loss to achieving a more loving relationship.

Rule 1: A Microresolution is Easy. Your microresolution must be a pledge you are sure you have the power to keep—a *no excuses* resolution. To be absolutely achievable, it must be limited. Put aside that familiar temptation to try to fix everything all at once by tomorrow and focus instead on making a resolution that is so reasonable you are sure you can make it stick—so don't overreach.

Small Move, Big Change

Rule 2: A Microresolution is an Explicit and Measurable Action. Your microresolution must be explicit so there's no guessing about what to do, when to do it, or how to carry it out. Resolutions such as *I will exercise more* or *I will snack less* are worthless. The more explicit your resolution, the easier it will be to measure success, identify obstacles, and fine-tune your commitment for greater effectiveness.

Rule 3: A Microresolution Pays Off Up Front. A microresolution *to make the bed each morning before breakfast* achieves its goal and delivers its benefit as soon as the resolution is kept. A resolution *to keep the house clean* has very little chance of succeeding. A microresolution *to stop eating after 8:00 pm.* delivers a concrete benefit immediately.

Rule 4: A Microresolution is Personal. This book is full of examples to get you thinking, but to be effective, a microresolution must be designed by you, for you, based on observations of your own habits, attitudes, and situation. What personal behavior might you adopt, change, or eliminate to advance your objective?

Rule 5: A Microresolution Resonates. Once you've got a handle on the easy, limited, measurable, personal action of your microresolution, the next step is to *frame* your resolution statement. Framing is a semantic exercise, finding the language to concisely and accurately capture the action of your resolution and its cue.

Rule 6: A Microresolution Fires on Cue. Cues are personal—two people who each snack at the same time every afternoon may be responding to entirely different cues. The cue for one person may be a hunger pang; for another, it's passing a vending machine on the way out of the gym locker room. It is the strong association between act and cue that creates a lasting habit.

Rule 7: Make Microresolutions Just Two at a Time. Experiencing the power of microresolutions may inspire you to double down on a mega set of micros. Resist that suicidal impulse. Less is more when it comes to achieving lasting change. Limiting your resolutions ensures that you have the attention and endurance to stick with a behavioral shift until it becomes autopilot.

MICRORESOLUTIONS IN ACTION

It's very common to adjust a schedule cue during the early days of a microresolution. If it seems like a cop-out to adjust your resolution after your initial commitment, it's not. Scaling back is far better than quitting. A microresolution should succeed every time. If you aren't succeeding, rethink, reframe, reschedule, and rescope your resolution until you can put a ring on it. The key is simply to make a start.

In sharing some of my own microresolution experiences, I hope I'm not creating the impression that I have conquered every area of self-improvement or met all my personal goals. My aim is to provide some solid examples to inform your efforts, not to advocate for particular standards or lifestyle choices. This book is about personal empowerment—not about *you should*, but all about how *you can*.

The habits you are building through microresolutions will ultimately give birth to new preferences. As your preferences shift to support your new habits, your sense of who you are will shift too. You'll discover that the experience of doing things in a new way has made a different person of you. You'll begin to identify with your new behaviors, to describe yourself differently. You'll realize that you are indeed improved—in fact, transformed. A change in *doing* has made a change in *being*. Learning how to do just one thing differently punches your ticket for a voyage of continuous personal progress. Whatever your age and aspirations, transformation is within your reach, you just need to invest in the everyday process that works the magic.