



Design to Amplify

FLASHCARD SET

Beyond just nudging... a process for organizations to amplify behavior change and make it easier for clients to follow through with behaviors and improve their lives



Using These Flashcards

DEEPER UNDERSTANDING

Cognitive and behavioral quirks to improve understanding are on the **dark blue** cards. Applying them to your clients' situations and the steps they go through to do a behavior will give you a deeper understanding of the barriers your clients face.

BEHAVIORAL AMPLIFIERS

Cognitive and behavioral quirks and nudges that facilitate and amplify behaviors are on the **light blue** cards. Including these in the design of your program and/or product should make it easier for your clients to complete their goal behavior(s) and for your program to achieve its outcomes.

Availability Bias





APPLICATIONS

Availability bias explains why people overestimate the likelihood of shark attacks. If you can quickly or easily think of an example of a situation, then you tend to think it's more likely. But since emotionally charged memories (those with fear, anger, or frustration) tend to come to mind easier than non-charged memories, we overestimate their likelihood. (And if it's harder to think of an example, we think those are less likely to happen.)

- A person heard a story of a child getting sick after a vaccine. Since the story evokes fear, they think of it easily and think it's likely to happen to their child. They decide to not vaccinate their child.
- A woman heard that someone had trouble getting pregnant after using a certain family planning method. She's afraid that might happen, so doesn't want to use any methods.

WHAT IT IS NOT

Placing more importance on information from people you think are attractive or whom you like —that is the *halo effect*.

Choice Overload





APPLICATIONS

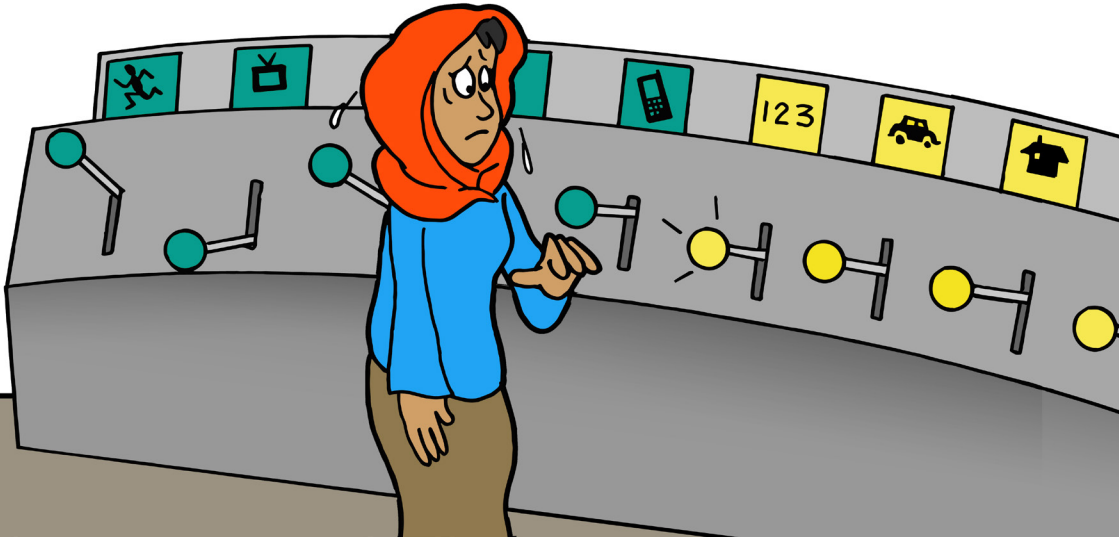
Too many choices can feel overwhelming. When faced with too many choices, humans tend to avoid (defer) making a choice or go with an option that's been chosen for them (like a default). Too many choices has also been associated with unhappiness and decision fatigue.

- **A woman wants to start on a family planning method and is provided with information on ten methods at once. She feels overwhelmed and doesn't choose one.**
- **A consumer sees an environmentally conscious product and wants to try it, but feels overwhelmed by the many choices they have to make to buy it. So they don't buy or try it out.**

WHAT IT IS NOT

It is not a reason to eliminate all choices — options are important for clients!

Decision Fatigue





APPLICATIONS

Decision fatigue happens after someone has made decision after decision after decision. Just like a muscle gets tired after lifting weights, the brain gets tired after making lots of decisions and starts making less accurate and less beneficial decisions.

(Steve Jobs famously wore the same outfit each day so he would have one less decision to make.)

- A doctor has made hundreds of treatment decisions and is mentally exhausted. For their next patient, they prescribe a common antibiotic instead of figuring out the most appropriate one.
- An employee is making many decisions about benefits their first day. They are too mentally tired to make a decision about which health insurance is best, so they just select the first one on the list.

WHAT IT IS NOT

It is not mental exhaustion of your willpower - that's *ego depletion*. And being presented with too many choices at once is called *choice overload*.

Ego Depletion





APPLICATIONS

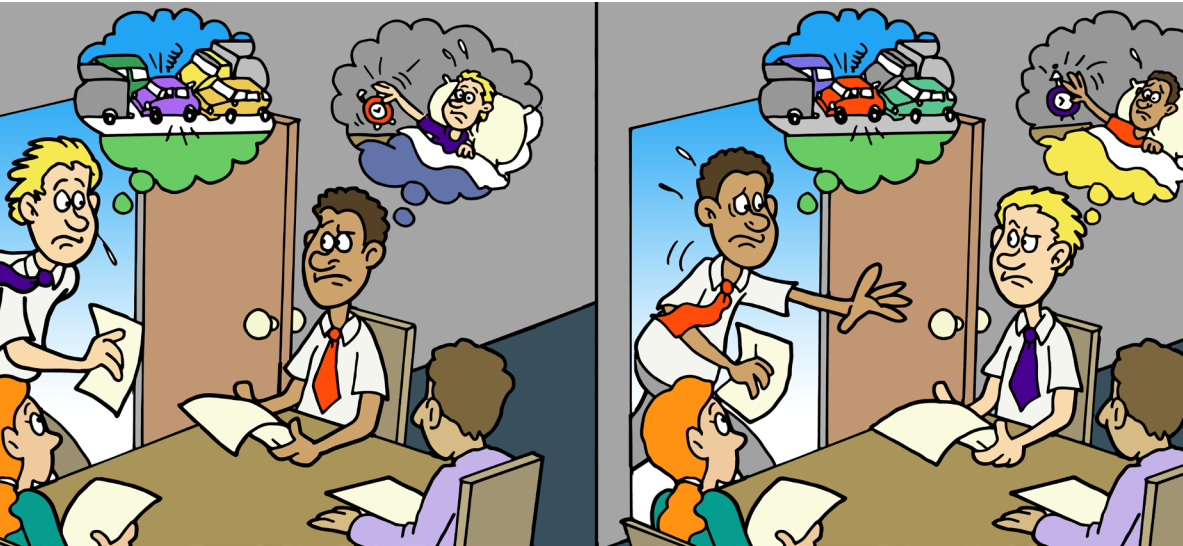
Ego depletion happens after humans have to hold back multiple times from doing something they want to do. Willpower is not infinite! Being forced to repeatedly hold back can make that person more likely to overindulge or make it harder for them to make beneficial choices.

- **Someone saving for a long-term goal constantly has to say no to eating out with friends. On an impulse they buy something expensive they don't need, hurting their savings goal.**
- **A person on a diet repeatedly says no to sweets around the office. When they get home, they don't have the willpower to say no to a giant cake.**

WHAT IT IS NOT

It is not mental exhaustion from having to make repeated decisions – that is *decision fatigue*.

Fundamental Attribution Error





APPLICATIONS

Fundamental attribution error occurs when people assume other people's behaviors are because of that person's character rather than whatever situation they are in. But when people consider their own behavior, they think it is mainly influenced by the situation that they are in.

- A client misses a court date with their lawyer. They miss it because their shift at their job changed last minute and they could have been fired if they didn't work the shift. But the lawyer thinks they are disorganized and not serious about their case.
- A lawyer reacts harshly to a client missing a court date. The lawyer is concerned because the law is very rigid and missing the court date harmed their client's case. But the client thinks the lawyer is rude and uncaring of their situation.

Hassle Factors





APPLICATIONS

Hassles — even small ones — can get in the way of starting or completing something. Just *expecting* there will be hassles to do something can have the same effect as the hassles themselves. Expecting hassles may also cause someone to delay something to a later time when they think there will be fewer hassles.

- A person wants to go to a doctor but they think of the steps they have to do to make an appointment: finding their password, maybe resetting their password, logging into the system, comparing appointment availability to their own calendar while switching between phone apps, and then filling out a form explaining the reasons for the visit. They're already tired from a busy day, so decide to do it "later".
- A person starts filling out a form and gets to a field requiring specific information they don't remember that's stored somewhere else. So they stop filling out the form, and plan to finish it later.

Hot-Cold Empathy Gap



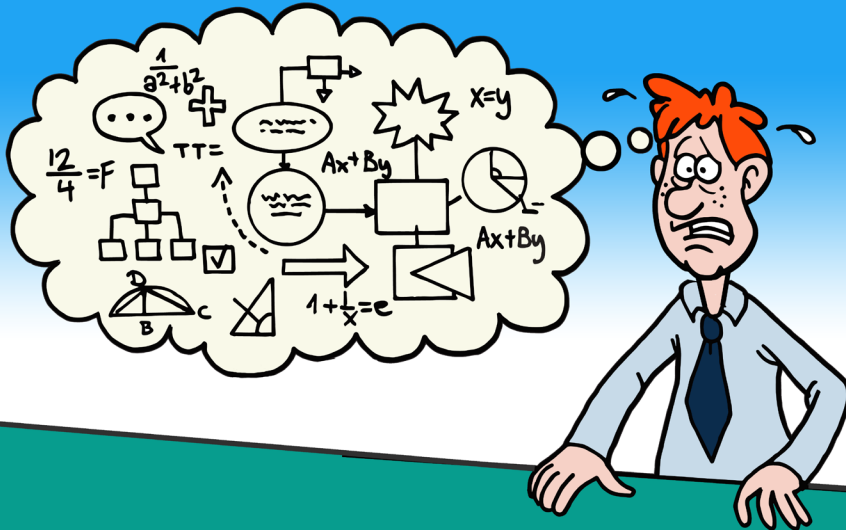


APPLICATIONS

When someone is in an emotionally charged **'hot'** state – like being hungry or being angry – they make different decisions and they act differently than they would if they were in a calm or emotionally neutral **'cold'** state.

- **A person plans to eat a healthy dinner, but they are hungry when they go to the market. They buy junk food to snack on immediately and never end up cooking their healthy dinner.**
- **A person strongly believes in practicing safe sex and has a strong intention to always use a condom. But in the heat of the moment they don't end up using a condom.**

Information Overload





APPLICATIONS

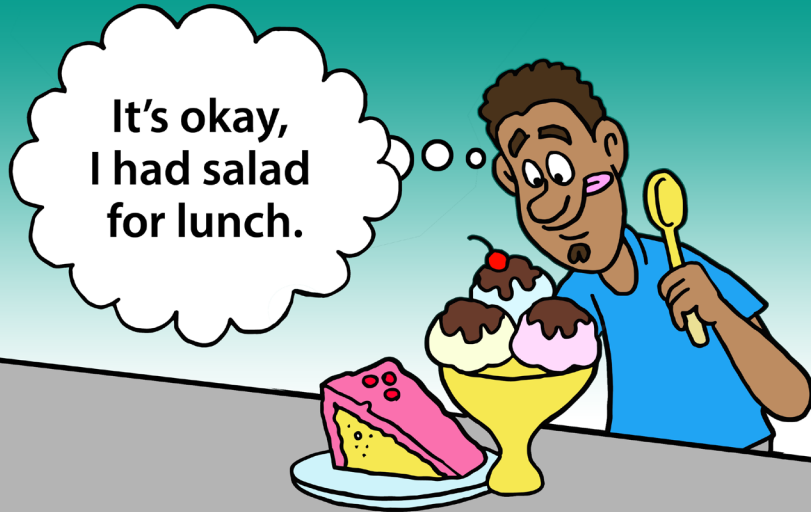
When too much information is given or it is hard to understand, **information overload** (also called cognitive overload) occurs. People don't process information when there is too much of it or it is confusing.

- **A woman wants to delay her next pregnancy. But for some methods she's given information about risks and for others she's given information about side effects. It is difficult for her to compare and decide, so she doesn't choose a method.**
- **A program manager wants to improve their project and they find hundreds of articles about interventions. The amount of information makes it difficult to figure out how to update their project.**

WHAT IT IS NOT

Giving information at a time when someone can't act on it is the *time-action gap*.

Licensing





APPLICATIONS

Sometimes people justify doing something they don't think is good (like lie, cheat, or eat junk food) by focusing on the fact that they recently did something they think is good (like making a charitable donation or eating healthy). This mental justification is known as **moral licensing** or **self-licensing**.

- A person ate a healthy lunch and then goes to an office party with snacks. They overeat snacks, telling themselves that they can have that extra cupcake (or three) because they had a healthy lunch.
- A nurse went out of their way to help one of their morning patients. It's now late afternoon and they want a break, so they rush through afternoon rounds and don't take all of the measurements as accurately as they could.

Ostriching



QUIRKS FOR **UNDERSTANDING**



APPLICATIONS

Like an ostrich putting its head in the sand, **ostriching** describes a person avoiding thinking about an uncomfortable topic. This avoidance means they never form an intention or consider doing something about it.

- **Thinking about being HIV positive can be overwhelming. People who avoid thinking about it might never form an intention to get tested.**
- **An individual does not want to think about the idea that the way their partner constantly puts them down and yells at them could be gender-based violence. They never form an intention to seek help.**

WHAT IT IS NOT

Putting off *doing* something uncomfortable — that is *procrastination*.

Procrastination





APPLICATIONS

Since enjoying good things (or avoiding bad things) in the present is more attractive than benefits in the future, humans **procrastinate** — put off doing something — when doing it will cause them some amount of discomfort in the present. Both mental and physical discomfort can cause procrastination.

- **Sometimes it can be uncomfortable to figure out what to write in a report and go through the mental energy of getting the wording right. So an individual keeps putting off starting the report.**
- **A farmer intends to put fertilizer on their crop but it is hard and exhausting to do. So each day they plan to do it tomorrow.**

WHAT IT IS NOT

Putting off *thinking* about something uncomfortable — that is *ostriching*.

Prospective Memory Failure





APPLICATIONS

Prospective memory failure

is when someone intends or makes a plan to do something and even puts themselves in the situation to do it. But then they get distracted or lost in other things, and never end up doing what they originally intended to do.

- A person makes an appointment to talk to their doctor about an issue, but during the visit gets distracted by other conversations with the doctor. When they get home, they realize they forgot to ask about the specific issue.
- A person plans to send one quick email. They open their email and get distracted by their overflowing inbox. Three hours later they realize they forgot to send the email.

WHAT IT IS NOT

Intentionally putting off doing something — that is *procrastination*.

Scarcity Mindset



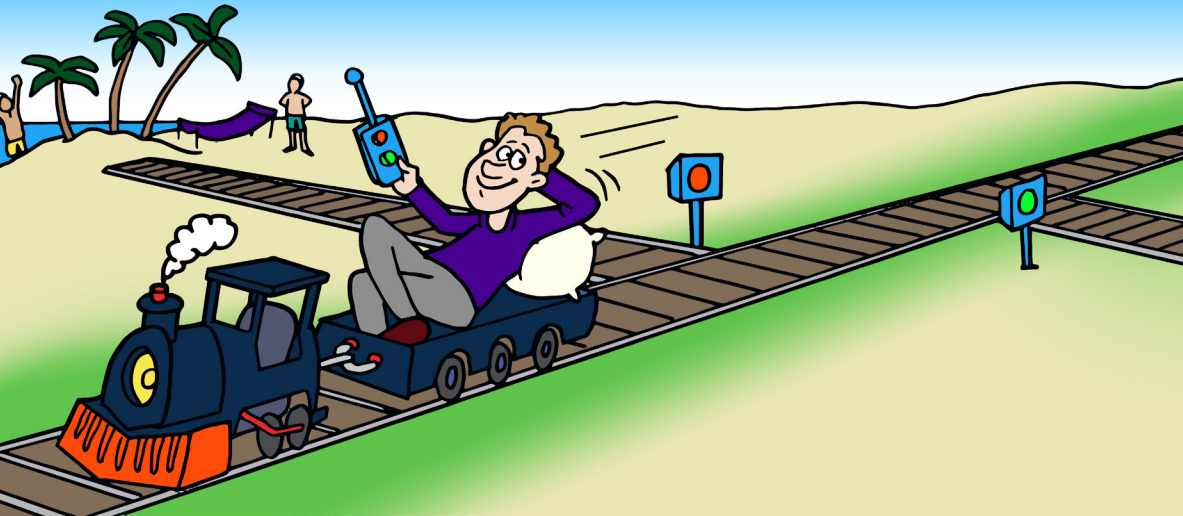


APPLICATIONS

People have a set amount of mental bandwidth (brainpower) to deal with everything life throws at them. When someone is living in **scarcity**, especially economic scarcity, they use a big chunk of their bandwidth to survive the scarcity. They tend to **tunnel** on their immediate and most important needs, so they can miss long-term benefits or opportunities in front of them.

- **A single parent is working two part-time jobs and raising their children. They are focused on coordinating their work schedule, nurturing their children, and paying their bills on time, so they forget their monthly appointment for their HIV medication and run out.**
- **A person gets sick, misses work, and doesn't get their normal paycheck. They take out a payday loan with a very high-interest rate because they need to pay rent and provide food for their family.**

Status Quo Bias



QUIRKS FOR **UNDERSTANDING**



APPLICATIONS

Making a decision, especially a decision about doing something new, takes mental effort and our brains want to be as efficient as possible. So when choosing between continuing to do the same thing or having to figure out the advantages and disadvantages of doing something new, **status quo bias** means that people tend to stick with doing the same thing.

- A doctor has prescribed the same antibiotic for years, their “go-to antibiotic” for infections, so doesn’t consider that a different antibiotic may be more appropriate for their patient.
- A person goes to buy toothpaste. They see that there are some new types of toothpaste showcased in the aisle, but they don’t consider them and pick the one they have used for years.

Stereotype Threat





APPLICATIONS

Humans have different ways of thinking about ourselves — called identities — like being a member of a specific racial or ethnic group, a specific gender, a parent, a friend, an employee, or a boss. People may act based on which identity they feel in a situation, and **stereotype threat** occurs when a negative stereotype about one of their identities adversely affects their behavior.

- An illiterate individual may not believe they can report gender-based violence because they think “people like them” don’t speak up.
- A first-generation university student may drop out when they are struggling because they think “people like them” don’t graduate.

WHAT IT IS NOT

If people know there will be additional hurdles to overcome because of their identity, that is a structural issue to address.

Time-Action Gap





APPLICATIONS

The **timing** of providing information is crucial. While not a specific behavioral or cognitive quirk, giving information too early or when a person isn't able to focus on it makes it harder for someone to remember to do something or make a decision.

- **When they purchase fertilizer, a farmer is given information on when and how much to apply. Weeks later when they start to apply it, they don't remember the details and apply it incorrectly.**
- **An individual's just been told they have HIV and is immediately provided with lots of information on treatment plans. But they stopped processing information after they heard, "you have HIV."**

WHAT IT IS NOT

Giving confusing information (even if it is well-timed) is *information overload*.

Choice Architecture



QUIRKS FOR AMPLIFYING



APPLICATIONS

How options are presented strongly influences which option is chosen. **Choice architecture** intentionally organizes and structures options – either in a physical space or online – so that individuals are steered towards a specific option.

- **Consider if you can adjust how options are presented so that the most beneficial or healthiest options are seen first. That could mean placing them at eye-level in a store, first on a list, or making them stand out by saying they're 'recommended' compared to other options.**
- **Move the most beneficial or healthiest products to where the largest number of people will see them, for example to the front of a store or a check-out page or area.**

Commitments



QUIRKS FOR AMPLIFYING



APPLICATIONS

Commitment devices

are tools that try to lock future behavior, a way for a motivated ‘present self’ to influence the behavior of a ‘future self’ that may not be as eager to do the behavior.

- Consider if someone could publicly declare or sign a pledge that they will do something or follow a specific set of policies.
- Consider if there are ways a person can ‘lock’ their behavior, possibly including penalties. For example, there are financial tools that do not allow withdrawal without penalties except in special circumstances.

CONSIDERATIONS

They can have varying strengths. On the stronger side they can include penalties, and on the weaker since they could just be a promise someone makes to themselves.

Deadlines

I've been putting this off, but now have to submit this since it's due tomorrow





APPLICATIONS

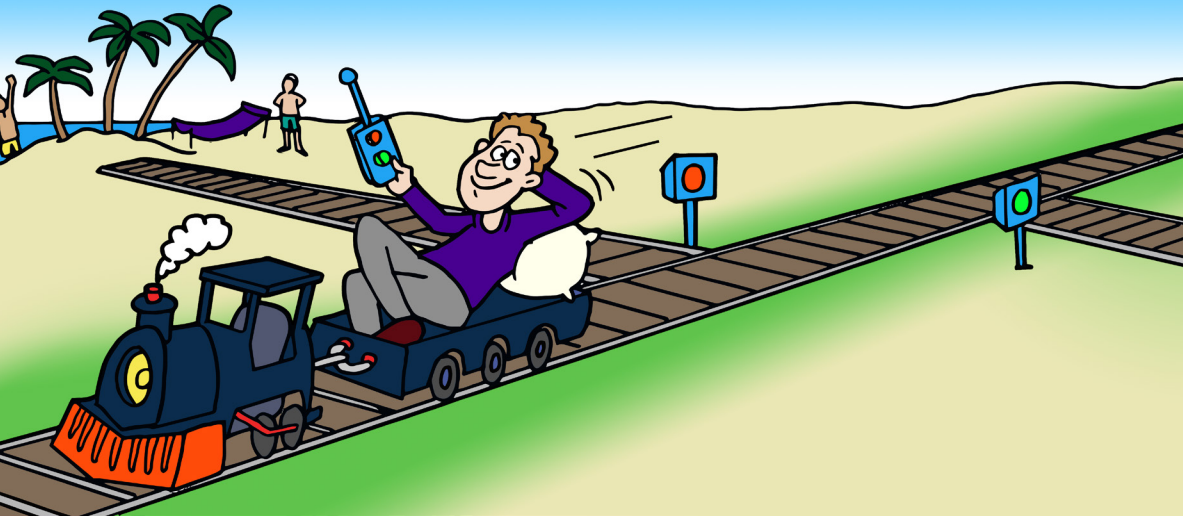
Deadlines call our attention to something by prioritizing it and by creating a focus on its completion. Deadlines cut through the noise of the numerous activities that humans have to do each day.

- Consider if a large project or a process with many steps can be broken down into multiple deadlines.
- If the task is mentally uncomfortable to do (like writing a complicated report), consider adding a deadline that might prevent additional procrastination.

CONSIDERATIONS

A deadline should be meaningful – if it is constantly being pushed back or the individual knows it doesn't matter, then a deadline might not have an effect.

Defaults



QUIRKS FOR AMPLIFYING



APPLICATIONS

Defaults are pre-selected choices or options that usually put someone on a path to a specific outcome. Humans tend to follow whatever the default is, and not actively switch to a new option.

- **Consider automatic enrollment into a set of steps or a plan, with the option to opt-out.**
- **Consider ‘presumptive language’ in place of a default. An example is, “Your child just turned 11. Because they’re 11, they are due for the HPV and meningitis vaccines. We’ll do those today.”**

CONSIDERATIONS

It is important to realize that defaults don’t increase agency since the person doesn’t actively make a choice or select something. They are a way to steer behavior. As with all nudges and program design, the ethics of choices should be discussed with the community.

Endowment Effect



QUIRKS FOR AMPLIFYING



APPLICATIONS

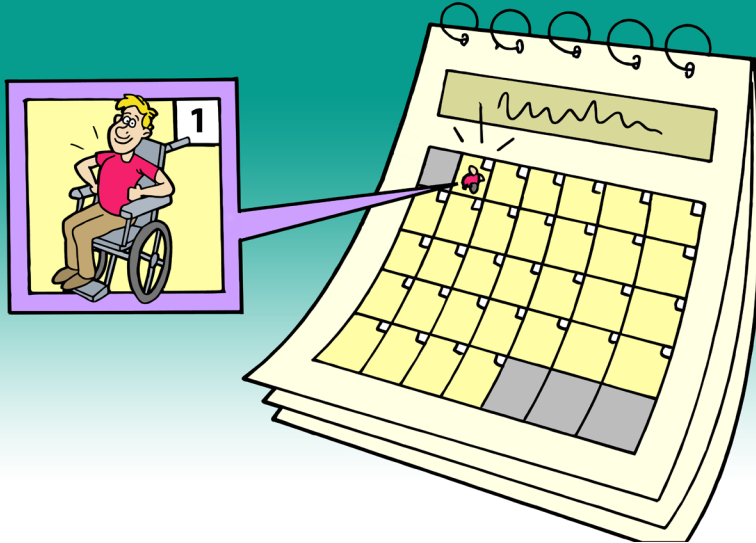
Owning something changes how a person values it — if you own it, you tend to think it is worth more and are less likely to give it up. Creating a sense of ownership around a behavior or an item may make it more likely a person continues doing it or keeps it.

- Consider giving someone a sense that they already started a process or already own something. It could be a punch-card with the ‘first punch free’ so they start out further along the steps of the path.
- Consider creating an early feeling of ownership over a process, perhaps by giving a “Congratulations, you’re now an active ...” message after an initial interaction.

CONSIDERATIONS

It is not valuing something more because you built or created it — that is the IKEA effect.

Fresh Start Effect





APPLICATIONS

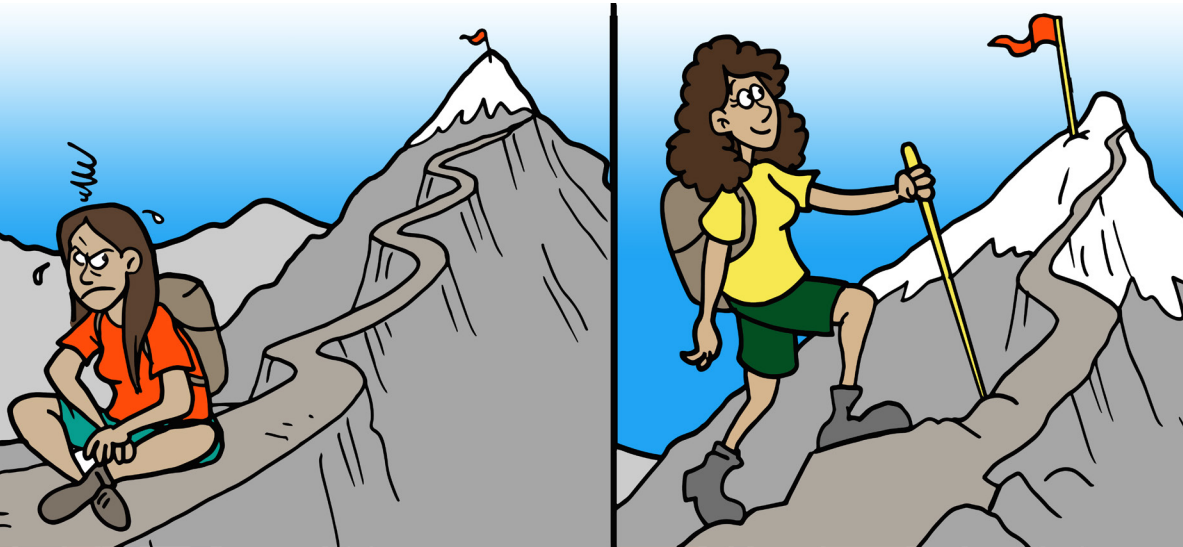
An important date or special occasion allows humans to mentally reset or ‘break’ with past versions of themselves. The **“new you”** can engage in healthier behaviors and any bad habits were left with the “old you”. These **fresh start dates** are called ‘temporal landmarks’. New Year’s Day, a milestone birthday, Mondays, and the first day of a month are common days people try to start fresh.

- **Consider language that gives clients a sense that they are starting a new chapter: “New diagnosis, healthier you.” Gyms and weight loss programs frequently use slogans like “New year, new you”.**
- **If you are trying to re-engage lapsed clients, consider ways to make them feel like they have a new start without criticism or judgment for having lapsed.**

CONSIDERATIONS

Also make sure there is a plan for how to make the behavior or action stick so it doesn’t turn out like most New Year’s resolutions and fizzle out.

Goal Gradient



QUIRKS FOR AMPLIFYING

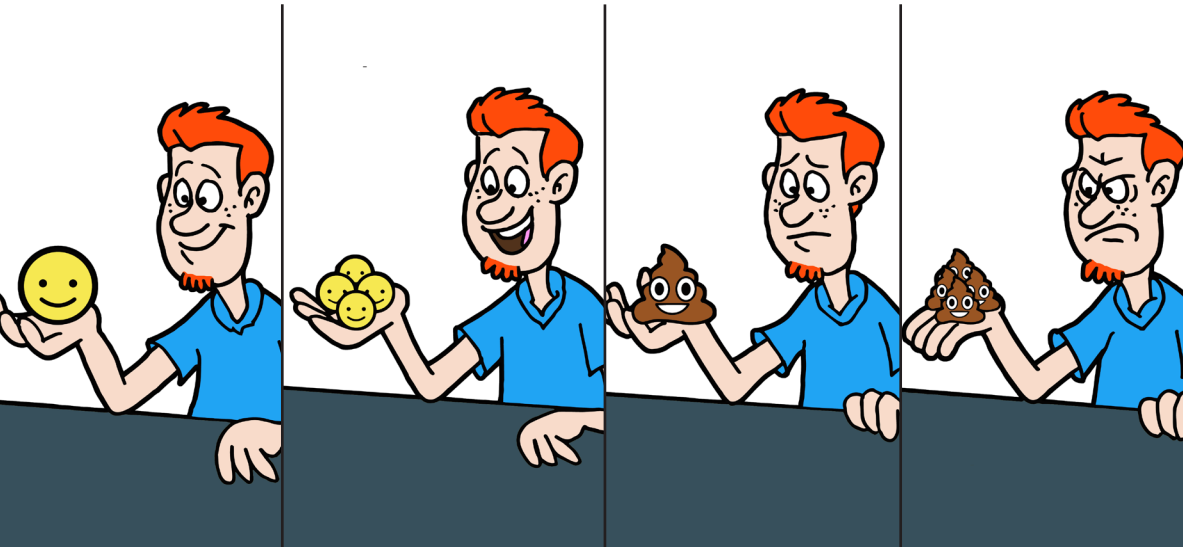


APPLICATIONS

When people feel that a **goal is achievable** and within their sights, they tend to work harder to achieve that goal. If a goal feels unrealistic or too far away, it can be demotivating.

- Consider if there is a way for people to set their own individual goals, creating a balance between goals feeling achievable while meeting clinical or program targets.
- Consider creating multiple options that clients can choose between, with each option having a different set of goals. For example, many exercise plans have options for people starting at low, moderate, or high levels of fitness.

Hedonic Framing



QUIRKS FOR AMPLIFYING



APPLICATIONS

Hedonic framing is a way to **make gains (positives) feel bigger** and make losses (negatives) feel less strong. Splitting up gains into smaller units can make the whole gain feel greater. But on the opposite side, combining losses into a single loss can make it feel like a smaller loss.

- **Consider if you can itemize or break up small gains for clients. Some companies do this by listing each discount individually (each one is a small gain to you) so you feel like you've gained a lot and are getting a great deal.**
- **If you are trying to avoid your clients strongly feeling a negative experience, consider combining negatives (losses) to soften the overall negative feeling.**

CONSIDERATIONS

Ethically this should be used to empower your clients to reach their goals, not to make an organization look better.

Identity



QUIRKS FOR AMPLIFYING

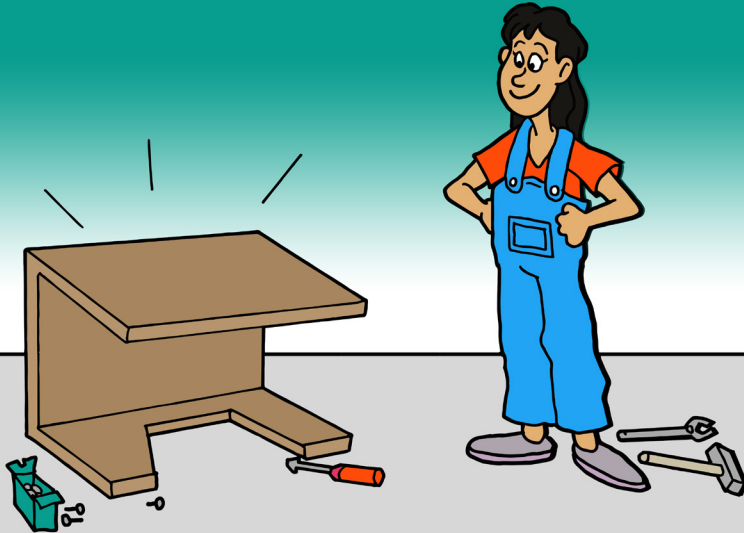


APPLICATIONS

As humans, we all have different ways that we think about ourselves — called **identities** — and we act based on which identity we feel in a situation. The identity we feel influences the language and words we use, how we interact with people, and the decisions and choices we make. It reveals itself by people interacting with their friends very differently than they would with the head of their company.

- **Consider if you can highlight an identity that someone already feels. For example, some healthcare workers think of themselves as healers and some as caregivers, so linking one of these identities to a new practice or policy could increase adoption.**
- **Consider if you can use language to link someone to a new identity that they aspire to have. For example, using language such as ‘protector’ or ‘promotor’ might empower someone to act in a new way.**

IKEA Effect



QUIRKS FOR AMPLIFYING



Helping create or build something changes how a person values the situation or product above just owning it. When we **build something**, we tend to **think it is worth more** and we are more invested in it or keeping it going.

APPLICATIONS

- Consider how you can involve communities in creating and building products and systems instead of dropping in a top-down solution.
- Consider if there is a way to engage individuals in putting together their own behaviors or treatment plan to get to the desired outcome.

CONSIDERATIONS

Valuing something more just because you own it is the *endowment effect*.

Lottery Effect



QUIRKS FOR AMPLIFYING



The concepts of probability and chance can be hard to visualize and fully understand, so humans are overly swayed by the **allure of a lottery**. People frequently buy lottery tickets even if the chances of winning are tiny and the expected value is negative.

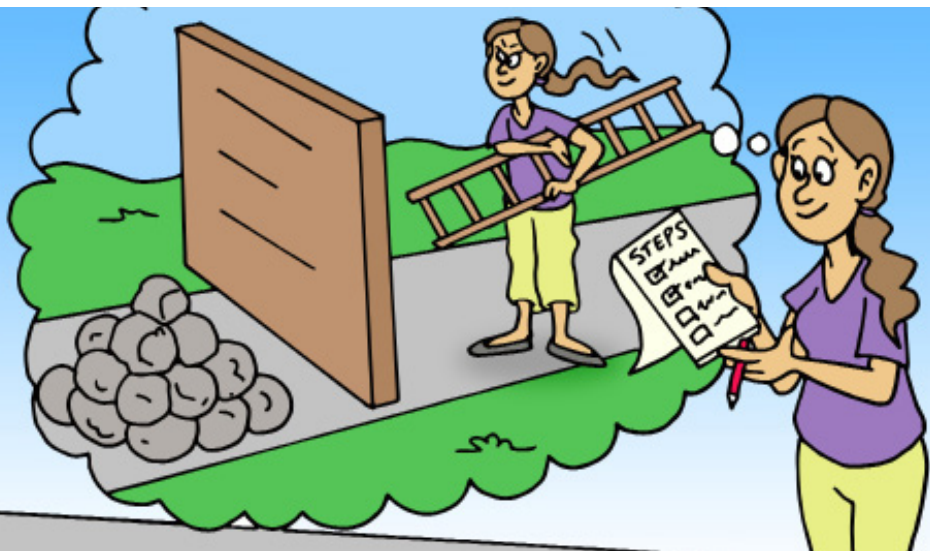
APPLICATIONS

- **Consider if there is a way to enter clients into a lottery for completing something. It could be a new task or providing data for your organization.**
- **Consider both monetary and non-monetary prizes, such as new farming equipment for agricultural areas. Lotteries can be more cost effective for organizations compared to other incentives.**

CONSIDERATIONS

Incentives might crowd out an individual's intrinsic motivation for doing something, so piloting and testing the effects of lotteries is important.

Plan Making





APPLICATIONS

Detailed planning helps humans follow steps and makes them more likely to complete a process and achieve a goal. The more concrete a plan, the better. One specific type of planning is called mental contrasting implementation intentions (MCII). That's when in addition to planning steps towards a goal, an individual plans what hurdles they could face and pre-plans ways to overcome them.

- **Consider ways you can help your clients plan. Instead of telling them their next steps and having them agree to do them, consider having them select a specific day and time to do it. Make the plan more concrete by having them put it on their calendar and plan additional details.**
- **Consider providing prompts so your client can think about what could go wrong and plan out what they could do in those cases. “If X happens, then I will do Y” statements reduce feeling overwhelmed when things go wrong, and can mean people are less likely to get derailed from their plan.**

Reminders





APPLICATIONS

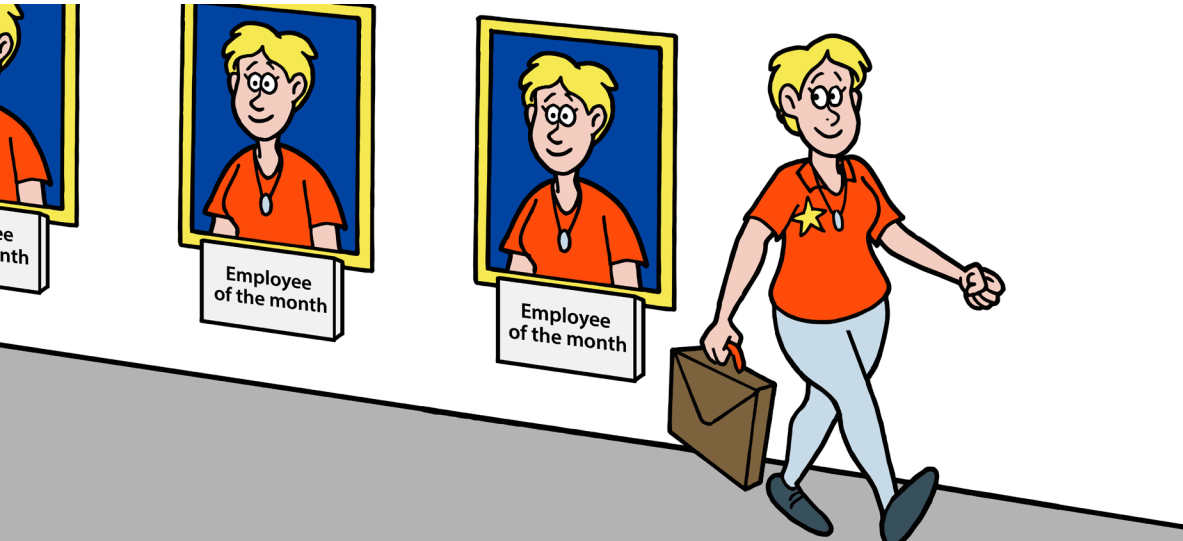
Everyone's lives can be busy with juggling multiple responsibilities and tasks. Sometimes our brains are focused on one thing and we forget to do something else, which is why **reminders** can be helpful. They cut through the noise of daily life and bring something that needs to be done back into focus so it is top of mind.

- **Consider sending messages or calling clients when it is an ideal time for them to do or remember something, such as a few days before they should put fertilizer on their crops or before an appointment.**
- **Consider if there are ways to create or build physical or visual reminders, such as pill bottles that light up if not opened or agricultural sensors that beep if the soil is dry.**

CONSIDERATIONS

Too many reminders can be annoying and people might start to ignore them!

Rewards and Recognition





APPLICATIONS

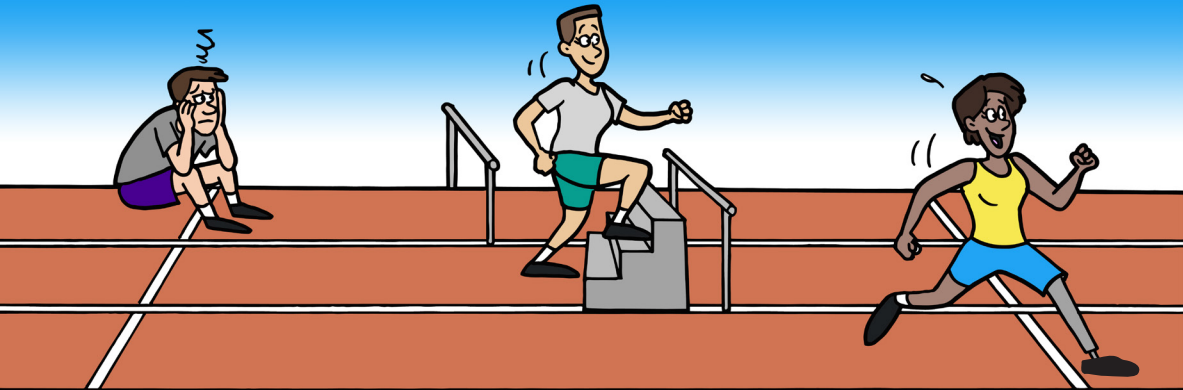
Sometimes **small rewards or recognition** can have oversized effects on our behavior. (Everyone loves getting a gold star!) Small rewards or recognition can help overcome or balance out the annoyances, hassles, or discomforts of doing something.

- Consider providing a small micro-incentive or non-monetary reward, which could be as small as a 1 kg bag of lentils, to clients when they finish doing something.
- Consider publicly recognizing clients for their achievements. Commonly used “Employee of the Month” photos or certificates can be inspiration for how to celebrate clients’ achievements.

CONSIDERATIONS

Monetary incentives might crowd out an individual’s intrinsic motivation for doing something, so piloting and testing their effects is important.

Simplification



QUIRKS FOR AMPLIFYING



APPLICATIONS

The more steps there are to do something, the more mental and physical energy it takes to do it, making it less likely that someone will actually do it. Make behaviors as easy as possible by **simplifying steps** and removing hassles.

On the other hand, if you want to discourage a behavior, add additional steps and hassles to make it harder to do. (This is called adding sludge.)

- **Encourage:** Consider changing the ways you deliver services so they are easier for clients to access, using more approachable language and targeted visuals to make information clearer, or modifying products so they can be used less frequently.
- **Discourage:** Consider ways to make things more painful to do, such as adding a waiting time before a person can purchase something or making staff justify their actions in writing.

Social Proof



QUIRKS FOR AMPLIFYING



APPLICATIONS

We are strongly influenced by what we **see or know other people are doing**. We might be looking for guidance on the best option, we might want to do something so others look favorably on us, or we might not consciously realize that we are using others as a guide.

- Consider telling people how they directly compare to other individuals in their communities, such as telling doctors if they are in the top 30% of antibiotic prescribers or households if they use more energy than their neighbors.
- Consider providing information on what the majority of people are (or approve of) doing, for example that 95% of people recycle. (But if the information is lower than people expected, it could have the opposite effect on behavior.)

CONSIDERATIONS

Comparisons should be to aspirational or similar people.



There are more quirks (yes, more!) and additional resources on
www.DesigntoAmplify.com

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Questions? Reach out!*

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