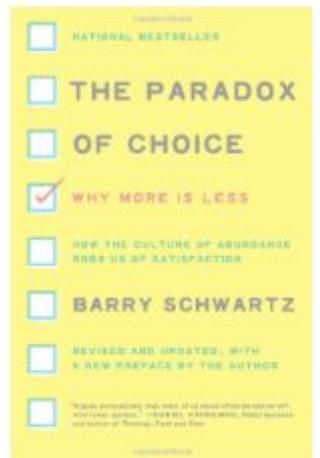
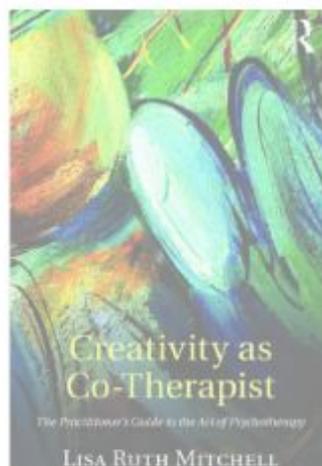
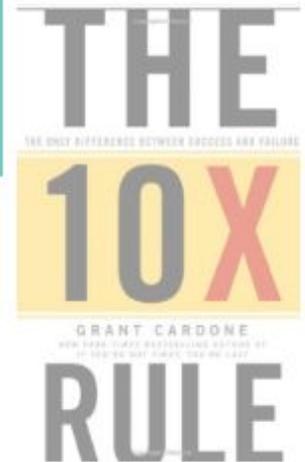
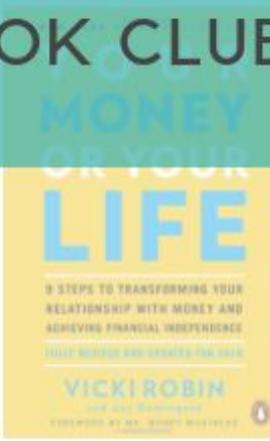
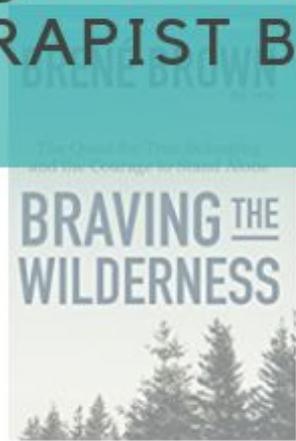
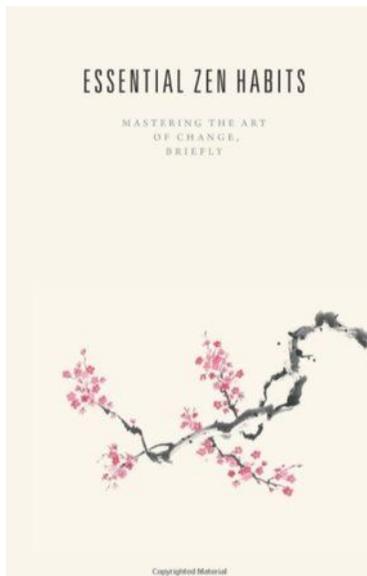


# Refreshed

## THERAPIST BOOK CLUB



**April 2019**



## *Essential Zen Habits*

Leo Babauta

### **Suggested Reading Schedule**

Week 1: Section 1 (pp. 1-40)

Week 2: Section 2 (pp. 42-60)

Week 3: Sections 3 + 4 (pp. 61-80)

Week 4: Reflection + Discussion

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**Main theme:** Focus on one habit at a time.

**Overview:** "If you practice the method over the next six weeks and beyond, it will help you not only become better at changing habits, but dealing with procrastination and life struggles."

**Tip:** Trust the process, and don't rush.

### **Big Ideas**

- "There is a projector in our minds, and it is constantly playing a movie of how we'd like things to be, . . . how others should be, how we should be. These images aren't based on reality." (p. 1).
- "This fantasy, which I call the Mind Movie, is what stands in our way of making habit changes" (p. 1).

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- "The mind is like a little child-constantly seeing comfort and pleasure and control" (p. 2).
- "This Mind Movie and the rebellion of the Childish Mind is not just at the heart of our struggles with habit change; it's at the heart of all our struggles" (p.2).
- Concepts to Know (p. 7-9)
  - **Mind Movie:** The fantasy your mind plays telling you how things should be. These mind movies get in the way of appreciating life, making healthy changes, and create struggle.
  - **Childish Mind:** The part of the mind that complains about how things are, that fears being uncomfortable, that craves only pleasure and comfort, and doesn't want things to be difficult.
  - **Mindfulness:** This refers to two actions:
    - Turning inward and seeing the Mind Movie, the Childish Mind's resistance, the urge to quit, and the difficult feeling that one is having.
    - Turning away from the Mind Movie, embracing reality, and finding appreciation for that reality.
  - **Groundlessness:** It describes the feeling of not having solid ground under one's feet. It is likened to the feeling of being adrift.
  - **Resistance:** This is the Childish Mind complaining about having to do something that isn't comfortable.
  - **Self Compassion:** Having compassion for one's self as a way to deal with the Childish Mind, dissatisfaction, and resistance.
  - **Intention:** A way of consciously deciding what one is hoping to accomplish during an activity.
- **How to choose a habit (p. 13)**
  - It should be easy
  - A new habit, not quitting an old habit (like smoking)
  - Something that can be done once a day
- Before Starting (p. 15)

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- There are six days in each week of the process so as to not overwhelm and give too much to do, as well as carving out a day off if all goes well, or giving a day to catch up if necessary.
- Missing a day is completely normal. This is an opportunity to not attach the Mind Movie of doing everything perfectly and to instead just keep going. Don't quit because of a missed day or three. Accept and expect to mess up; consider it part of the process and enjoy the journey.

➤ **Week One- A Slow Start**

- Day one (p. 16)
  - Pick one change: Something easy, positive, and meaningful
- Day two (p. 17)
  - Create a vow: Vow not to let yourself down. Write the vow and place it somewhere it can be seen each day, and stick to the vow to your utmost ability.
- Day three (p. 17)
  - Make it small: Make the habit as easy as possible, and make it something that can be cut down to just one minute a day.
- Day four (p.17-18)
  - Create a space: Make space (literally in one's home, or on one's calendar). Make it a priority (first thing in the morning before life intrudes is usually best, but adjust it as necessary), and carve out 10 minutes to do the habit. The extra 9 minutes are cushions, and a sacred space that can't be intruded upon.
- Day five (p.18)
  - Set a trigger and a reminder: Pick something that is done everyday as a trigger (coffee, opening a laptop, brushing teeth, coming home from work), then write a reminder, and put it near where the trigger happens.
- Day six (p.18)
  - Start easy: Do the smallest version of the habit- the smallest amount needed for success. As the habit gets done, enjoy it, and celebrate it!

➤ **Week Two: Mindful Enjoyment**

- Day one (p. 20)
  - Enjoy the habit! Enjoy the process, reflect on the feeling of accomplishment, and give positive feedback; smile!
- Day two (p. 20-21)
  - Be mindful of the movie: Reflect on the Mind Movie and how it relates to the habit, and then turn the attention to the reality of doing the habit.
- Day three (p. 21)
  - Focus on gratitude: Search for little things to appreciate about the habit, and find gratitude for those little things. Gratitude is the antidote to the Childish Mind when it eventually starts to rebel against doing the habit.
- Day four (p.21)
  - Practice mindfully: When doing the habit, practice shining the spotlight of mindfulness onto the habit. Appreciate those things that are wonderful about the habit so the habit itself becomes the reward.
- Day five (p.21)
  - Reflect and (optionally) journal: When done doing the habit take a moment to reflect on the past week of doing the habit. What was learned? Reality of the habit versus the preconceived notions?
- Day six (p.22)
  - Adjust to a two minute habit: If all has gone well, and no more than a day has been skipped, it's time to lengthen the habit to two minutes. If there were struggles, keep it at a minute until each step isn't difficult and the mind isn't rebelling.

➤ **Week Three: Overcoming "The Dip"**

- Day one (p. 23)
  - Notice the resistance to doing the habit today. What does it feel like? Is there a way to accept the resistance, accept the discomfort, and find gratitude?
- Day two (p. 24)
  - Flow around a missed day: When missing a day or two one can either feel bad and make it a big deal, or flow around it, get back on track, and not make it a big deal. Disruptions happen, and very often lead to quitting habits. The key to making habits is learning to flow around the disruptions, and embrace any new landscapes that arise.
- Day three (p. 24)
  - Overcome a motivational slump: Is the motivation as high now, as it was on the first day? If not, the reality of doing the habit, probably isn't matching the Mind Movie. This is a time to find other things that can motivate other than the Mind Movie--the joy of doing, love of learning, feeling of pride that comes with accomplishment, helping others, etc.
- Day four (p. 25)
  - Practice self-compassion: If there is struggle or dissatisfaction with doing the habit, give oneself kindness, as one would give a friend who is in pain aid and comfort.
- Day five (p. 25)
  - Reflect again, adjust: What obstacles were encountered, and how were they overcome, or not? Look at any mistakes and improve the method; learn from the pitfalls and made adjustments. Turn failure into a great teacher.
- Day six (p. 25-26)
  - Stay with groundlessness: When working a habit, groundlessness occurs. Feeling lost and the feeling of wanting to quit shows up. This

is normal. Practice staying with feeling while working the habit, instead of avoiding them with distractions.

➤ **Week Four: Reconnecting**

- Day one (p. 27)
  - Quit the third time: Notice the urge to quit the habit after you start, and don't follow it. Don't act, just observe. The urge will go away, and not quitting isn't the end of the world. Notice the urge when it comes back. Don't act. When the urge to quit comes back the third time, quit. Quitting right has now been earned. Practice "quitting on the third time" all week.
- Day two (p. 28)
  - Reconnect with the why: Pause for a moment to remember the intention for the habit, the deeper reason for doing it.
- Day three (p. 28)
  - Reconnect with the moment: Reconnect with the intention for the habit, and move away from the Mind Movie, and focus on the moment.
- Day four (p. 28-29)
  - Reconnect with gratitude: Reconnect with the gratitude for being in the moment, being able to do the habit, and being alive.
- Day five (p.29)
  - On struggles: Reflect on any struggles over the past week. What was the Mind Movie attached to? What is the Childish Mind rebelling against? Working with the struggles is crucial to forming the habit and changing one's life.
- Day six (p.29-30)
  - Don't waste life: Reflect on not wasting this life, and study this habit change as if it were the most important change in one's life.

➤ **Week Five: Embracing Groundlessness**

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- Day one (p. 31)
  - Be curious about groundlessness: One's mind does not like the feeling of not being anchored. Stay curious about the groundlessness. Stay with the feeling, and examine it with an open mind.
- Day two (p. 32)
  - Practice being with uncertainty: People tend to not like the feeling of uncertainty (when will the habit be ingrained? Is this the right way to do it? Is there more to know?) Stay with that feeling. explore it, and be curious about what uncertainty is like.
- Day three (p. 32)
  - Practice being with discomfort: If one does not push oneself into uncomfortable situations (a tough work task, social situations, writing assignments) one is limiting one's self, severely. Consider pushing into discomfort while finding curiosity about it, and see if acceptance with the discomfort can be gained.
- Day four (p. 33)
  - See that this is enough: Practice accepting this moment as enough, and ignore the Mind Movie about wanting more in order to get enough.
- Day five (p.33)
  - Practice letting go and accepting: Accept life as it is, and seeing it is already enough is the toughest task one can give the Childish Mind. Life will present times when one is forced to live without something one wants badly. Practice letting go with the habit, and accepting the moment one is in..
- Day six (p.34)
  - Go through love: Look through the groundlessness, and don't run from it. What's underneath it? When one is afraid of uncertainty, the

fear comes from a place of love. Explore this groundlessness, and see what is really there.

➤ **Week Six-Gradually Changing Your Life**

- Day one (p. 35)
  - Consider a second habit: If the new habit is becoming ingrained, it might be time to easily start a new habit.
- Day two (p. 35-35)
  - Gradually change your life: Consider the slow change method that was done with the first habit, and consider tiny changes that can be made over the next few months that will be easy to make but will be meaningful in the long term.
- Day three (p. 36)
  - Let go of unhelpful changes: Consider whether or not the new habit has been helpful, and whether it's worth carrying forward. If not, give yourself permission to drop it, and revisit the habit later.
- Day four (p. 36-37)
  - Adjust and refocus: If one has decided to keep the habit going, consider how the process has gone. What if any adjustments need to be made going forward? Refocus on the deeper "why" of the habit, the intention, and the gratitude.
- Day five (p. 37-38)
  - Embrace the uncertain path of change: The path to gradually changing one's habits and life is not straight, orderly, or neat. Embrace the uncertain path with curiosity.

➤ **Troubleshooting**

- Gauge bandwidth (p.41)
  - Gauge what is happening in life (travel, illness, family crisis) and then decide if reducing the habit, or revisiting it later is the best course.
- Assess focus and commitment

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- What is the level of focus and commitment? Can either be increased? What else is needed to make the habit happen? **Suggestions to help (p. 42-44)**
  - Make a commitment to others
  - Make a rule: Don't miss two days in a row
  - Create accountability
  - Create a consequence
  - Make it social
- Can't find the time (p. 45-46)
  - Has the habit been made a priority, and can it be? If it can't be a priority, there are options
    - Take a break, but make it a defined break
    - Don't take a break, but reduce the level by going back to the smallest version of the habit.
    - Don't listen to the Childish Mind!
- Others aren't supportive (p. 47-50)
  - Don't abandon change because others aren't on board instead
    - Get others on board: Talk to those impacted by the change, and give them time and a chance to get on board.
    - Accept others as they are: Make it clear the change isn't a judgement on them, but rather an attempt to reduce one's own struggles with the change.
    - Set the example: Be a good example and others will follow
    - Make changes alone: Don't recruit others, just ask for personal space to pursue the changes alone.
    - Educate with patience: Share books, websites, and blogs regarding the change.
    - Group challenges: Create challenges and competitions to bring people together.
- Not doing as well as hoped (p. 51)
  - Have a good intention for the habit, but **don't attach to the outcome.**

- Accountability isn't working (p. 52-53)
  - Create consequences in regards to accountability
    - Write a blog with daily updates
    - Create a public log and share with friends
    - Pledge to do something embarrassing in the event of failure
    - Issue a public challenge to friends and family
- Feeling tired, stressed, overwhelmed (p. 54-56)
  - Be aware of the problem
  - Get more rest: Go to bed earlier, take a nap (if able)
  - Take breaks
  - Exercise
  - Get the overwhelm under control
    - Make a list of all that is going on, and see if items on the list can be eliminated, or put on hold
  - Reduce the inflow
    - Reduce the amount of information coming in (RSS feeds, Twitter, Facebook, email)
  - Breathe
  - Make the task the meditation
    - Close all programs and devices that aren't associated with the task, and be mindful while working on the task.
- Making mistakes, guilt from failing (p. 57-58)
  - Take a long view of things:
    - Failure is for a day or two, or maybe a week
    - Missing a few days in a year makes almost no difference
    - Missing a few days in a lifetime means nothing.
    - Guilt is short term thinking. Learn from the mistake, and get going again.
- Quitting a Bad Habit
  - When to attempt to quit (p. 61)
    - Don't tackle too much too early.

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- **Learn how to develop new habits before quitting old habits.**
- Don't quit a habit unless developing new habits has become fairly easy.
- Track the habit and the triggers (p. 62-63)
  - Write down every trigger for the habit.
  - What happened before the habit, what were the circumstances around the habit, who was around for the habit.
- Come up with replacement habits (p. 64)
  - For each trigger and need, write down a positive replacement habit that will meet the same need.
  - Find new ways of coping
    - Exercising
    - Meeting new people
    - Learn a new skill
- Use the previously learned techniques (p.68-69)
  - Make a vow
  - Put up visual reminders
  - Find gratitude
  - Flow around disruptions
  - Reflect on learning
  - Make adjustments
- Gradual change versus cold turkey (p. 70-71)
  - Gradual method: Slow and steady, like learning a new habit. This takes time but yields good results.
  - Cold turkey: Stopping all at once. Yields fast results, but the results aren't usually lasting.
- Struggling with urges (p.72)
  - Instead of acting on urges immediately, delay, delay, delay.
    - Get out of the situation.
    - Don't negative self-talk.
    - Be realistic: Things won't always go as planned.

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- What happens when failure shows up (p. 73)
  - Quits are messy and have slip-ups and urges.
  - Learn from the mistakes.
  - Forgive.
  - Figure out a new and better plan for next time.
- Types of quits (p. 74-78)
  - Food changes
  - Smoking
  - Internet distractions
  - TV watching
  - Impulse shopping
  - Negative thinking
  - Drugs or Alcohol
    - Seek professional help and treatment

### **A few memorable quotes**

- "The art of life lies in a constant readjustment to our surroundings" (p 1).
- "Putting things off is the biggest waste of life." -- Seneca (p.29)
- "Learn to embrace this groundlessness, and to be OK with things not being firm and certain or going as we'd like. This is great practice for habit change, and for life in general" (p.31).

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#### **More resources, from Leo Babauta:**

[Zenhabits.net](http://zenhabits.net)

*The Power of Less*, <https://amzn.to/2YHrTAj>

*Zen Habits: Handbook For Live*, <https://amzn.to/2HR8xUw>

*Zen to Done: The Ultimate Simple Productivity System*, <https://amzn.to/2FFBkbo>

*Focus*, <https://amzn.to/2WJj9Z1>

*The Simple Guide To A Minimalist Life*, <https://amzn.to/2CNkwy1>