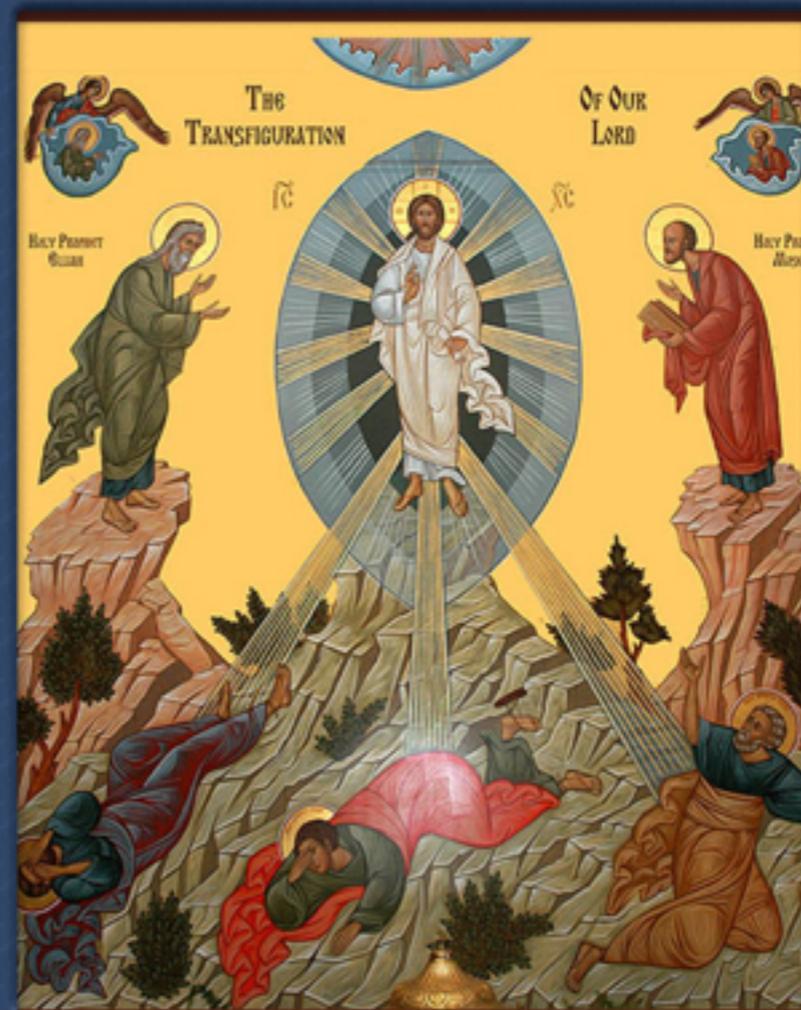


Adding Salt to Your Spiritual Life

*Based on Life and Teaching of
Saint Gregory Palamas*



Giving up
Bad Habits
Gaining
Good Habits



Being an Orthodox Christian

- * What is involved in living a Christian Life? What is it like?
- * 1. We believe:
- * **in Christ**, that He was incarnated fully God and fully man
- * He was resurrected from the dead.
- * He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of the Father and sent the Holy Spirit for our salvation
- * He established His Church (His Body) where the Holy Spirit is active for our benefit in its Liturgies, Sacraments and Guidance.

Being an Orthodox Christian

- * 2. Have hope of **eternal life** in His kingdom
- * 3. We **love God** with our whole heart
- * 4. Out of this love we desire to **follow His commandments** -- we know this is the way to be united with Him in heaven.
- * 5. We participate in the **sacramental life** of the Church which unites us with Him.
- * 6. We develop a **personal relationship** with Him and participate personally in the mystery of a living faith.

Being an Orthodox Christian

- * 7. **Seek** continually to **receive the gifts of Holy Spirit** and to have our actions guided by God's grace and **do His will**.
- * 8. **Strive for holiness and perfection** with Christ as our model of the perfect human being.
- * 9. **Accept that we are imperfect**, that we are all sinners, that we fall short of the perfection He calls us to and lived for us.
- * 10. **Desire Theosis**, for a union with Him in all things.

Being an Orthodox Christian

- * We know our goal is **perfection in Christ** yet we know in our daily life that we fall short of this perfection.
- * Why is it so difficult to fulfill this expectation?
- * Too many **bad habits** that keep us separated from God and His grace and **too few good habits** that lead us to this perfection.
- * This is our challenge to **get rid of bad habits** that block us from God and to **gain good habits** that unite with God.

Being an Orthodox Christian

- * How to realize this?

- * Need God's help.

Can only be realized if God chooses to aid us and blesses us with what we need to attain holiness.

- * All the material wealth of this world will not help us.

- * All self-help programs will not get us there.

- * Only a **personal relationship with God** will gain us Theosis.

- * Where do we begin?

- * With a **surrender**, with **humility**, realizing we can not do what we desire through our own efforts alone.

Being an Orthodox Christian

- * This series is designed to give you insight into the teachings of one of our very important Church Fathers, Gregory Palamas who defended Orthodoxy in the 14th century.
- * He was a holy person and was able to defend the mystical nature of our task against the best religious philosophers of the time, Barlaam and others.
- * We will get to his story and teaching later.



Habits

Key Questions

- * Let's begin with these questions:
 - * *How central is God in your life?*
 - * *Which of your actions today were consciously taken to do God's will?*
 - * *In what ways were you not able to live up to the perfection given to us in Christ?*
 - * *Do you have an unspoken sense that there must be more to life but I'm not sure what it is?*
- * When we live a truly virtuous life, a Godly life, our actions are **in harmony with God** and we are **aware of His presence** there is **abundant joy**.

Key Questions

- * Why is this so?
- * We are with our Lord and Savior and He is with us, we are living in Him and He in us.
- * He leads, comforts, and gives strength
- * We know our actions are congruent and in synergy with Gods will - are free of any guilt
- * This is the “**salt**” that gives true joy in our lives

Reality

- * Isn't reality for most of us that majority of our actions are taken without any thought of God?
- * Isn't He is absent from most of our life?
- * We are going to discuss in this series how we can change this - how it's possible to transform **from a worldly life to a godly life** yet still be in the world.

Getting to Theosis

- * Involves two broad stages of spiritual growth.
 - * 1st. learning to **live by virtuous actions** which develops love
 - * 2nd. **Contemplation** where we learn to focus exclusively on God and participate in His divine energies.
- * Since we are beginners, must focus on **how we can become proficient in the virtues**
- * Going to begin by talking about **habits** - the **things we do without thinking.**

Habits



“All our life, so far as it has definite form, is but a mass of habits.” William James

- * How about your choices in daily life?
Are they well considered decisions or just habits?
- * Duke University researcher found more than **40%** of actions we perform were not decisions but habits.
- * Implications?

Habits

- * William James used water as analogy for a habit.
- * *Water “hollows out for itself a channel, which grows broader and deeper; and, after having ceased to flow, when it resumes, it flows the path traced by itself before.”*



Habits

* Why do we rely on habits ?



Scientists have found that habits emerge because the brain is constantly looking for ways to save effort.

* Tries to turn any routine into a habit.

* Think of how many transactions your brain has to deal with.

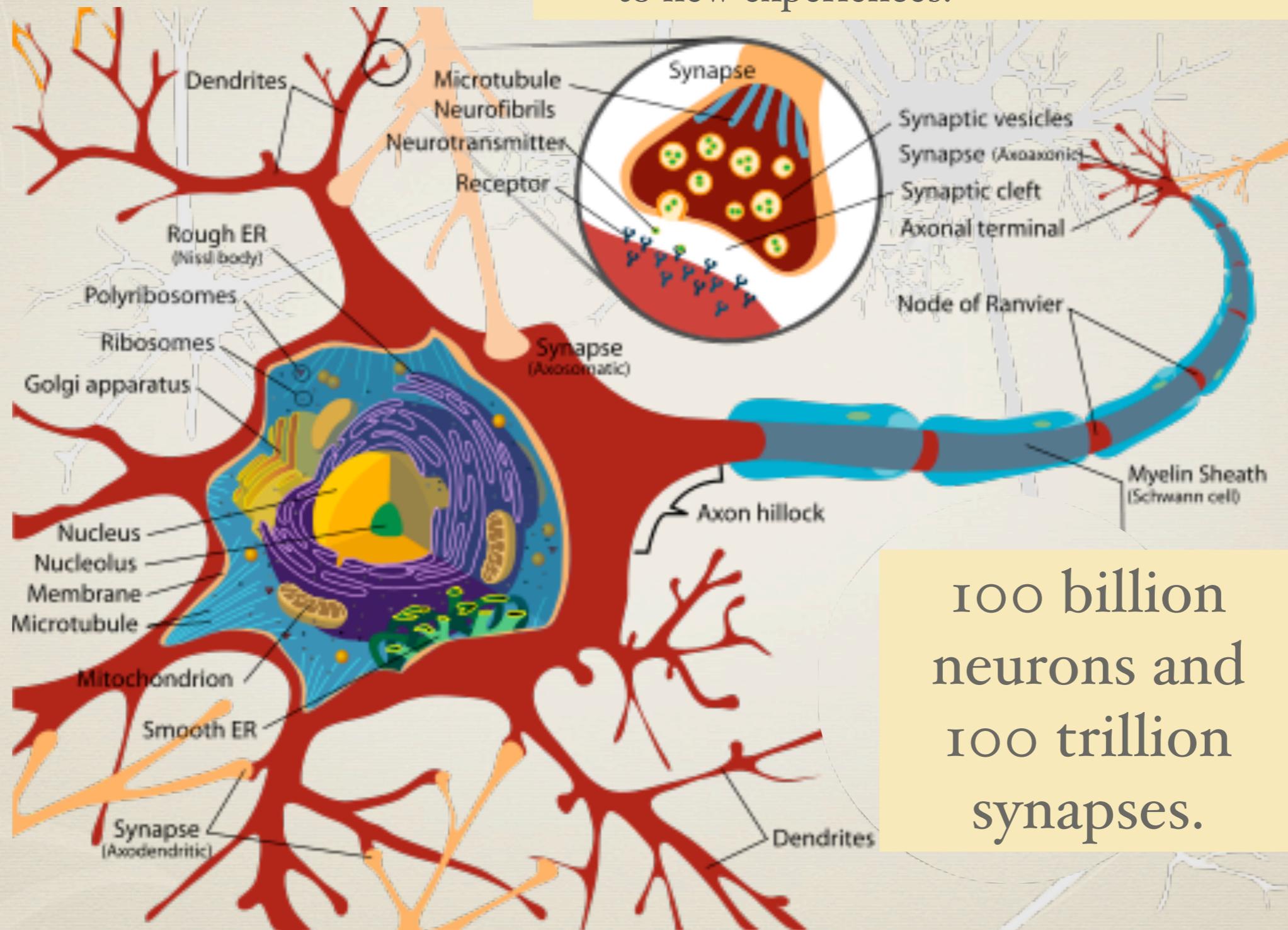


Brain

- * What is the brain and what does it do?
- * A part of the **Body**
- * Integrates **soul and body** and **external world**.
Allows body to adapt and interact with its environment.
- * Takes **input from senses** and creates a **integrated view** of the world.
- * Provides means for **regulation** all bodily functions.
- * **Focus is on the body** and its needs and desires (passions)
- * **Complex** network of physical connections.

Neurons

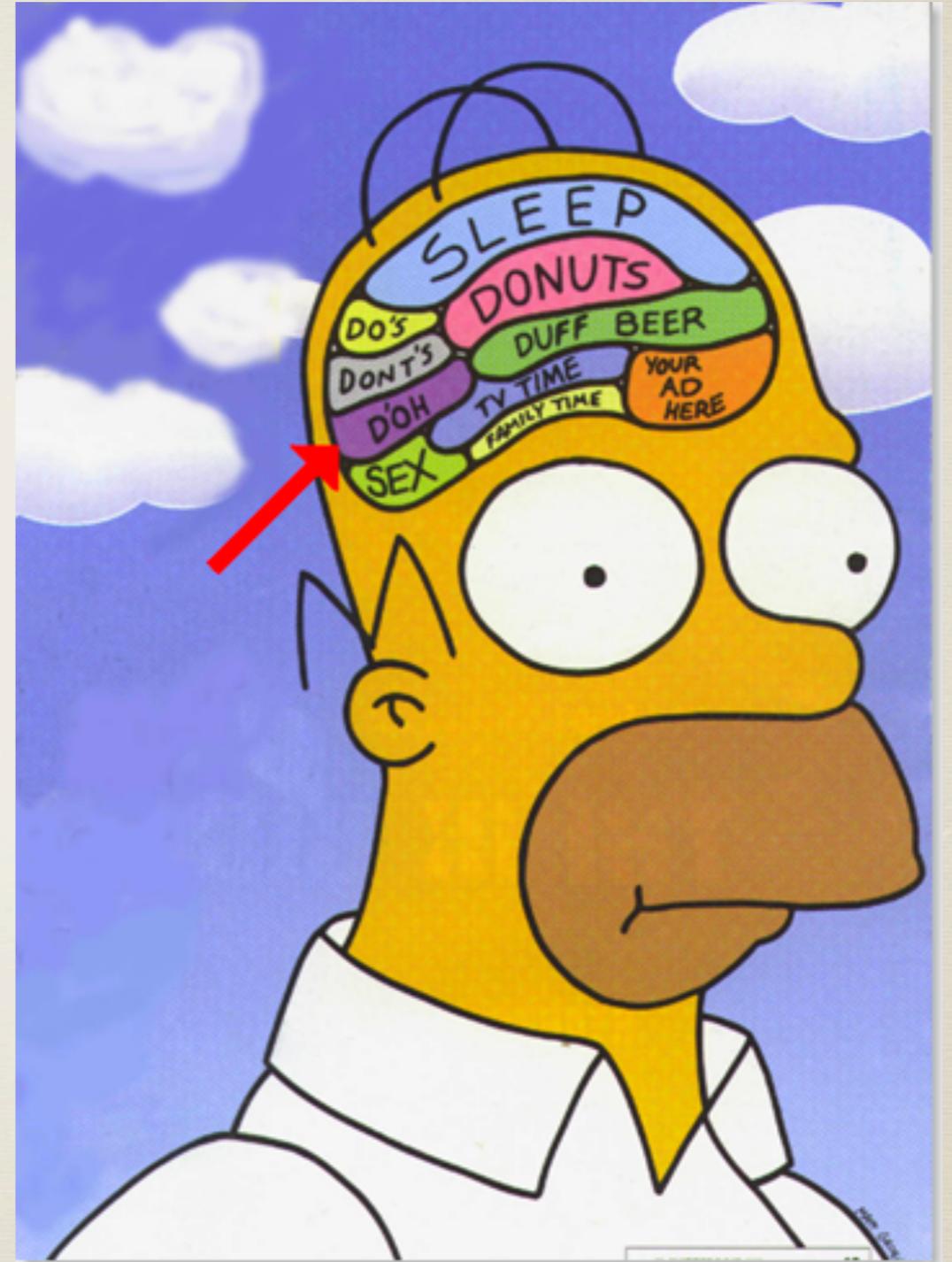
Synapses are awash in hormones and neurotransmitters that modulate the transmission of signals, and they constantly form and dissolve, weaken and strengthen in response to new experiences.



100 billion neurons and 100 trillion synapses.

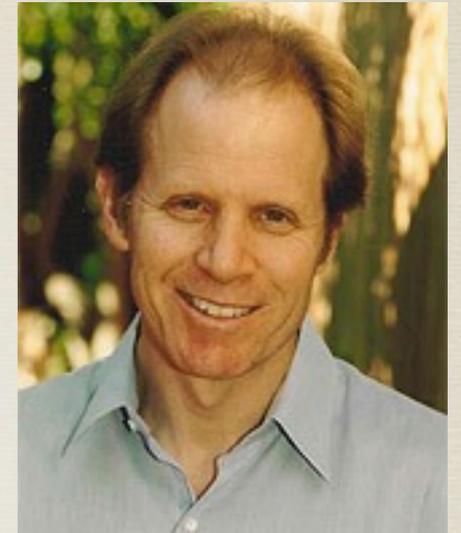
Brain

- * Relies on many **assumptions** to simplify its task.
- * **Mental programming**
- * Has **etched** in it patterns of behavior many we call habits
- * Are **hard wired** in our brain.



Can Change Brain Structures

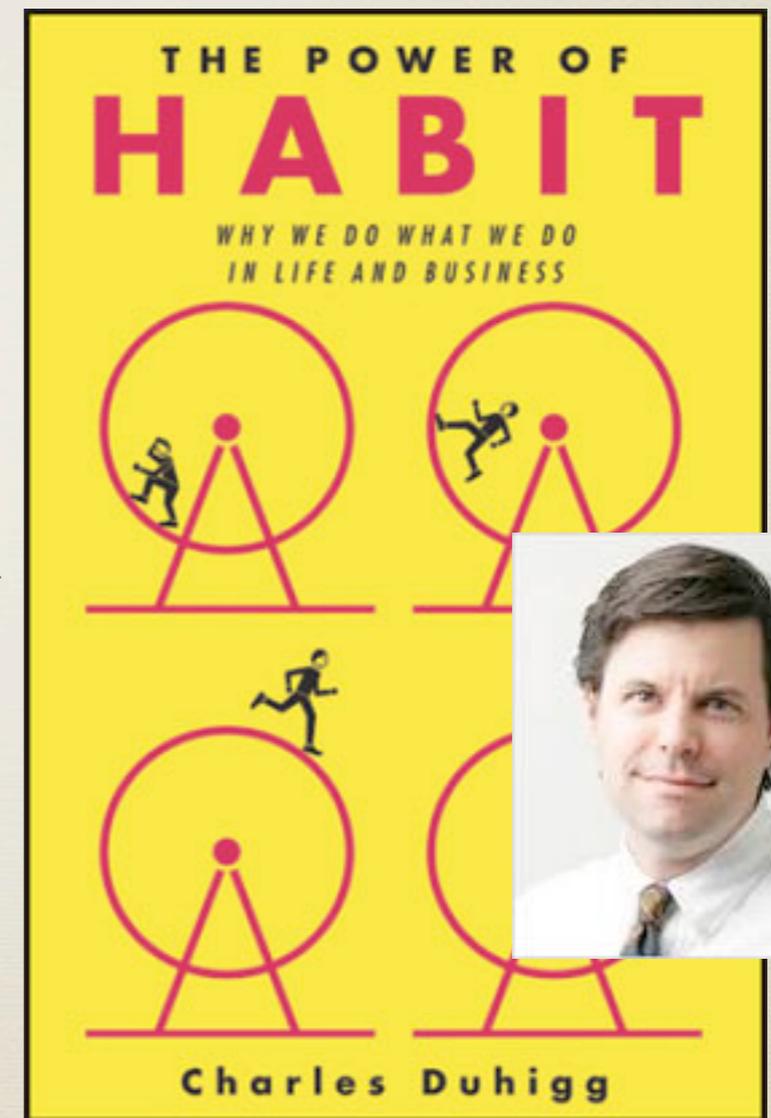
Mindful Brain, Daniel J. Siegel



- * We can actually focus our minds in a way that **changes the structures and function** of the brain throughout our lives. (96)
- * **Its Trainable:** “Attentional processes, emotion regulation, and capacity to observe internally, to introspect and reflect, are all considered **trainable skills.**” (Lutz and colleagues 204) (97)
- * What does this tell us about how we can prepare for cooperation with God?
 - * We must **develop attentiveness** in our mind.
 - * **Know our habits** and develop ability to get rid of those which are hindering us and create new ones that will help us.

Habits

- * *The Power of Habit* by Charles Duhigg
- * *Habits aren't destiny. By harnessing this new science, we can transform our lives.*
- * He clarifies a reality about our habitual lives
- * but does not give us meaningful solutions as we will find later in the teaching of Saint Gregory Palamas.



How Habits Work

- * Duhigg identifies a **3 step loop** in brain that explain how habits work.
- * 1. **Cue** or trigger: tells your brain to go into automatic mode and which habit to choose.
- * 2. **Routine** - physical or emotional
- * 3. **Reward**: help brain determine if routine is worth remembering for future

How Habits Work

- * Once a habit is established the brain **stops participating** in decision making so it can work on other tasks.
- * Implications?
- * Many of our habits lead us to repeated sinful actions.
- * Are we connected with God when acting out of habit?
- * Unless we deliberately fight a bad habit, find new routine, the pattern of behavior will continue automatically.

How Habits Work

- * Further, habits are **hard wired** into our brain, encoded in its structure.
- * Brain is not moral.
Can't tell difference between a good and bad habit.
- * To change habit from bad to good, must work to change the very **structure of our brain** and seek help from the soul.
- * As we will show later, this is where the Church and the Holy Spirit can help us: role of sacraments, ascetic efforts, and spiritual fellowship, spiritual guidance....

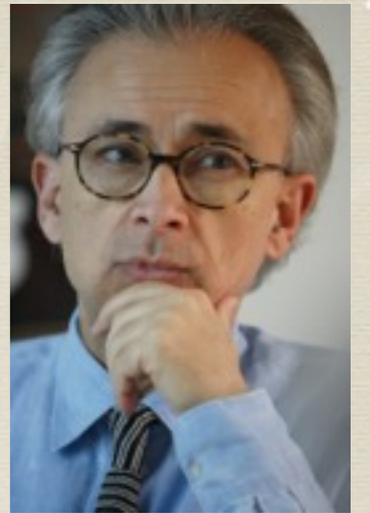
Cues

- * Researchers have found key to change is in **cues**. If they change in the slightest habits fall apart.
- * What are cues?
 - * Visual trigger like chocolate cake, commercial, good looking boy or girl,
 - * Verbal insult, an odor, some one touching us.
 - * Certain place, time of day, sequence of thoughts or company of particular people
- * Can you think of some cues?

Routines

- * What are **routines**?
- * Actions that result from receiving a cue
- * Complex or simple: emotions can happen in milliseconds

How Emotions Work



Antonio Damasio - *The Feeling of What Happens*

- * Something from our senses (cue) initiates a response.
- * Brain sends commands to other regions of the brain and most everywhere in the body proper.
 1. Bloodstream - commands are sent in the form of chemical molecules that act on receptors in the cells of body tissues.
 2. Neuron pathways - commands take the form of electromechanical signals which act on other neurons or on muscular fibers or on organs which in turn can release chemicals of their own into the blood stream.
- * Results in global change in the state of the organism.
- * Then we become aware of a feeling.

Implications?

- * We **can't wait for our feelings to develop** to control our behavior.
- * Need to interact at the time of the stimulus and work to change the automatic response of the emotional response.
- * Not a simple process and not an easy task with our own efforts.

Rewards

- * What are **rewards**?
- * **Physical sensation** that is seen as pleasurable
i.e. from Food: taste, full stomach
or drugs: sense of relief, relaxation, visions
- * **Emotional payoffs** such as feelings of pride that come with praise or accomplishment.
- * Cues and rewards work based on cravings which our Church Fathers call **passions**.
- * Cue initiates a routine that **gains us what we crave or desire**.

How do Ads Work?

- * Let's look at how ads work on us.
- * We receive over **3000** ad impressions each day
- * Advertisers study behavior to find simple and obvious cues & define rewards to lead us to **create new habits**.
- * How about if all the ads were designed to lead us to Theosis?
- * Ad exec Claude Hopkins figured out how this works: Made Pepsodent toothpaste household name and made teeth brushing a habit about 100 years ago.



Pepsodent



- * At time people had bad teeth because of rising consumption of sugar.
- * All kinds of stuff was sold door to door, none made much money.
Few people brushed their teeth.
- * Turned a new idea into one of best known products.
How?
- * Cue and reward tapping into our passions or desires.

- * He figured out how to tap into a passion to create a craving.
- * This is what marketing is all about.
- * Studied dental text books and found reference to mucin plaques on teeth which he later called “the film.”
- * Decided to promote it as a creator of **beauty** by promoting the removal of this natural film on teeth which simple brushing w/o toothpaste will remove.



Ads

* “just run your tongue across your teeth, You’ll **feel a film**, that is what makes your **teeth look off color** and invites decay.”

* “Note how many pretty teeth are seen everywhere. Millions are using a new method of teeth cleansing. **Why would any woman have dingy film on her teeth?** Pepsodent removes the film!”

* **Cue:** film on teeth. **Reward:** beauty **Routine:** Brush teeth with Pepsodent

* What’s current version of this?



Ads



- * Within 10 years Pepsodent was one of top selling product in the world.
- * Before Pepsodent only 7% of Americans had a tube of toothpaste. Ten years later 65%
- * He proclaimed two rules for advertising:
 1. find a simple and obvious **cue**
 2. clearly define the **rewards**.
- * He turned advertising into a science.

Febreze



- * Febreze
- * New chemical discovered: Researcher was smoker - came home and wife asked him if he stopped smoking. Chemical he had created absorbed smells.
- * How to market to create new habit?
 - * Something to rid people of embarrassing smells.
 - * Cue: smell of cigarette smoke. Reward: odor eliminated from clothes. Routine: spray clothes with Febreze.
 - * A clean house - no pet smells
 - * Failed. Why?
 - * most people could not detect their own smells.



Ads

- * How to build a new habit?
- * Key was to **create a craving**, link with a **passion**
- * Take phone text message. Chime is cue. What do we do? Why?
- * Take away the cue, the chime, what happens? Can go all day without checking.
- * To overpower a habit must recognize which craving (passion) is driving the behavior.

Ads



- * Back to Febreze issue
- * Hired phd's from Harvard to do psychological tests.
- * Found woman who loved Febreze: no smells, no pets, no one smoked. Why using it?
- * “I use it for normal cleaning. It’s a nice way to make everything smell good as a final touch.”

Ads

- * Watched her clean and found that after she cleaned the bedroom & straightened up the bed, she would spray the smoothed comforter. “Spraying feels like **a little celebration** when I’m done with a room.”
- * On video tape they noticed that many who followed a similar routine smiled when they left the room admiring their handiwork.
- * The reward was the **self-satisfaction of cleaning** - clean and smells good

- * Instead of focusing on eliminating bad smells they gave Febreze its own smell and included images of open windows with fresh air.
- * New ads featured women spraying freshly made beds with tag line “**Cleans** life’s smells” in stead of “gets bad odors out of fabrics.”
- * It became an air freshener used as a finishing touch on things are already clean.
- * People don’t want to admit things smell bad but craved a nice smell after hey have spent time cleaning.
- * Now a reward with craving.
- * One of P&G’s most successful brands, with sales of over \$1 billion annually.



Pepsodent



- * There was one other element to Pepsodent's success.
- * Pepsodent contained citric acid and doses of mint oil to make it taste fresh.
- * What was purpose of this?
- * These create a cool, tingling sensation on the tongue and gums which was associated with cleanliness.
- * This made it now became a habit by tapping a sensual pleasure.



PEPSODENT gives you a
Clean Mouth Taste for Hours
thanks to **ORAL DETERGENT** discovery!

Pepsodent's exclusive ORAL DETERGENT cleans your teeth cleanest. And the cleaner your teeth... the better you fight the cause of bad breath and tooth decay. What's more, you can prove it to yourself... with Pepsodent you'll find you have a Clean Mouth Taste that lasts for hours. Lever Bros. Co. unconditionally guarantees your satisfaction or money refunded.

Only **PEPSODENT** cleans your teeth cleanest
that's why you get a
Clean Mouth Taste for Hours!

Try the new Pepsodent Chlorophyll

Pepsodent
Chlorophyll

Jon Williamson.com

Habits

- * Want a new habit?
 - * Create a cue.
 - * Identify a reward.
 - * Link it with a **desire or passion**.
- * Anticipate this reward and eventually the craving will help form the habit.
- * Spiritually this craving is referred to as a **passion**.

Cravings

- * **Cravings** (passions) are what drive habits. To change them or create new ones must **reorient** our cravings.
- * Spiritually this means what?
- * From craving a physical satisfaction to **craving a relationship with God**, for eternal life, for life without strife and suffering.

- * How about a prayer habit?
- * Cue?
 - * A specific time
- * Routine?
 - * Go to place, Light candle, read specific prayers
- * Reward?
 - * Peace of mind, comfort of Christ, Future rewards in heaven
- * Craving?

Peace of quietness. Time removed from all the problems of this world. Sweet smell of incense, flickering light of oil lamp reflecting on icons of Theotokos and Christ.
- * Same is true for the Divine Liturgy where we appeal to all our senses to lift us above the physical world.

Alcoholics Anonymous



* Story of AA



1934 39 yr old alcoholic Bill Wilson met a friend in dingy basement on Lower East Side of New York who had become sober through religion.

* He talked about heaven and hell, sin and the devil and said to him, “Realize you are licked, admit it, and get willing to turn your life over to God.”

* A month later he checked into the Charles B. Towns Hospital, an upscale detox center



AA



- * Given hourly infusions of a hallucinogenic drug belladonna - then used for alcohol treatment.
- * Began writhing in agony.
Felt like insects crawling over his skin.
He hallucinated.
Became so nauseous that he could hardly move.
- * Finally he yelled out,
“If there is a God, let Him show Himself!”
“I am ready to do anything. Anything!”

AA



- * Felt like he was on a mountain top as a white light filled his room.
- * Ecstasy subsided and he felt as if he was in a new world of consciousness. Realized he was a free man.
- * He would never have another drink and devoted himself to **founding & building AA.**
- * Today, **2.1 million** people seek help from AA each year.

AA



- * Why does AA work?
- * Attacks the **habit** that surrounds alcohol use.
- * Bill was not a social scientist. He wrote **12 steps** one night sitting in his bedroom and picked twelve because there were **twelve Apostles**.
- * Researches say it works because it forces people to **identify** the **cues** and **rewards** that encourage their alcoholic habit and **help them find new behaviors**.

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
4. **Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.**
5. **Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.**
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

12 steps

- * Steps 4 & 5 (to make “a searching and fearless inventory of ourselves”) and admit “to God, to ourselves, and to other human beings the exact nature of our wrongs.
- * What does this process sound like?
 - * Repentance

12 Steps

- * In this process one identifies all the triggers (cues) for their alcoholic urges (cravings).
- * Then they are asked to search for the rewards they get from alcohol. What **cravings** are driving your habit?
- * Most crave a drink because it offers escape, relaxation, companionship, blunting of anxieties, opportunity for emotional release. (**passion**)
- * Don't crave feeling of being drunk. Physical effects are least rewarding part of drinking.

AA

- * A major part of the **routine** in the habit **is going to the bar**.
- * To offer what they get at a bar AA has built a system of **meetings and companionship** (ecclesia) & “the sponsor” (spiritual father).
- * Forces one to develop **new routines** for what one does each night. At the meetings you can talk and relax and deal with your anxieties.
- * Triggers and payoff stay the same. Now a **new routine** of the meeting.

Belief

- * Researchers have found that **belief** is a **critical** component to create anew habit loop.
- * Alcoholics who believed **God** entered their lives were more likely to make it through stressful periods with sobriety intact.
- * Must believe change is possible
- * Its easier with a **supportive community**.
- * For spiritual growth this is purpose of a faith community like the parish, bible study groups, classes...

AA

- * A habit cannot be eradicated it must be replaced.
- * Passions are natural but must be controlled.
- * Believe change is possible - we do have free will.
- * Strong faith helps make changes
- * Seek help group or guide

Habits

- * Remember how Paul says the He does not understand why he does what he knows he should not do?
- * We always have power to chose good but we may have **habits that we need to overcome** that have been hardwired in our brain physically.
- * Remember 47% o our choices are based on habit.

Deep Questions

- * Lurking under our lack of zeal in our life is our suppressed fear surrounding death.
- * *“What is life all about?”*
- * With **faith** we have **hope** of eternal life in heaven but we must learn to do good and rid ourselves of bad habits to have assurance of the rewards.
- * With faith we can follow a course that makes our hope a reality.

Hope

- * Our first task:
Make this hope **real**, based on a personal experience with God.
- * We need a God habit, where everything we do is to glorify Him **knowing** our reward is in heaven.
- * In the Church we have the help of the **Holy Spirit** through the **sacraments** and a guide through our spiritual father.
- * Action of Spirit is nurtured in us through our ascetic practices like prayer and fasting.

Change

- * Often it is our bad habits that hinder us.
- * In addition, we need to build good habits like regular participation in sacramental life of the church, daily prayer, and fasting.
- * Our salvation is **not** guaranteed because we say we are Orthodox Christian and have been baptized.
- * We must learn to **cooperate** with God, to become like Him, to seek union with Him, Theosis

God habit

- * Key is **do not procrastinate**. We all know we have bad habits and lack some good habit. We must act now to live by Spirit and not by habit.
- * Wisdom of our time:
“The way to get started is to quit talking and begin doing.” Walt Disney
- * Remember God is not the cause of our anxiety or suffering. He wants peace and order based on love.
- * We must act out of our own free will and love for our God.
- * *“Procrastination is like a credit card, it is a lot of fun until you get the bill.”*

Faith with Works

- * Remember faith has no power without good works.
“So faith, if it does not have works, by itself is destitute of power.” (James 2:17)

Seek

- * Good place to start is to evaluate our spiritual life, how we pray and worship, how we participate in the sacraments, what effort are we making to draw upon the powers of the Holy Spirit.
- * *You have said, Seek My face. My heart says to You, Your face, Lord, I will seek, inquire for, and require.* (Psalm 27:8)
- * *Develop the habit of acknowledging God in all your ways and then He will direct your steps.* (Proverbs 3:6)

Next Time

- * We will continue with the life of Saint Gregory Palamas
- * Then we will listen to his teaching on how to gain a life fulfilled by overcoming our bad habits and creating good habits.