

DOPE LABS

Transcript of Lab 049: The Habit Equation

Titi: You think folks are sticking with their New Year's resolutions or have they dropped them already?

Zakiya: No. At this point? Absolutely not. I think most people were committed January first through fourth and then we saw great drop off then.

Titi: Yeah. All the commercials that have been trying to rope you into all these different things, whether it be gym memberships or managing your money properly or whatever. It seems like those commercials have stopped because maybe yall have fell off those habits.

Zakiya: I don't know. I just know for me in my house, good habits are hard to come by. OK, New habits are hard to come by.

Titi: Yes, it always feels like it takes a significant amount of activation energy to start a new habit.

Zakiya: Yes. Not just to start it, but especially for it to solidify and to stick around. It feels like it takes almost all your energy. Sometimes I have to sit down the other things I was already doing, so I could focus on the new thing I want to do.

Titi: I think the only habit that I've been able to maintain is ordering off DoorDash. That's it.

Zakiya: Were you trying to pick the habit up?

Titi: No, it just happened over the pandemic. I'm Titi

Zakiya: And I'm Zakiya. And from Spotify, this is Dope Labs.

Titi: Welcome to Dope Labs, a weekly podcast that mixes hardcore science, pop culture and a healthy dose of friendship.

Zakiya: For our last installment of our New Year series, we're talking all about habits. And when we look back, we learned quite a few things over the past few weeks.

Titi: Yeah, like with sleep and how important it is, I've learned that I might sleep a little bit too much, which I didn't think was possible before talking to Dr. Jean-Louis. We also learned about vitamins and how I probably need to be just eating better. I know I learned a lot about our immune system and how it works and how it kicks itself in the gear to keep us healthy.

Zakiya: There are some things that I might need to pick up, but there's some stuff I'm like, it just is what it is.

Titi: I hope you pick it up going to bed because it sounds like you really need to get some sleep, friend. But I guess no matter where you fall on this spectrum of, Oh, I want to pick up these new habits or change the way I'm doing things, how you create new habits or ditch the bad ones is really, really important.

Zakiya: Yes, the good news is we're going to talk all about it today.

Titi: Perfect timing.

Zakiya: Let's get into the recitation.

Titi: So what do we know?

Zakiya: Well, habits are like the Konami code or shortcuts of self-improvement. They're like those hot keys on your computer that let you move everything off the desktop to help you get directly to the action.

Titi: Yeah. Command Shift C or whatever. I know that forming new habits good habits can be really, really hard.

Zakiya: But you know, it's easy to what forming bad habits?

Titi: Oh yeah, I've got plenty of those I got. I got plenty

Zakiya: Effortless. OK.

Titi: It takes no energy at all. So what do we want to know?

Zakiya: I want to know why it's so hard to form the good habits, right? What is the barrier there?

Titi: Yeah, I want to know what's going on in our brains when we are in the process of trying to form a new habit. Is there something neurologically that makes it easy for some habits and harder for other habits to stick?

Zakiya: Yeah. Is there a social component? You know, like the buddy system, they say, Look, if you're doing something, have a friend, do it with you. Mm hmm. What is the heck is there a hack to happen?

Titi: Give us the life hack.

Zakiya: Yes, TikTok has not shown me that.

Titi: I've searched every corner of TikTok. I have not found it.

Zakiya: And even when I say TikTok, I mean Tik Tok on Instagram.

Titi: She means, Tik Tok on Reels. All right, let's jump into the dissection.

Zakiya: Our guest for today's lab is the author of Good Habits Bad Habits, Dr. Wendy Wood.

Dr. Wendy Wood: My name is Wendy Wood and I'm a behavioral scientist. I study habits and mostly why they're so difficult to change. I'm on the faculty at the University of Southern California.

Zakiya: Before we even get to defining a habit, Titi I already know what they're going to try to tell us.

Titi: They're going to try and say it's 21 days to make a habit. I think we've all heard it.

Zakiya: We've heard it. We've seen it everywhere. But guess what? They're wrong.

Titi: Dr. Wood has already told us that you guys are taking this way out of context.

Dr. Wendy Wood: It was a popular book in the 1960s that was written by a surgeon explaining how long it takes people to get used to a new face or a new image after plastic surgery. So it didn't have anything to do with habits.

Titi: OK, so we know we all have habits. But what exactly makes a habit.

Dr. Wendy Wood: Repetition. Every time you repeat a behavior, your mind is processing it in part of your brain, which stores habit memories. It connects where you are and what behavior you're repeating that get some reward that makes you feel good. And that enjoyment is really important for repeating a behavior. And it could be just feeling pride. It's just a good feeling that you have when you do the behavior.

Zakiya: So when we repeat behaviors that feel good, we're forming these mental associations so that in the right context, that habit is automatically activated.

Dr. Wendy Wood: So it's like standing in front of your bathroom sink in the morning. The habit that's activated for most of us is brushing our teeth. And we do it without thinking a whole lot.

Am I going to do it today? Do I want to? How do I do it? You don't have to ask those questions because you have a habit. You just repeat what you've done before.

Titi: Habits allow us to go on autopilot for certain tasks like brushing your teeth or making coffee.

Zakiya: What's your morning habit that you're just on autopilot for?

Titi: Oh, it's probably a bad habit that I need to break, which is first things first, I'm checking my phone. I don't even realize it, and I'll realize, Oh, I've been scrolling on my phone for five minutes since I woke up. I need to stand up and get my day started. But then right after that, it's go to the bathroom, brush my teeth. What about you?

Zakiya: I reach around for my phone and as I'm standing up, I'm unlocking it. I'm usually seeing if my Apple Watch is dead or.

Titi: Dead or alive.

Zakiya: Dead or alive. And then I'm calling my dad as I'm walking to make coffee in the kitchen.

Titi: I want to incorporate your dad into my morning routine.

Zakiya: You think you want that dose of energy in the morning?

Titi: Hey, I won't need a cup of coffee.

Zakiya: So making coffee is easy for me. I like doing it. It makes me feel good. But the problem is when it comes to those behaviors that are harder to do like to remember that time I tried to be shy and quiet, no matter how hard I tried or I tried to commit to it. I just kept falling off.

Titi: She couldn't do it.

Zakiya: Why was that?

Titi: Lasted for two minutes.

Zakiya: No, I could do it for two minutes.

Dr. Wendy Wood: So we experience willpower. It's exerting self-control. It's a bit of a struggle. It takes effort. And the challenge with willpower is this Let's say you decide I'm not going to snack anymore in the afternoon, I'm going to just quit that. As soon as you start saying that, you start thinking, OK, what am I missing? What am I denying myself? What can't I have now? There's great research showing that that has ironic effects, which then get us to think more and more about the thing that we can't have. And then all of a sudden, we can't really keep ourselves

from doing the thing that we tried not to do, and that's the ironic effects of desire. If you try to control it, it just kind of takes over.

Titi: Yes, there was a time when I decided that I wasn't going to drink soda anymore. In particular, the soda that has the tightest grip on me is Coca-Cola. And that's because I don't want my teeth falling out my mouth. I can't afford veneers. I don't want to have to go to Columbia to get them. So I was like, OK, let me cut back on the Coca-Cola. And then all of a sudden I felt like I saw Coca-Cola ads everywhere. I felt like everyone around me was drinking Coca-Cola. It felt like I was depriving myself of this thing, and it was just everywhere. I felt like I could smell it, and it became like the hardest thing ever. So I ended up caving because I was just like, This is taking over my mind. I could barely think every day. All I did was focus on not drinking Coca-Cola, which made me want to drink Coca-Cola even more. So I just said, OK, well, maybe I'll drink it with a straw to try and avoid my teeth. It doesn't work that way, but it's OK.

Zakiya: Are you putting the straw directly into your esophagus?

Titi: back to my esophagus.

Dr. Wendy Wood: It's really hard to use willpower effectively to control habits. Willpower just doesn't last as long as your habit is going to.

Zakiya: So Dr. Wood explained that while we all know what it feels like to try to use willpower, we're actually less familiar with our habits.

Dr. Wendy Wood: Habits proceed in a way that isn't accessible to conscious awareness. We can't just sort of look at the habit and decide what it is. We don't have access to that.

Titi: According to Dr. Wood, the habit system works kind of independently from our conscious awareness of our behaviors. It works through experience.

Dr. Wendy Wood: So you can tell yourself, I want a new habit and I'm gonna make a decision. But that doesn't do anything to habit memory. That's your conscious self. Habit memory is somewhat separate from that and has a different logic to it. Habit memory is so simple that all mammals have learned through habit. It's how your dog learns. It's how whales learned. It's how cows learn. So you have to keep in mind how basic it must be for all of those animals to be able to learn in a similar way.

Zakiya: So we're basically all Pavlov's dogs.

Titi: Maybe this is why I have yet to be able to teach my dog Daisy a trick because I be like sit and she won't do it. And I'm like, All right, girl, just eat the treat. It's fine.

Zakiya: Well, even if you can't teach Daisy a trick, were you able to at least teach yourself a trick? What happened with the coke?

Titi: Yes. So I ended up replacing Coca-Cola with sparkling water, but I had to go through kind of like a trial and error process where I was testing out different brands, different flavors until I finally arrived at a brand and flavor that could scratch my Coca-Cola itch. And I was like, Oh, this is just as good as having a Coke. And haven't had a coke in months. Well, at this point, a year.

Zakiya: A year?

Titi: I've probably had a coke. I know I've had a Coke, but when I'm not having it doesn't feel like I haven't had one. Like, I can't even remember when the last time I had one was.

Zakiya: I remember when you could remember.

Titi: You remember when I was feening.

Zakiya: yes, my friend was having those coke.

Titi: She was there. She was there with me shooting in the gym.

Dr. Wendy Wood: That's exactly what you should do. When you can another behavior that is a direct substitute can be a way of maybe not changing the habit, but adapting it to meet the goals that you have right now. So you're kind of building on that habit memory that you have. And instead of reaching for coke, you just get a can of flavored water.

Zakiya: So you wanted to get rid of coke altogether. And what you really did is kind of adapt or replace with something else. So that makes me think about how our brain really can form, quote unquote good and bad habits. Like is one easier? Is there a difference?

Dr. Wendy Wood: There isn't much. They really do function very much the same. What's different is whether they meet your goals right now. I bet when Titi started drinking coke, it woke you up. It gives you a little bit of a sugar lift. It tastes good. So all of those things are rewards. But once you start doing it all the time, it's really not good for you. So it was a good habit. Maybe when you started, that doesn't mean it's a good habit several months later, a year later. And so that's the difference between good and bad habits. And that's how bad habits form. We do something. We end up doing a lot. Then we realize, Oh, gee, no, that's not really a great thing for me.

Titi: You know, one of the things that me and my friend Zakiya love is skincare. And so I was trying to have a new skincare routine and I said, every single morning and night, I'm going to use this acid on my face. And I made it a habit where in the morning I will wash my face. I would put this acid on and then I put on sunscreen because that's what you're supposed to do. Then at night, I would do the same thing. I would wash my face. I would put on this BHA AHA. one of these HA and then put on a moisturizer. After doing that for maybe like a week and a half. My skin was so sensitive. I feel like I removed a protective layer on my skin where I was just like, Wow. Everything that I put onto my face was burning. Things that aren't supposed to burn were burning. And so I was like, OK, this is a little bit too much, then I need to back off the acid.

Zakiya: Yes, I think you really have to find the right cadence for stuff. similarly, and I know you've seen it as much as making coffee is a routine for me in the morning. I really enjoy it. I like the way it tastes. I also like the process of preparing the beverage, and sometimes when I'm really stressed, I'm like, I need to get another cup of coffee. And it's not even that I need the caffeine because maybe once I have a couple cups I'm typing like a mad man and I'm talking 30 words per second. And so what I found, though, is to combat that I have just in my hopper, in my little being grinder, I'm putting mostly decaf, and then I just add in the other beans and I still have the habit of going and making the coffee in the morning. I can have multiple cups, but I also am not terrorizing you and Jenny and Lydia our producers on the back in right in our meetings. We all can understand each other. I don't send so many links is working out. And I think it's important to not really think of any what habit is objectively good or bad. I think the question is, does it work for me right now for who I want to be? Does the frequency, you know, it still may be working for you, but maybe you don't eat twice two times a day?

Titi: Yes, maybe every other day Titi. Maybe that's OK. To meet the goals that I have. Yes, those are the adjustments that I need to make.

Zakiya: You see those things that float online there. Like every day you should this, this and this, and they're like habit trackers. But maybe sometimes the habit is once out of every seven. OK.

Titi: Especially when a new year comes around, or for some people, it's their birthday where you just feel like, OK, this is where I'm going to get my fresh start and this is what I'm going to do. Sometimes you got to think about the long game. If this is a lifestyle change for you, like, OK, I want to be a more avid reader. If you burn yourself out in the first month because you read 60 books and you can't even remember what most of the books were about, and then you kill your joy of reading. Then it's not going to last very long, but have you say, OK, I'm just going to try and do one book a month and then maybe next year I'll do two books a month, or maybe after six months of doing one book a month, I can up it to two or three, whatever feels good, but to get you to your goal of being a more avid reader.

Zakiya: So let's take a break. When we come back, we're going to talk all about how to actually form habits that stick.

Titi: We're back and we're talking all about habits, the good, the bad and the ugly with Dr. Wendy Wood. Before we dove back into the dissection, Zakiya, what are we talking about next week?

Zakiya: OK, so the Winter Olympics start this weekend in Beijing. And just because there won't be fans, that doesn't mean we aren't excited for figure skating, ski jumping and bobsledding. So next week, we're talking with Dr. Sofia Nimphius, and she's going to tell us how athletes are harnessing the power of physics to perform all of our favorite winter sports.

Titi: OK, let's get back into the dissection. So we want to know what are the steps to form a habit? How do we do it? Dr. Wood says there are three main parts: repetition, rewards, and context.

Zakiya: Let's start with repetition. We said it earlier, so it's not too surprising. Habits are repeated behaviors, and we don't really think too much about them. So it makes sense that repetition is the first step in the process of forming a habit.

Titi: The second part is rewards.

Dr. Wendy Wood: Rewards are really important for habit formation because we're just not going to repeat behaviors that aren't rewarding in some way. And I think that's a problem that people have when they try to change habits is they think, let me do the thing that's best for me, regardless of whether they like it or not. Regardless of whether it's easy or not, let me choose the thing that would make me a better person without trying to work with themselves and figure out what they enjoy.

Zakiya: That makes sense to me that we're more likely to repeat behaviors that feel rewarding and beyond the psychological. There's also a biological reason why rewards are key for forming habits

Dr. Wendy Wood: when you do something that feels good or that works for you in some way. Your brain releases dopamine and dopamine is that feel-good chemical that we all know, but it does lots of things, and one of the things it does is it ties together all of the information and memory to form those habit connections. Those streamlined decision making parts of the habit memory and dopamine works for about a second. So you can't promise yourself a reward at the end of the week. If you do something, it has to be as you're performing the behavior that you feel good in some way.

Titi: So long term rewards of a habit like exercising or practicing a new instrument may not be enough to get us to commit to starting that habit. How can we make a habit more fun in the moment if the activity itself isn't intrinsically rewarding?

Dr. Wendy Wood: So I got myself an elliptical because I thought that would be most similar to running, but I couldn't use it because it's so boring. You have to stay in the same place and just do it the same thing over and over again. I thought it was awful until I figured out I can read trashy novels while I work out. I can watch stupid stuff on TV that I never normally watched and once I figured that out. I loved the elliptical.

Zakiya: You know, previously, when I thought about trying to create some habits, I was reading James Clear's book Atomic Habits, and a lot of what he said is very similar to what Dr. Wood explains that her book, which is the kind of daisy chain something good or something that's already rewarding, was something that you probably don't want to do. So you tie these things together, and they both nailed this point. So, you know, it's got to be legit. Earlier, we talked about something being good for you right now. I don't believe in totally depriving yourself of something. So one of the things that I like this in my area is a cheese Danish from this bakery

that's nearby. And you know, when I like something, the next thing for me is like, how can I make cheese danishes from scratch? And I'm like, Oh, no, that's not rewarding. OK. But one of the things that I've learned in this series that could be really useful for me is just getting outside and walking for like 15 minutes in. A lot of that is remember from good anxiety with Dr. Wendy Suzuki. She was talking about how just moving around and being out in the Sun, how it can change those things. We also learned that with Dr. Jean-Louis for getting this sleep at night. Mm-Hmm. And so if I want to have a cheese Danish, I don't have to penalize myself with making dough from scratch, but I can walk into the bakery and get one as I get my activity, which is for later me for sleeping, right? That doesn't work. That's not a reward. When I'm walking right, then I don't get a good night's sleep right away, but I do get an immediate reward of going to like my favorite little bakery. And so I'm putting those things close together, and I'm basically helping later me so that I can go to sleep.

Titi: I love that. I think that's such a good idea, and that's something I'm definitely going to start trying with some of the habits that I'm trying to form that I'm like, Nah, this ain't going to work. One of the things that I've done in the past is that I bought a planner, and it's one of these planners that has space on each day where you can write in notes, you can plan your day out hour by hour. And so the reward is kind of hidden in that it helps me stay organized and so I go into each day feeling like I know exactly what I have coming up, I know how my day is going to be passed out. And so that is a continual reward that you get from adding to this planner.

Zakiya: I know we talked about this in an earlier lab about you being a planned patty and maybe in a last minute Larry. But I will say that I have picked up some of those habits from Titi. And so now I map a lot of things onto my calendar and I don't feel stressed out when people want to plan stuff ahead of time. I can say I know I'm going to have time for it. Like, I can block off time. That's just creative time for me. Like, I think that's one of the things that makes me a last minute Larry. I'm like, I don't know how I'm going to feel, but if I block creative time for myself and I know I've blocked enough time for myself during the week, then I'm OK saying, yes, I can do this thing.

Titi: Yes, the reward is the freedom.

Zakiya: Yeah, and for me, sometimes the predictability to know what's coming up. You know, something else that's not so obvious for me.

Titi: What?

Zakiya: Data I like data. The more information the better when I started saying I was a real cyclist. You remember that, you know, it was really only writing for like 10 minutes.

Titi: You were a cyclist.

Zakiya: The not so obvious reward that I always enjoy was being able to see how far I went on those rides. I just love that and sharing it. And I would say, Look, here's my ride today Titi. Every time you always say good job, maybe that was the reward.

Titi: Maybe that is. All of these smartwatches that folks have, where you can link up with your friends and your friends can send you words of encouragement that could be the reward. I think that's nice.

Dr. Wendy Wood: Even things that are difficult for some people can be rewarding. If you can figure out something that works for you to make the behavior fun. That's what's important.

Titi: All right, so we've talked about repetition and we've talked about where rewards the third part of habit forming is context.

Dr. Wendy Wood: Context is everything around you. So for brushing teeth, context is your bathroom sink and your toothbrush for making coffee in the morning. It is your kitchen early in the morning and your coffee maker. Other people can be context, too, and the reason why contexts are so important is because some make it easy to repeat a behavior and others make it more difficult. One of the things that makes things difficult is if they take a while time, right? Amazon knows that if it has us do a one click purchase where there, two clicks and they lose customers because it's just slightly more difficult with two clicks. Doesn't sound like it's meaningful, but it is. Our behavior is very responsive to how difficult or easy things are, and we're just much more likely to repeat things that are easy for us.

Zakiya: That's really interesting because a lot of what I see on social media or just within our friend group and maybe I'm just talking about myself, is people using shame to try to help them stick to their habits? For example, you might need an accountability partner, so you might want someone who's going to say, Did you do X today or did you do Y to shame you into doing those things that you said you wanted to do?

Titi: Hmm. It's hard sometimes, because some of these habits, like exercising better sleep, aren't necessarily fun to do. We already talked about adding rewards while you're doing the habit. But is there something else we can do for these habits that are somewhat uncomfortable but will benefit us in the long run?

Dr. Wendy Wood: That is the challenge. Most of us live in environments where the behaviors that are more fun, like intrinsically fun to us, are not the ones that are best for our health and well-being. We're all captured by cell phones and social media. It's so easy to fall into these patterns. So part of changing your habits is knowing how to control your environment in a way that will make it easier.

Zakiya: One of the things I've been wanting to do, and I found that I enjoy. You know, I'm working from home a lot and I don't know about you, but I have been all into my leggings and sweatshirts and hoodies. I have a Hampton sweatshirt that I have worn nonstop. I went to start getting dressed more at home, and something that makes it a lot easier is to put my outfit out the night before. So it's not something I have to look for. It just takes a little bit of that friction out in the morning time when I'm getting ready, and it just makes it easier to stick to this habit that I want to become more second nature.

Titi: So one habit that I had when I was in undergrad because, you know, eight am classes come at you fast and I struggle with just getting out of bed. So what I started doing was putting my alarm clock across the room. So when the alarm would go off, I would have to stand up and have to walk over and my feet had to touch those cold tiles. I'm having to move my body, so my body's waking up to turn off my alarm clock and that wakes me up. So including that level of friction to get me up out of the bed. Definitely reinforced a better habit for me.

Zakiya: So friction is a concept in physics, right?

Titi: Absolutely. Friction is when you have an object that's moving in a specific direction, and it's the forces that are operating against that object that cause the friction.

Zakiya: So friction is controlling how easy or hard it is to get something done if there's something that you don't want to do. You add obstacles that's creating friction. If it's something you want to do, you remove the friction. So I'll take my own example. I want to get dressed every day. Some of the obstacles are figuring out what I'm going to put on if I remove that friction by laying out my outfit the night before. It's much easier when I wake up to decide to get dressed. Instead, it's to default to leggings and a sweatshirt.

Titi: Yes. And then with my example, I'm adding friction by putting my alarm clock across the room so that I have to get up to turn it off.

Zakiya: So the idea is, if you're trying to move away from a habit, add some friction. So it's not easy to do. If you're trying to move towards something, remove the obstacles, remove the friction so it's easier to do. Dr Wood explained to us that our environment can also affect our level of self-control and how adjusting that can help us with sticking to our habits to help us understand? Dr Wood told us about an experiment that study self-control among children.

Dr. Wendy Wood: So most people know about Walter Michelle's marshmallow experiment, where he took four year olds and he put a marshmallow in front of them and told them, Sit there for 15 minutes. You can eat it if you want to, but if you wait those 15 minutes, then you get two marshmallows. And of course, four year olds can't do this. And what they did was, it's so simple they put a cake tin over the marshmallow and they said, you can lift up the tin and eat it anytime you want to. But if you wait, you get two. And if the marshmallow was hidden, 90 percent of the kids could wait until they got two marshmallows, which is amazing. Self-control comes from the environment that we're in. If we organize the environment in a way that pushes us in the right direction, we can all look like we have amazing self-control.

Titi: Yeah, this marshmallow experiment, I think that a version of it actually went viral on TikTok and Instagram all over social media where people were doing this with their children, where they would put their kids favorite snack. These little candies or gummy bears or whatever right in front of them and say, Don't touch it, I will be right back. And the experiment was to see how long your child would wait with the instruction that they weren't supposed to touch it until you got back and that they could have it as soon as you got back. And a lot of these kids didn't make it. Some of the kids use some really unique tactics to be able to wait. So some of them would look away. Some would close their eyes. And then it was Kylie Jenner's daughter, Stormi,

that actually sang a song about being patient in order to help herself be patient as she was waiting for her mom to get back. It was very, very cute.

Dr. Wendy Wood: All habits are difficult to change, and it's difficult to form new ones, and I think that's why people keep forming the same New Year's resolution over and over is they just haven't figured out the tricks. Because if I said to you, the way to form a new habit is to find something that's fun and make it easy. You'd be like, Oh, yawn, that's nothing new, but there's good research behind why that works and not self-control or not feeling guilty and that accountability with friends. If I had somebody I was accountable to, I'd just get pissed at them. At the end, they kept telling me to do something I didn't want to do. There was a study tracking people's cell phones and figuring out how far they traveled to a paid fitness center. They analyzed hundreds of thousands of cell phones, and what they found is that people who traveled 5.1 Miles to a fitness center went on average once a month. People who traveled 3.6 Miles to have paid fitness center to a gym went five times a month. So if you can integrate going to the gym with your job, going to work with going to the store, if you can find a gym close to home, then you will have removed a lot of the friction. You'll have made it easier and you'll be more likely to go. It's just not the way we think about it. We think we go to the gym when we commit to it and force ourselves. But there are easier ways and that is just make it close. Make it convenient.

Zakiya: So now that we know what it takes to make a habit: repetition, reward, and context. Even if you provide all those elements, are there some habits that are just easier than others?

Dr. Wendy Wood: Some habits are just more complicated than others, so going to the gym is much more complicated than switching out coke for water. And because it's more complicated, has numbers of steps, There's more effort involved. It'll just take longer things that are more complicated. Just take longer to learn.

Titi: So it's not 21 days like we already discovered, but how long does it take to form a habit?

Dr. Wendy Wood: Well, you know that you've formed a habit when you're doing the thing automatically. It's like driving a car, right? So you get in the car, you drive somewhere and you think, Oh my God, how did I get here? I know I was paying attention to what happened on the road because I'm here, but I was thinking about something else. That's typical of habits. You can do them while you're thinking about other things. They just sort of run off automatically. And if you can practice, repeat the behavior often enough so that it becomes just sort of like making coffee in the morning. It's just something you do. Sometimes you think about it while you're doing it, but most of the time you don't have to. And that's when you know that it's a have a kind of recedes from consciousness, you're not making those decisions anymore.

Zakiya: I think that was really interesting to me is that former heavies is not really high level brain work. . When Dr. Wood basically likened it to training a dog, I was like, Wow, this makes me really sad about my previous attempts to form new habits, but it's really a simple equation. And after a while, your brain will take over if you keep giving it that repetitive behavior and that additional context and you reduce that friction and you just stick at it. You need a little stick to

itiveness, then you can form a habit that's really wild to me. Ding, ding, ding, ding, ding, ding. It's time, for one thing.

Titi: What's your one thing, Z?

Zakiya: Well, my internet scouring has taken me into another corner of Twitter that I didn't really know about, but I am really enjoying it there. I pulled up a chair and it's been exciting. I've been in geology and fossil. Twitter. OK.

Titi: how did you even get there?

Zakiya: I don't know

Titi: we'll talk about it later.

Zakiya: Anyway. Two feeds that I'm really enjoying are Dr. Phoebe Cohen. That's @PhoebeFossil and Dr. Katie Strength. And that's @PalaeoKatie. And they have been sharing all of this fossil knowledge that I just did not know about. I think somebody of Fossil Twitter shared a link to an article about a crab that was found and it has eyes. But the eyes are not on stalks. The eyes are big . So they think this crab might have been Swimming kind of predator crab, not a crab that crawls along the ocean floor like we think about. I mean, it's just is so much to learn. And the brain isn't fossilized. A lot of times the brain is fossilized, so they can look at all this stuff. It is, I'm telling you, you've got to get over there.

Titi: Fascinating. My one thing this week is an Instagram page that I have a following for a while now, and I'm surprised I haven't brought it up in my one thing yet. But it's black girls in Trader Joe's, and I love this Instagram page because they show all the new items at Trader Joe's. It's a really great community. It's so much fun. I love reading the comments of people saying different things they've tried from Trader Joe's, some of their staples that you must try If you've never been to Trader Joe's. And they post really delicious looking food and the vibes are just right, and it always makes me really excited for my next trip to Trader Joe's. So that's a black girls in Trader Joe's on Instagram, and I believe they have a Facebook community, too. Mm. Our credits this week are being read by one of our ogy listeners, Alexandra.

Alexandra: That's it for Lab 049. Call Dope Labs at 202-567-7028 and tell Titi and Zakiya what you thought or give them an idea for a lab they should do this semester. Titi and Zakiya really love hearing from you. That's 202-567-7028. And don't forget, there's so much more for you to dig into on the website. There will be a cheat sheet for today's lab, additional links and resources in the show notes. Plus, you can sign up for the newsletter. Check it out at Dope Labs podcast.com! Special thanks to today's guest expert, Dr. Wendy Wood. Find Dr. Wood on Twitter and Instagram @profwendywood. And you can find Dope Labs on Twitter and Instagram @Dopelabspodcast. Titi is on twitter @dr_tsho and you can find Zakiya @zsaidso. Dope Labs is a Spotify original production from MegaOhm Media Group. Producers are Jenny Radelet Mast and Lydia Smith of Wave Runner Studios. Editing and sound designed by Rob Smierciak. Mixing by Hannis Brown. Original music composed and produced by Taka

Yasuzawa and Alex Sugiura. From Spotify our executive producer is Gina Delvac and creative producers is Candace Manriquez Wrenn. Special thanks to Shirley Ramos, Yasmeen Afifi, Kimu Elenia, Teal Kratky and Brian Marquis. Executive producers from MegaOhm media group, are Titi Shodiya and Zakiya Whatley.

Zakiya: Do you remember when I was doing that thing and I was saying I am a cyclist when I wanted to get on my bike more?

Titi: Yes, I do remember.

Zakiya: This is what a cyclist would do. I changed my whole personality, not personality, but it worked.

Titi: She was really out here. I remember when I called you on Facetime I still have the screen shots of you with your bike, put an oil on the chain. What is going on over there? This is a real biker.

Titi: The link will be in the show notes, so make sure you check it out there. Our credits this week are being read by one of our listeners, Alexandra.