

# From Atomic Habits to the Watchful Eyes Effect: A Research-Informed Day in the Life of an Assistant Principal

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|                   |                     |                    |
|-------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| 7.15am            | Arrive              |                    |
| 8.15am - 8.30am   | Morning Duty        |                    |
| 8.30am - 9.00am   | Free (30 mins)      | Academic Mentoring |
| 9.00am - 10.00am  | Discipline Response |                    |
| 10.30am - 11.30am | Teaching – Year 11  |                    |
| 11.30am - 12.30pm | Teaching – Year 11  |                    |
| 12.30pm - 1.00pm  | Lunchtime Duty      |                    |
| 1.00pm - 2.00pm   | Free (60 mins)      | Learning Walk      |
| 2.00pm - 3.00pm   | Teaching – Year 10  |                    |
| 3.15pm - 4.30pm   | SLT Meeting         |                    |

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## Papers

*Impact of a Simple Signage Intervention Against Bicycle Theft*, by Daniel Nettle, Kenneth Knott and Melissa Bateson

*Implementation Intentions: Strong Effects of Simple Plans*, by Peter Gollwitzer

*The Cost of Interrupted Work: More Speed and Stress*, by Gloria Mark, Daniela Gudith and Ulrich Klocke

*The Negativity Bias in Affective Picture Processing*, by Joseph Hilgard et al.

*Why Do Dominant Personalities Attain Influence in Face-to-Face Groups?*, by Cameron Anderson and Gavin Kilduff

## Books

*Atomic Habits*, by James Clear

*Creating the Schools Our Children Need*, by Dylan Wiliam

*Help*, by Oliver Burkeman

*Messy*, by Tim Harford

*The Antidote*, by Oliver Burkeman

*The Art of Thinking Clearly*, by Ralf Dobelli

*The Hidden Lives of Learners*, by Graham Nuthall

*The Teacher Gap*, by Rebecca Allen and Sam Sims

*What Every Teacher Needs to Know About Psychology*, by David Didau and Nick Rose

# Arrive

7.15am

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## The benefits of uninterrupted time

Surprisingly our results show that interrupted work is performed faster. We offer an interpretation. When people are constantly interrupted, they develop a mode of working faster (and writing less) to compensate for the time they know they will lose by being interrupted. Yet working faster with interruptions has its cost: people in the interrupted conditions experienced a higher workload, more stress, higher frustration, more time pressure, and effort. So interrupted work may be done faster, but at a price.

*The Cost of Interrupted Work: More Speed and Stress*, by Gloria Mark, Daniela Gudith and Ulrich Klocke

# Morning Duty

8.15am - 8.45am

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The importance of visibility

The importance of routine

The importance of being 'on the ground'

The simple intervention of displaying signs featuring images of watching eyes and a verbal message about being watched was associated with a large reduction of bicycle thefts at the experimental locations, reducing them from 39 in the year before the intervention compared to 15 in the year after. Previous studies of the watching eyes effect in real-world settings have focussed on small acts of generosity [19], [20], or relatively minor infringements of social norms such as putting money in an honesty box, littering or disposing of garbage incorrectly [21]–[23]. We were thus surprised to find an apparent effect on the much more serious, and presumably motivationally different, social norm violation of bicycle theft.

*Impact of a Simple Signage Intervention Against Bicycle Theft*, by Daniel Nettle, Kenneth Knott and Melissa Bateson

If I miss one day, I try to get back into it as quickly as possible. Missing one workout happens, but I'm not going to miss two in a row. Maybe I'll eat an entire pizza, but I'll follow it up with a healthy meal. I can't be perfect, but I can avoid a second lapse. As soon as one streak ends, I get started on the next one.

The first mistake is never the one that ruins you. It is the spiral of repeated mistakes that follows. Missing once is an accident. Missing twice is the start of a new habit.

*Atomic Habits*, by James Clear

# Academic Mentoring

8.30am - 9.00am

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The importance of implementation intentions

The difficulty of goal setting

Goals or resolutions stand a better chance of being realized when they are furnished with implementation intentions that link anticipated suitable opportunities to intended goal-directed behaviors. Implementation intentions delegate the control of goal-directed behaviors to specified anticipated environmental stimuli. This deliberate self-regulatory strategy makes use of the automatic control of action. As numerous experiments demonstrate, such strategically obtained automaticity helps people to effectively meet their goals in the face of problems with initiating goal-directed actions, tempting distractions, bad habits, and competing goals. Implementation intentions, however, need to be based on strong goal intentions. As well, certain types of implementation intentions work better than others, and people need to be committed to their implementation intentions.

*Implementation Intentions: Strong Effects of Simple Plans*, by Peter Gollwitzer

During his years in the corporate world, Kayes had been troubled to watch goalsetting achieve the status of religious dogma among his colleagues. The situation hasn't changed much today. The hallmark of a visionary leader, it is widely held, is the willingness to set big, audacious goals for his or her organisation, and then to focus every resource on achieving them. Individual employees, meanwhile, are encouraged, and sometimes obliged, to define their own personal work objectives, frequently in the form of 'SMART' goals. (The acronym stands for 'specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and time-bounded'.) Numerous self-help books advocate ambitious and highly specific goals as the master key to a successful and satisfying life: 'By this time next year, I will be married to the woman of my dreams/sitting on the balcony of my beach house/earning £10,000 per month!' One of the practice's most passionate evangelists, Brian Tracy, in his book *Goals! How to Get Everything You Want – Faster Than You Ever Thought Possible*, insists that 'Living without clear goals is like driving in a thick fog . . . Clear goals enable you to step on the accelerator of your own life, and race ahead rapidly.'

*The Antidote*, by Oliver Burkeman



# Discipline Response

9.00am - 10.00am

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The power of social norms

The significance of peer relationships

The dangers of fundamental attribution error

As social animals, humans are highly sensitive to the unspoken rules – the social norms – which govern social interaction and group membership. Schools have long attempted to foster pro-social norms through school rules, and the ethos and values they promote, but there may be some benefits to applying these ideas more explicitly to classroom behaviour.

Students develop beliefs about the social norms of behaviour in the classroom through observing their peers (especially peers who enjoy popularity or approval amongst other students). **Students who often observe other students disrupting lessons will assume that such behaviour is socially normal and acceptable.** They may form negative attributions related to the teacher or the subject based on these negative social norms, which act to reinforce the disruptive behaviour in future lessons.

*What Every Teacher Needs to Know About Psychology*, by David Didau and Nick Rose

First, there is the public world that the teacher sees and manages. It is the only world that most of us see when we go into a classroom. In this world, the students (mostly) do what the teacher wants them to do, by following the public rules and customs of the classroom. This is the world structured by the learning activities and routines the teacher designs and manages.

Second, there is the semiprivate world of ongoing peer relationships. This is the world in which students establish and maintain their social roles and status. It has its own rules and customs, and students are acutely aware of them as they participate in the public world of the teacher. **Transgressing peer customs may have worse consequences than transgressing the teacher's rules and customs.** This peer-relationship world flows over into out-of-class activities, where clique formation goes on uncontrolled, and where adults do not usually see the teasing and the bullying.

*The Hidden Lives of Learners*, by Graham Nuthall

In conclusion: as much as we are fascinated by the spectacle of life, the people on stage are not perfect, self-governed individuals. Instead they tumble from situation to situation. If you want to understand the current play – really understand it – then forget about the performers. **Pay close attention to the dance of influences to which the actors are subjected.**

*The Art of Thinking Clearly*, by Ralf Dobelli

# Lunchtime Duty

12.30pm - 1.00pm

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The dangers of negativity bias

The importance of 'little choices'

The Negativity Bias is the psychological phenomenon that, simply put, “bad is stronger than good” (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Finkenauer, & Vohs, 2001). That is, **negative events tend to have larger and longer-lasting effects than do positive events of equal magnitude**, an effect thought to reflect an evolutionary adaptation to the relatively greater relevance of threat compared to reward (see Cacioppo, Gardner, & Berntson, 1999). Whereas an insufficient response to positive information could lead to regrets over missed opportunities, an insufficient response to negative information could lead to injury or death. The negativity bias appears pervasive, as evidence has been found in a number of domains.

*The Negativity Bias in Affective Picture Processing*, by Joseph Hilgard et al.

We are limited by where our habits lead us. This is why mastering the decisive moments throughout your day is so important. Each day is made up of many moments, but it is really a few habitual choices that determine the path you take. These little choices stack up, each one setting the trajectory for how you spend the next chunk of time.

*Atomic Habits*, by James Clear

# Learning Walk

1.00pm – 2.00pm

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The problematic nature of judging teacher quality

The influence of situational factors

Recognise your own fallibility in making judgments about other teachers. We pointed out in Chapter 4 that headteachers do know quite a lot about the quality of their own teachers, but they acquire this through slow accumulation of soft evidence. We now know that our capacity to judge high quality teaching in a lesson observation is rather limited and is affected by classroom pupil composition.<sup>149</sup> We also know that pupil test scores do not cleanly capture teacher quality.<sup>150</sup> Do not place too much weight on any single measure of a teacher's performance.

*The Teacher Gap*, by Rebecca Allen and Sam Sims

1. **Teacher performance is variable.** Good teachers have bad days, and bad teachers have good days.
2. **Context matters.** The same teacher will appear to be a better teacher when teaching a class of highly motivated, well-prepared students from affluent homes. It is very hard, if not impossible, to distinguish between motivated students being badly taught and less motivated students being well taught.
3. **Performance is not learning.** Research on human memory shows that the more that students struggle in the lesson, the more they are likely to remember in the long-term. What looks like a very effective, clear lesson might result in no long-term learning, while one that looks confusing may be highly effective.

*Creating the Schools Our Children Need*, by Dylan Wiliam



# SLT Meeting

3.15pm - 4.30pm

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## The importance of listening

### The dangers of the Colour of the Bike Shed Problem

### The dangers of group think

However, our findings in Study 2 also suggest a potential byproduct of the link between perceptions of competence and influence: **More assertive individuals might sometimes gain influence above and beyond what their actual competence warrants, and skilled members who are low in trait dominance might be unjustifiably ignored.** Such a dynamic would likely hamper group productivity and performance, as it would fail to leverage the group's collective competences to the fullest. In short, although groups strive to construct functional hierarchies on the basis of competence, differences in trait dominance might hamper this goal.

*Why Do Dominant Personalities Attain Influence in Face-to-Face Groups?*, by Cameron Anderson and Gavin Kilduff

**When deliberating with a group, then, we should be seeking out people who think differently, who have had different experiences and training, and who look different.** Those people may bring fresh and useful ideas to the table; even if they do not, they'll bring out the best in us – if only by making us feel awkward and forcing us to shape up. That messy, challenging process is one we should embrace.

*Messy*, by Tim Harford

This has come to be known as the Colour of the Bike Shed Phenomenon: the time spent on any item will be in inverse proportion to its cost and importance. **Relentlessly, the trivial squeezes out the non-trivial.** The reactor may suffer a meltdown due to some overlooked technical matter, but never mind: check out the awesome letterhead stationery we spent so long getting right!

Parkinson's point – which also applies to politics and the media, where the focus, frustratingly, is often on the least important things – isn't simply that smaller matters are less intimidating to deal with. It's that when the members of any group are driven partly by personal egotism – as all of us are – their interests conspire, without them realising it, to keep the focus on the inconsequential. Each wants to demonstrate, to the boss or to themselves, that they are taking part, paying attention, making a difference, 'adding value'. But with complex subjects about which they're ignorant, they can't: they risk humiliation. They may also not want to dwell on their specialist

*Help*, by Oliver Burkeman