

## BOOKS

## Authors offer practical advice for flipping 'Switch' for change

BY MATTHEW CROWLEY

So, who's your decider? Is it the logical self, who can bypass Ben & Jerry's, knowing it will ease bathroom-scale visits later? Or is it the emotional self, who says diets can wait, hits the drive-through and orders a hot fudge with extra nuts? Authors Chip and Dan Heath suggest that pattern-altering choices touch off furious fights between these camps and change comes only when you appease both.

In "Switch: How to Change Things When Change is Hard," brothers Chip Heath, a professor at Stanford University's Graduate School of Business and Dan Heath, a senior fellow at Duke University's Center for the Advancement of Social Entrepreneurship, offer real-world stories about achieving workplace change.

In their fast, fun account, the Heaths describe how the warring Elephant (emotion) and its Rider (reason) get stuck. The elephant's inertia comes from laziness and skittishness; if there's no instant

**Well Read**

"Switch: How to Change Things When Change Is Hard" by Chip Heath and Dan Heath, 320 pages, Broadway Business, \$26.

satisfaction, he won't budge.

Analysis paralysis stifles the rider; he goes nowhere while he dithers. But with cooperation, the Heaths say, change can happen.

The Heaths outline three steps toward change — direct the Rider, motivate the Elephant, shape the path — and show them in practice. Changing direction may start with changing attitudes, they suggest. Obsess over the negatives (My kid got a D on his report card!) and you'll miss a chance to accentuate the positives (He also got two As!) Instead of berating a problem pupil's behavior, a teacher focused on how to help him succeed — greeting him at the door,

assigning him work and making sure he understood instructions. The pupil's class-disruptions fell by 80 percent.

Lack of clear direction can cause change resistance, the Heaths say, so they encourage leaders to show the way. Telling someone to be healthier is so vague it's useless, they argue. But telling them to adopt a habit, like buying 1 percent milk instead of whole milk, can help them cut saturated fat and step toward health.

Small procedural tweaks can yield big results, the Heaths say. By having drug-administering nurses wear bright orange "medication vests" a Kaiser South San Francisco Hospital's clinical services director kept other staff members from distracting the nurses from their tasks. During a six-month trial using the vests, medication mistakes fell by 47 percent.

Even when it seems familiar, the Heaths' advice is pleasantly practical. The idea of breaking big journeys into small steps is common, but starting housecleaning by setting a timer for five minutes and starting

in the untidiest room seems novel and effective. (Look, I started!)

Refreshingly, "Switch" aims not at corporate climbers clawing for executive suites, but at regular folks striving to optimize everyday circumstances. The Heaths profile people with limited power and resources who bring change by thinking creatively.

Like anything else, the Heaths say, change will require practice and reinforcement. We may, for example, have to start a habit of not just saying we'll do something, but adding where and when we'll do it (I'll get that extra 1,000 steps with a three-minute lap around the cubicles after lunch.) And we'll have to learn to praise instead of grouse. Congratulate yourself for skipping the ice cream and getting down for some commercial-break pushups during "Project Runway." You've done 19? Great, the Heaths would say, we know you can do one more.

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