

Developing Soft Skills and Personality
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Lecture – 17

Habits: Using the Zeigarnik Effect for Productivity and Personal Growth

Hi! Hello everyone. Welcome back to NPTEL MOOCs course on Developing Soft Skills and Personality. We are on the third week and then we are on the last two lectures of this week's modules and this week particularly I have been focusing on habits and in the last lecture I introduce a new term and then will continue with this Zeigarnik effect. But then let us try to look at this effect and see how we can use this for productivity in personal growth.

This is module-5 and totally this is going to be the 17th lecture you been watching. I hope you are enjoying watching this lectures and as usual I would like to begin with the quick highlight of what I did in the last lecture. In case you have forgotten you can just take a quick recapture of what we did in the previous one.

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Highlights

Highlights of the Last Lecture

Why is that some are able to change their habits in a lightning second and others are not able to do in ages?
The answer lies in . . .
Their level of self-awareness; correct perceptions of reality, and using Dopamine in a constructive manner.
It plays a crucial role in forming addictive habits.

Bad habits are usually formed in those circumstances where it is easy to seek pleasure by which you are also able to avoid painful or disagreeable experiences—at least for that time being!
The Zeigarnik Effect highlights a compulsive Need to Complete.

Emotional break-ups leave lots of incomplete tasks, hence, the dissonance.

New goals: keeping fit or trying creative writing. This will release a new set of Dopamine every time a goal is achieved.

Reminding of the bad things the other person did for you will help minimise the dopamine craving for the lost idyllic times and euphoric moments!

The most important question that I asked in the last lecture is why is that some are able to change their habits in a lightening second and others are not able to do in ages, why even if you want to take lot of efforts you are not able to change some of the habits and then somebody else is changing it so quickly. And I said that the answer lies actually in

the way dopamine is functioning and the way we are utilizing it to make or more ourselves using good or bad habits. Now apart from that some people are able to change quickly it is because that they have increase the level of self awareness, we started the introductory lecture with aspects of self awareness and then if you have gone through that you are already on the way of heightening yourself awareness. Then we also talked about perceptions, about correct perceptions - perceptions of reality also make you access what is the good habit and what is the bad habit. And last but not the least; you should be able to use dopamine in a very constructive manner because dopamine plays a very crucial role in forming addictive habits.

Now, bad habits are usually formed in those circumstances where it is easy to seek pleasure by which you are also able to avoid painful or disagreeable experiences, at least for the time being. This means on the one hand you are able to seek very nice activities that give you instantaneous pleasure and the same time you are able to avoid something you think is disagreeable. Take for example, just not seeing somebody or not trying to do an activity, the other thing you do you just go and then join a party enjoy your party for sometimes it is a birthday party and then you just freak out and your mind is completely out of the tension that is involved in complying thing that disagreeable activity which you do not want to do at that time.

And then I talked about this Zeigarnik effect which actually highlights a compulsive need to complete its in fact, is called as the motivation molecule that is responsible for our brain, to actually secret this which is responsible for giving a as his pleasure either in terms of rewarding or not giving us in terms of punishing us.

Now, the thing about this dopamine is it actually does not know whether you are using a good habit or bad habit to induce it. Now I then said that we can use this psychological understanding to look at why we are not able to come out of emotional break ups, because any emotional relationship that you have involved in it actually associates you with lot of activities which are planned and lot of activities which have started, but when there is a break up suddenly, so it leaves one with lot of incomplete task. Hence the disharmony or the dissonance the person feels. Now how you can conquer it? Again going by the dopamine way, I suggested that you form new goals. Particularly like if you develop obesity during the time try to keep fit or try something its completely like creative writing, this will release a new set of dopamine every time a goal is achieved

and then you will feel that you are gaining more and more pleasure and slowly you will come out of the negative thinking that you associated with emotional break ups and thanks to this Zeigarnik effect, thoughts were coming and including in your brain even if you wanted to focus on other things because you left it incomplete.

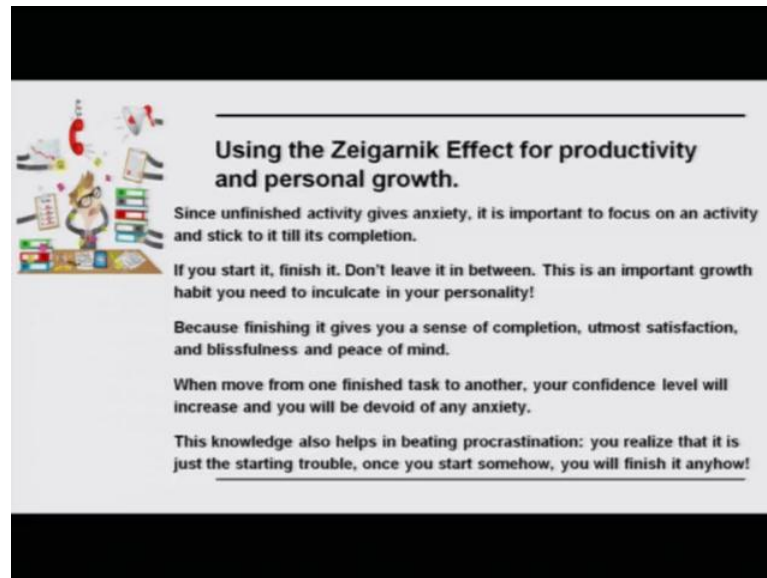
Now, the other thing I said is any remnants, I said that you just completely burn it or bury it or you keep away from that, places that you hang out together you just do not go to the place completely come out of it immerse yourself in new activities, get new dopamine benefits and then after time you will realize that you have actually come through. The other interesting thing that I set just as a passing, but I didn't spend more time in the previous lecture is said reminding of the bad things the other person did for you. Now usually when emotional break up is happened, initially there is some kind of detunes some kind of grief, but after sometime what happens the brain will always go back and remember the most pleasurable activities that happen during the time, it always wants to go back to that idyllic or euphoric moments the very glorious past in which both of you were involved. But the other thing that it does is it goes there and then leaves you with the sense of incompleteness and gives you withdrawal symptoms, makes you alienate from the immediately surrounding society and gives you lot of other chromatic feelings like depression and even it can take you to suicidal tendencies.

To counter it, it is suggested that do not only focus only on the good things the other person did because dopamine is again and again making your brain tubes seek that kind of pleasure and then you will you have associated that pleasure only with that particular person. So, you get it only when you are able to link with other person and person is no more or the person is not there in your vicinity or you cannot contact the person again for obvious reasons. So, that is again going to give you negative thinking and develop bad habits. Now to counter it is suggested that think of the bad things sometimes the person acted very crummy, jerky got into your nerves, even when the relationship was going on you wondered whether you should hang out this person forever there are so many breaking points. So, many times you thought that rather you have made wrong decision and then the other person literally got into your nerves.

Now think of those times, the times when you thought that may be this is not the right person now that is going to help you to minimize the dopamine craving that goes and then seeks that idyllic moment, the euphoric moment. So, this thinking of the bad things

that happened which generally memory tries to avoid again because of the dopamine factor, but that if you can think of that that will also help you to use dopamine, but in a different manner and then it will make you strengthen yourself and it will make you come out of it gradually and in sooner or later completely and then start a fresh chapter in your life.

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Using the Zeigarnik Effect for productivity and personal growth.

Since unfinished activity gives anxiety, it is important to focus on an activity and stick to it till its completion.

If you start it, finish it. Don't leave it in between. This is an important growth habit you need to inculcate in your personality!

Because finishing it gives you a sense of completion, utmost satisfaction, and blissfulness and peace of mind.

When move from one finished task to another, your confidence level will increase and you will be devoid of any anxiety.

This knowledge also helps in beating procrastination: you realize that it is just the starting trouble, once you start somehow, you will finish it anyhow!

Now, let us look at the same Zeigarnik effect that I talk to you, that includes your thoughts whenever you come to think of some activity that you left incomplete. Now how we can use that effect for productivity and personal growth? Now since unfinished activities gives anxiety according to the effect, it is important to focus on an activity and stick to it till it is completed, think about this again. If you lead something unfinished, so that time it looks like OK, that is fine, it can be completed later and then you go and start something else, but then your mind is already heavy with that task that is not yet completed and then it is not letting you focus on another activity and your mind goes back and reminds you what about that you left that incomplete and then you are spending most of your time on this, I will not let you focus on this until you go back and complete that.

So, how you can make yourself a very highly protective person and use this effect for personal growth. So, one guiding principal that you can have in terms of that is - think that if you start a work, finish it. So, if you start it finish it, any small thing - reading a

book, even it can be let say you wanted to listen to a song for 10 minutes do not leave it incomplete, finish it. Particularly with regard to any kind of job that is assigned to you, either personal level, professional level do not leave it in between if you start it finish it, this is an important growth habit you need to inculcate in your personality.

Keep telling you again and again if I start it I finish it, come (Refer Time: 10:40) me whatever obstacles, whatever come and stand in between I will surmount all the difficulties, but I will finish it, I will perceive here, I will be there till the end, I will stick to it that it is completed. Because finishing it gives you a sense of completion and that sense of completion give you utmost satisfaction and blissfulness and peace of mind. One thing that I try to impinge on your mind throughout this course is that its utmost important that you have your peace of mind which is much more important than any kind of pleasure seeking any kind of happiness, but that you will get when you try to have self actualization. That you will get when you are able to get it to your need achievement, when you operate at a high level of self awareness, but that will also get when you are able to complete a task and that will give you the blissful peace of mind which is very much needed. Live a life without regret, but leave also your life that gives you complete peace.

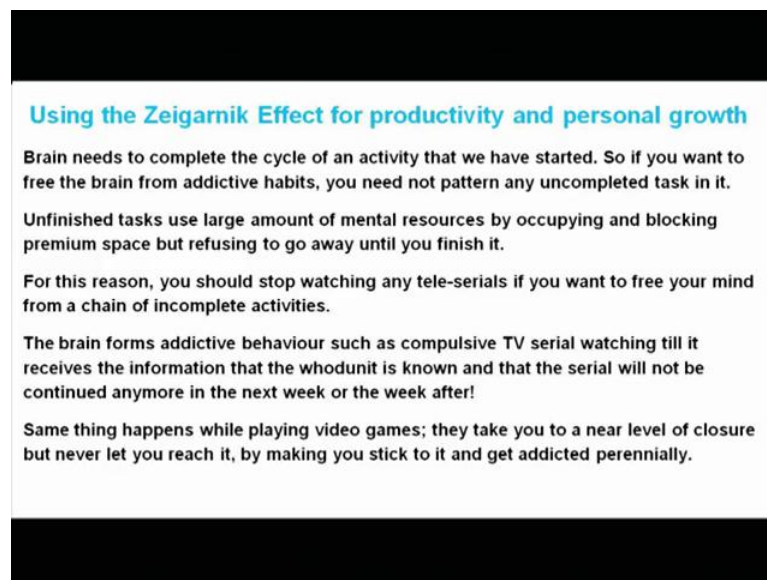
Now, when you move from one finished task to another your confidence level will increase and you will be divide of any anxiety. So, initially if you leave something unfinished incomplete. So, the thoughts will keep haunting you and then it will not let you develop your confidence and it will keep on enhancing your low self esteem, it will undermine you and it takes only keep you more and more at anxious state, but then understanding his part that when you leave from one finished task to another. So, that is going to build up your personality that is going to make to feel that I stop something I will finished it, you will exude lot of confidence and people will run after you because they think that this is the person whom I should approach because if I give this task it will be completed.

Now this knowledge in you also helps in beating procrastination, procrastination is one of the worst bad habits one can develop and this thinking alone and this realization and internalization can help you in beating procrastination, how? You realize that it is just the starting trouble, any work that you keep postponing that you keep avoiding doing it understand it is just the starting trouble, you just start it some over other and then

because you want the euphoric thing that dopamine will give you once you complete it and because you know that this Zeigarnik effect is not going to let you free unless you complete it you will finish it anyhow. So, you start it somehow and then you will finish it anyhow and that thinking, that it is all it needs to big procrastination is starting it somehow.

Do not want to for walking it is just getting up your bed and taking the first step, the rest will happen. You do not like to start writing the assignment; do not want to submit it is just writing the first few lines. In fact, even you can say I will just work only for 10 minutes you set your alarm and then just work only for 10 minutes on that activity and then after 10 minutes you will feel that you are already charged, already warmed up because now the Zeigarnik effect is going to be active and then with the combination with dopamine you know that now you cannot live it incomplete you need to continue with that. So, start and then you finish it and keep that is a kind of golden key line just to remember in terms of developing a good habit, especially if you want to develop your productivity and personal growth.

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Using the Zeigarnik Effect for productivity and personal growth

- Brain needs to complete the cycle of an activity that we have started. So if you want to free the brain from addictive habits, you need not pattern any uncompleted task in it.
- Unfinished tasks use large amount of mental resources by occupying and blocking premium space but refusing to go away until you finish it.
- For this reason, you should stop watching any tele-serials if you want to free your mind from a chain of incomplete activities.
- The brain forms addictive behaviour such as compulsive TV serial watching till it receives the information that the whodunit is known and that the serial will not be continued anymore in the next week or the week after!
- Same thing happens while playing video games; they take you to a near level of closure but never let you reach it, by making you stick to it and get addicted perennially.

Now, there are certain other aspects which you need to keep in your mind with regard to brain and that will also help you to increase your level of productivity. Now brain mix to complete the cycle of an activity that we have started, so if you want to free the brain from addictive habits you need not pattern any uncompleted or incomplete task in it,

what does it mean? Now brain has to get a feeling that one activity cycle the loop is completed or fulfilled once we started. So, if you want to actually free the brain from addictive habits. So, you should not pattern that with any activities that remain incomplete. This again means unfinished task huge large amount of mental resources by occupying and blocking the premium space, but refusing to go away until you finish it, so the unfinished activities. So, they are just like cancer spreading and occupying the premium space in your brain and then unless you just try to shut them out; unless you try to remove them from your mind. So, they are not going to let you occupy that importance space for using other creative and interesting and challenging activities for this reason alone you should stop watching any tele serials if you want to free your mind from a chain of incomplete activities.

Why should not you watch tele serials? Because the brain forms addicting behaviour such as compulsive TV serial watching till it receives the information that the who done it, what is happening next, who is the murderer, why did it happen, will the person get back the memory or not is the person going to die or not now all these things will be shown in the next day, next week. So, the brain needs to receive the information that it is known it is complete that the serial will not be continued anymore in the next week or the week after till it needs to know that it will keep on watching it even if it shown for years ages and till it wants to know that it is completed the brain is getting addictive to watching it. So, if you want to free up lot of space in your brain for more activities that will help you to develop high level of productivity and personal growth stop watching any serials.

The same thing happens while playing this video games now the video games take you to a near level of closure it you get a feeling that you reach the level and you are going to complete it, but they will never let you reach the final level, then they will never let you to open the last gate and then go and then get the treasure. So, it is always just near in, but not complete enough.

Now, that is the way the games will ensure it will make sure that you stick to it and get addicted to it perennially, a permanent addiction permanent enslaving is caused because of this Zeigarnik effect that can be used positively or negatively and in video games it is used to make you glue to the games. So, that the mind always seeks that I need to complete I need to complete and then it will never let you complete. And then can we

use Zeigarnik effect in a very constructive positive manner? Yes, now if we can use it constructively the Zeigarnik effect can give you the motivation to make you leave from sick bed and complete the task at hand. So, even great artists have always done. So, when a product remains unfinished in completed. So, it is this thinking in the mind that even if I am sick I would have to complete it, I have to finish it. So, that pushes them the makes them even overcome any kind of physical pain and then act and then perform experience the peak performances just because of this activity that is weird into the brain that unless you complete it you are not going to get your peace of mind, you will not get that creative assonants, it will be dissonant.

Now, the simple example is ear worms. So, ear worms or like figuratively refer to songs see you might have experienced like suddenly when you get up and then one song keeps coming in your mind. You do not know how it came may be you just saw some where or heard somewhere on radio or somebody mentioned a word of that song and then it trigger in your mind and then it keeps triggering your mind the entire day and then it is like you keep hearing. So, that is why it is like ear worm it is just inside your ear and then you are not able to do anything out of it unless you give complete time you listen to it fully and then you just attend your mind patently that I am listening and completing it fully just go away its not giving to leave you. So, sometimes the entire day it keeps playing in your ear again and again, somebody started it somebody whistled it on the way, but you got it in your ear. Now this is again a simple example of this Zeigarnik effect where incomplete things will continue to haunt you.

The brain is also immersed in something that does not let you focus on any task at hand because of this effect, but then internalisation of the Zeigarnik effect can give you the much needed intrinsic motivation to achieve or excel in any activity, what do I mean by this? If you can internalised, think and then identify and understand that if only I will start on activity and if I finish it I will not let this Zeigarnik effect act on me it will not keep on making me go back to task which I did not complete it before. So, I will always have time to do new activities and spend more time on creative tasks than to get bought down in something which I dint want to do.

So, whether you like it or not first you finish it and then come out of it, you escape. Now that is the way I want you to internalise that I start it I finish it I not leave anything incomplete otherwise this Zeigarnik effect, it is going to let my memory go back and

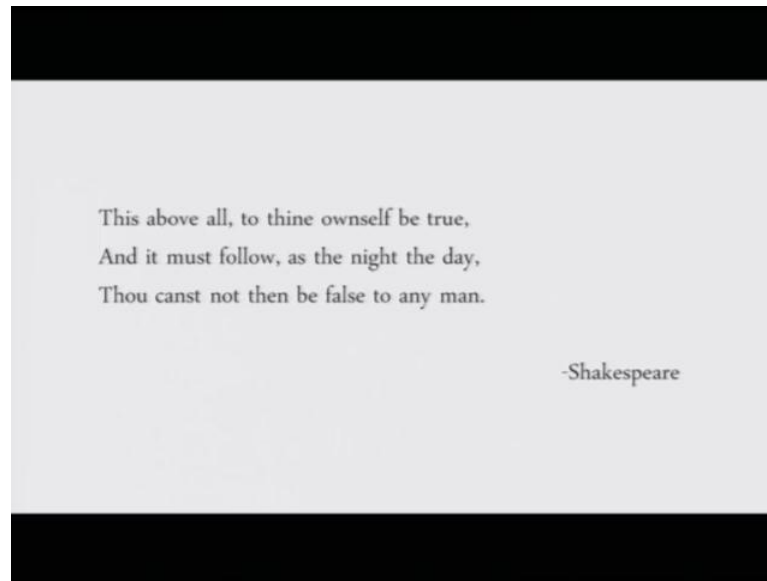
then it is going to include in the most unpleasant time or the significant time that I being giving to you new activity it comes and haunts me. What you should do? You can rewire your brain to seek completions as it takes you to resolution of tension and adds to the feel good factor. So, you just completely try to make your brain understand that if I finish it I will be able to resolve any tension and it also gives you this feel good factor, I completed I feel good about myself and this is what I want not completing. So, it is going to haunt me again and it is not going to allow me to do another task in a better manner. So, let me finish it. So, keep this in mind and this one single quality that since this Zeigarnik effect is there I just want to avoid letting that happened in it my mind. So, in order to counter I will always start a task and finish it I will never leave anything incomplete.

Now even one small thing that I tell you, the email inbox let say that as around 5000 mails in your inbox, if we can delete all mails which are not needed and create folders input which you need it later and create zero in your inbox and if you can see that. So, it is actually making you become more productive and you realise that you are able to check this Zeigarnik effect. Otherwise every time you go to email it is also causing you lot of heaviness, it always leads your feeling that there is something that you left, something may be important is there buried and you forgot to look at it, but there is no time to check that. But then if you can do this mind is completely free and then brain can focus on a new task completely with full figure.

Now, I just want to conclude this lecture with one interesting taught from William Shakespeare that comes in is most famous play Hamlet and this is a actually advise given by a father to a son, Polonius to a son lay or test. But why I am using this for the conclusion in the past two lectures at least I am trying to tell you avoid bad habits form good habits. Now you may ask me what are those good habits what are those bad habits and I have listed some, I have said that these are good habits these are bad habits.

Now I or anybody else is not going to oversee you whether you are going to found them, whether you are going to use them in your daily life, whether you are going to really a change from the above average to excellence using this because you should not think that somebody is there then I will try to form a good habit, but somebody is not there no body is watching I will try to do something wrong and then inculcate a bad habit. So, this is what Shakespeare says.

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He says - This above all, to thine ownself be true. So, many suggestions have been given, lots of pieces of advice have been given, but above all what are as been said to you to thine ownself be true - be true to yourself you do not have to true to somebody else, you do not have to be true to your father, you do not have to be true to your parents, do not have to be true to your boss, you do not have to be true to your spouses, you do not have to be true to your children, you do not have to be true to your neighbour, but just be true to yourself and it must follow as the night a day though (Refer Time: 27:14) not then be false to any man.

If you follow it up each day, every day, regularly that you insist promise to yourself that you will be true to yourself he says that then you will never be false to any man which implies that you will never form any bad habits if you are true to yourself. Keep this thought in mind.

At this point of concluding this lecture there's just one more lecture to complete this week and thank you for watching this video and I wish you that you have a very good day.