

# Habits for self-care

- ▶ Dr. Michael Allan
  - ▶ Cannexus
- ▶ January 28, 2020

▶ I have no conflicts to report

# Overview

- ▶ This presentation is designed to teach you the technology of habits so that you can apply it to any habit.
- ▶ Any habit whether it is useful or not

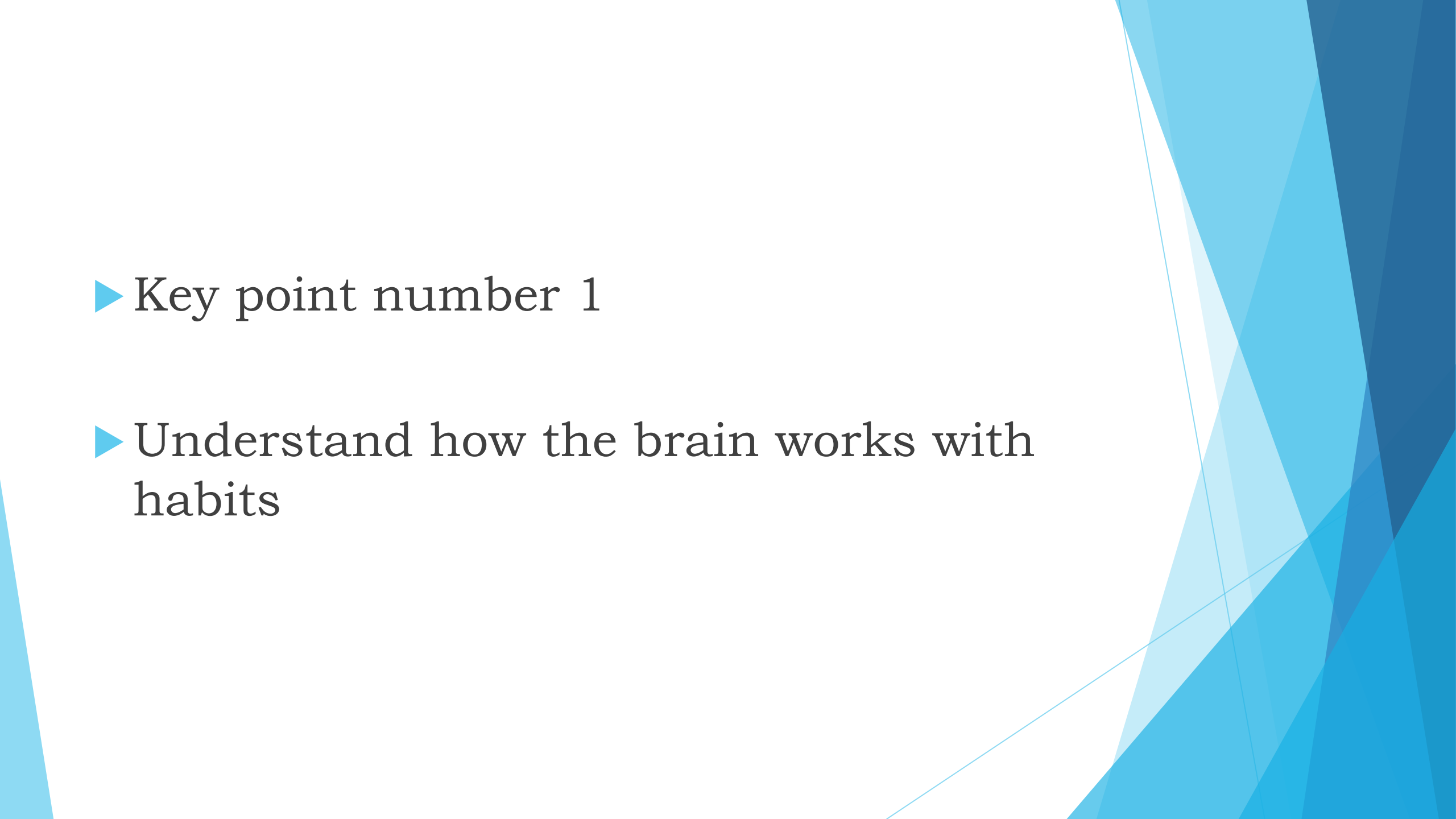
- ▶ I have 60 minutes
- ▶ I will talk for 45 minutes and leave 15 minutes plus the break to answer questions
- ▶ Please hold you questions until the end

The background features abstract, overlapping geometric shapes in various shades of blue, ranging from light sky blue to deep navy blue, creating a modern, layered effect.

## ▶ Agenda

- ▶ How the brain works with habits
- ▶ The key elements to start a habit
  - ▶ Cues
  - ▶ Start small
  - ▶ Reinforce and Repeat

- ▶ So to start, lets be clear: Its not your fault!
- ▶ The problem is with the technology, not with us

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- ▶ Key point number 1
  - ▶ Understand how the brain works with habits

- ▶ The first and perhaps the most important point is that we do not control our habits like we do everyday decisions
- ▶ Habits exist in the below the surface level of the brain and for good reason



- ▶ Our nonconscious self forms habits that we can easily repeat- what is called automatic habits
- ▶ So the most important feature of habits is that they work outside of our conscious awareness
- ▶ They work so efficiently and quietly that we think that we must of consciously decided to do them

▶ Wood 2019


- ▶ The brain is always trying to conserve its energy
- ▶ So, it cannot afford to consciously decide to do a habit as it would waste huge amounts of energy
- ▶ They need to run effortlessly

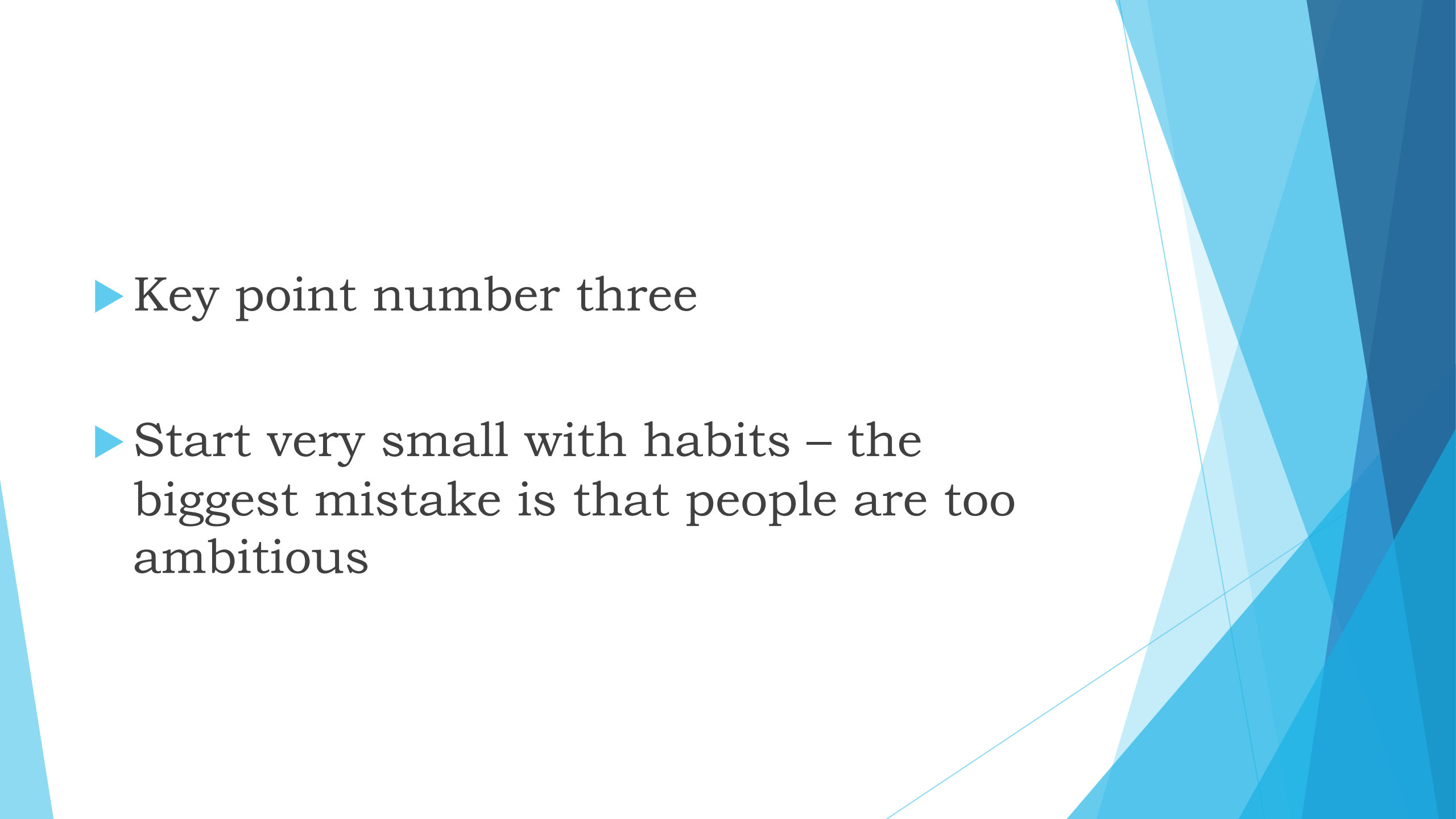
▶ Wood 2019

- ▶ Wood reports a tracking study, asking subjects to report what they were doing with a signal.
- ▶ 60 percent of the time, they were not thinking about what they were doing at that signal, they did:
  - ▶ Daily hygiene 88 percent
  - ▶ Work tasks 55 percent
  - ▶ Exercise 44 percent

- ▶ The goal is to be automatic in your habits no matter how long they take to get there

- ▶ Key point number two
- ▶ Your habits reflect you

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- ▶ Behaviour change is identity change
  - ▶ Your habits shape your identity, your identity shapes your habits
  - ▶ Think of who you want to be to shape your habits
- ▶ Clear 2018

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- ▶ Key point number three
  - ▶ Start very small with habits – the biggest mistake is that people are too ambitious

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- ▶ Pay attention to one behaviour at a time.

- ▶ You already know that New Year resolution lists are useless

- ▶ When you master the technology, then you can add or subtract habits at will

- ▶ Clear 2018

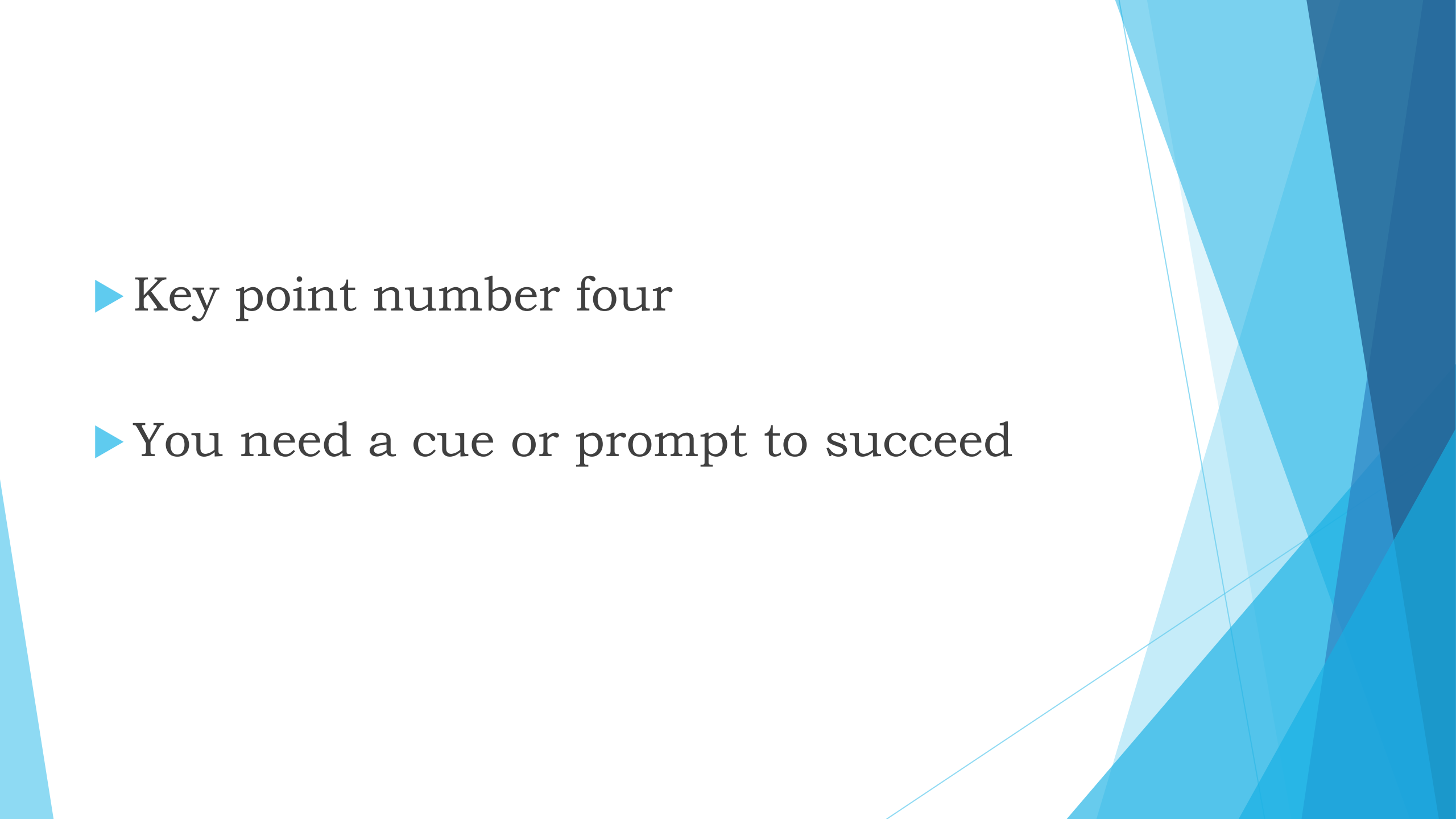


- ▶ Choose a behaviour and make it tiny
  - ▶ Find where it fits in your life
- ▶ The easier it is to do, the more likely that you will repeat it

▶ Fogg 2020

We are limited in what our habits can do. So use the two minute rule – when you start a new habit it should take less than two minutes to do. Once established, this is a very easy way to begin a behaviour, you can scale it up to your goal.

Wood 2019

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- ▶ Key point number four
  - ▶ You need a cue or prompt to succeed

▶ No behaviour happens without a prompt or cue. You don't have a prompt, your levels of motivation and ability don't matter - no prompt - no behaviour.

A prompt, a cue or a context is where the behaviour needs to fit.

▶ Fogg 2020

- ▶ If you want the habit to be important and a big part of your life, make the cue a big deal
- ▶ People who make a very specific concrete plan for where and when they want a habit to happen are much more likely to make it happen

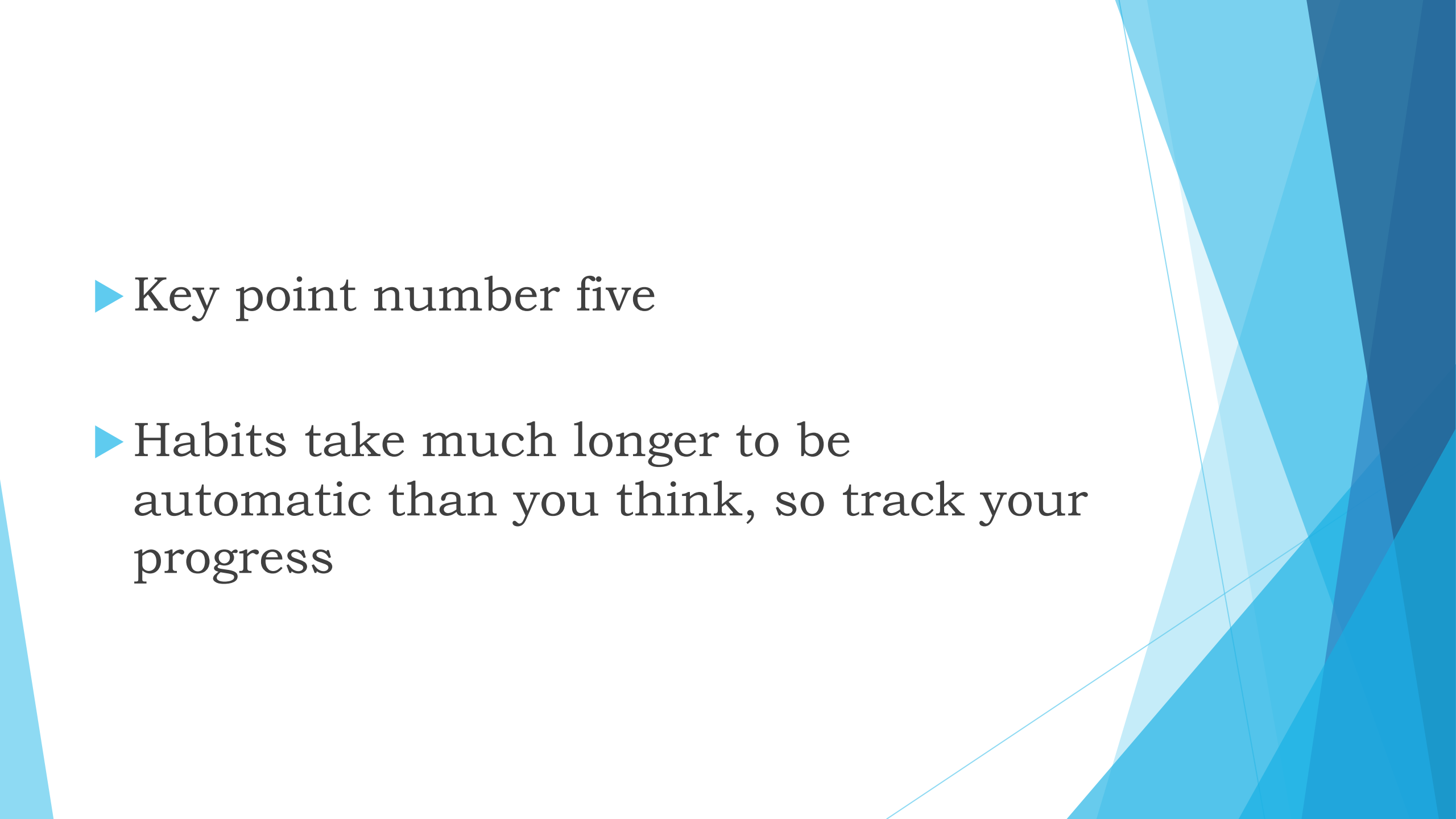
▶ Clear 2019

- ▶ One of the best ways to build a new habit is to identify a current habit you do each day and then stack your new behaviour on top. This is called habit stacking
- ▶ It must fit the cue and the frequency with which you do it

▶ McGonigal 2012

- ▶ Habit - A mental association between the context cue and the response it develops.
- ▶ We repeat an action in that context for a reward

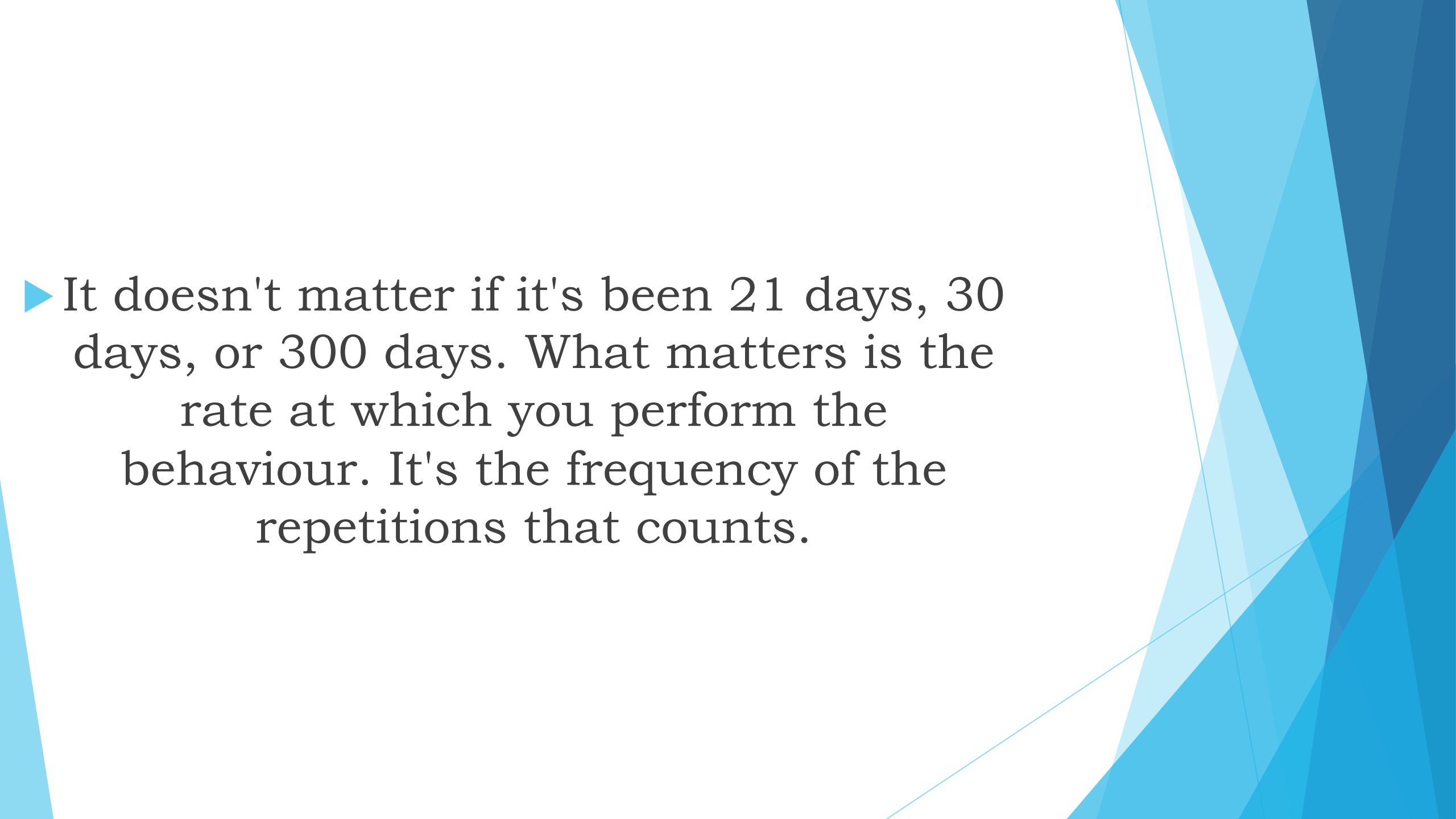
▶ Clear 2018

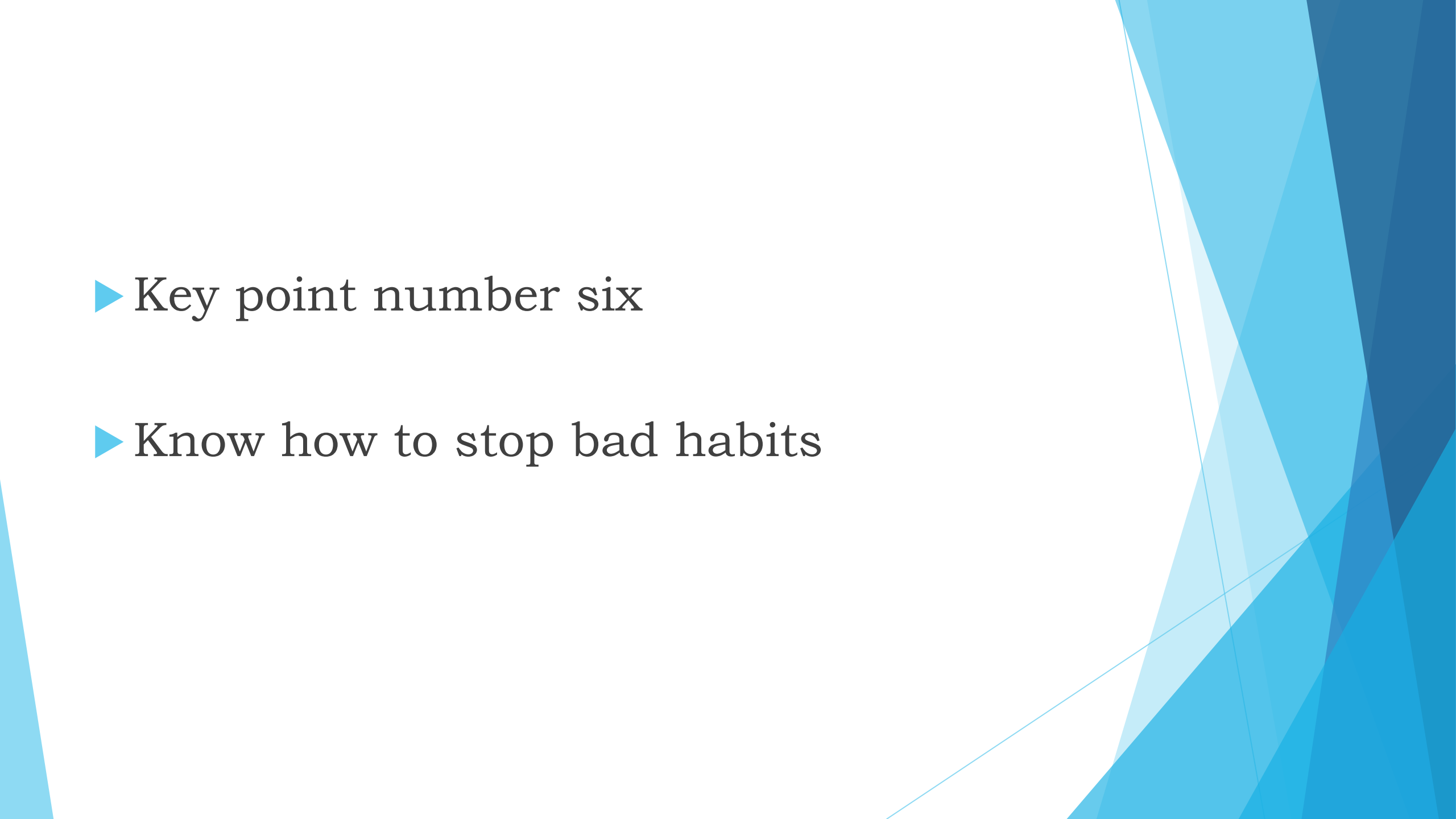
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- ▶ Key point number five
  - ▶ Habits take much longer to be automatic than you think, so track your progress



- ▶ We've all been deceived by publishing myths. If you walked into a bookstore today, you will find titles such as the 20 day plan for this to the 30 day plan for that. This is mythology. None of this is based on scientific evidence.

- ▶ All habits follow the same path, from effortful practice to automatic behaviour
  - ▶ But, how long is that
    - ▶ Eating healthy – 65 days
    - ▶ Healthy drinking - 59 days
      - ▶ Exercise – 91 days
- ▶ The biggest problem is that people stop too soon

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- The background features abstract, overlapping geometric shapes in various shades of blue, ranging from light sky blue to deep navy blue. These shapes are primarily located on the right side of the slide, creating a modern, layered effect.
- ▶ It doesn't matter if it's been 21 days, 30 days, or 300 days. What matters is the rate at which you perform the behaviour. It's the frequency of the repetitions that counts.

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- ▶ Key point number six
  - ▶ Know how to stop bad habits

- ▶ How to break a bad habit. Disrupt it or replace it.
- ▶ Disrupt it by changing the context or cue, and make it impractical to do it.
- ▶ Give the bad habit friction, so it gets much harder to do.

▶ Wood 2019

This will take time, so don't be frustrated, but in the end it will work. You can replace the habit by starting a new habit - this is more effective as it interferes with the old habit occurring.

▶ A further trick with habits is to make it a fun, feel-good activity. Those who reported enjoying the practice of the exercise more often report they stuck it out until it became habitual.

▶ Internal rewards work better

▶ Those who did the habit out of guilt or to please others failed to form a robust habit

▶ Wood 2019

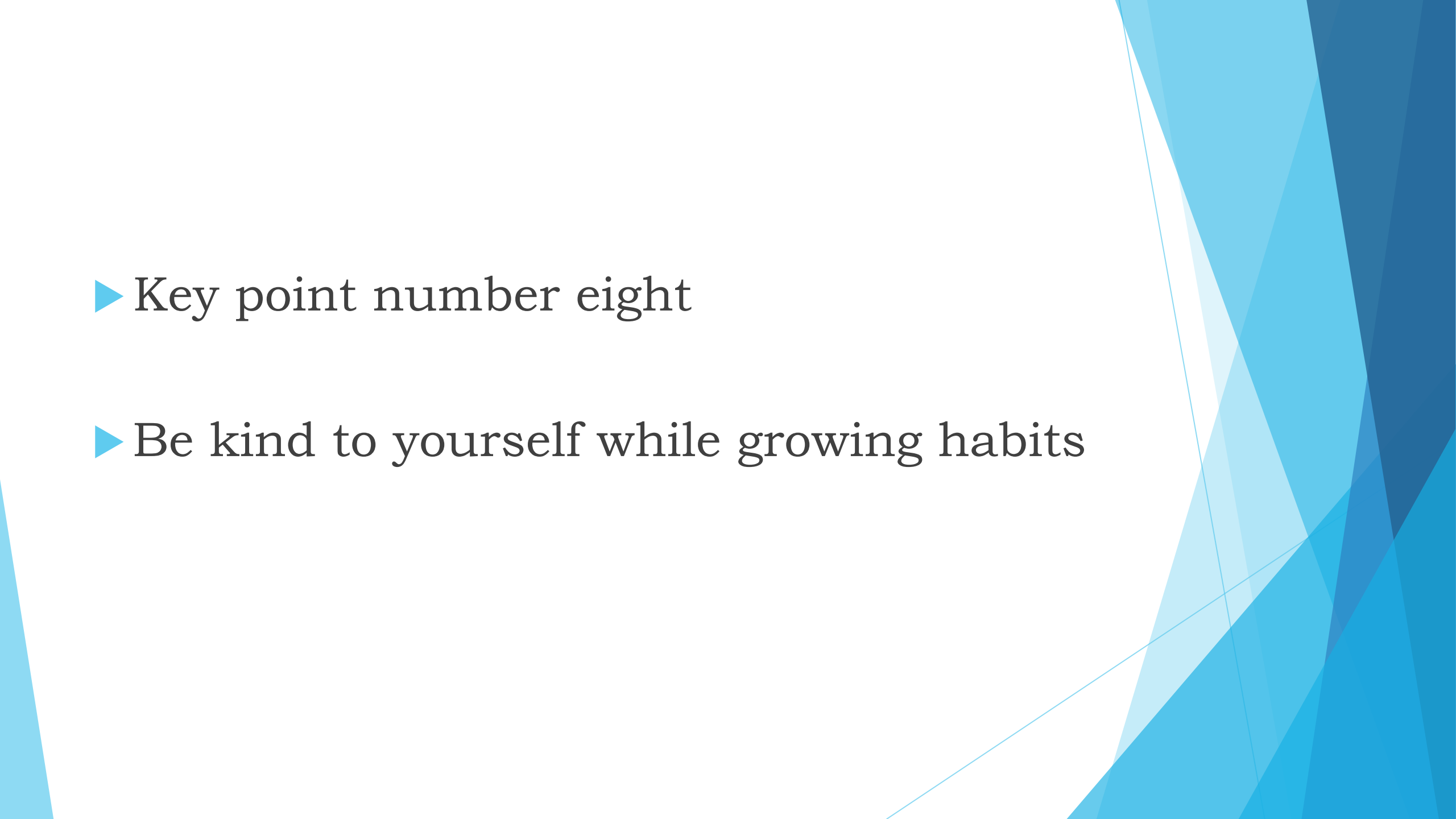
▶ Only by keeping your life as consistent as possible will habits have a chance to grow. You must find a way to reliably and unfailingly cue your new desired habit or it will never take hold


▶ Clear 2018



- ▶ Key point number seven
- ▶ Rewards keep it going

- ▶ Celebrate your tiny successes. Celebration can be your lifeline.
  - ▶ You can use emotion to help cue and reinforce the habit. This means finding a way to enthusiastically celebrate the habit when you've completed it successfully.

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- ▶ Key point number eight
  - ▶ Be kind to yourself while growing habits

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- ▶ Perfection is not possible. The problem is not slipping up, a very human thing to do, but thinking that if you can't do it perfectly then you shouldn't do it all.

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# References

- ▶ Clear, James. Atomic Habits 2018 Avery
- ▶ Duhigg, Charles The Power of Habit 2012 Doubleday Canada
- ▶ Mcgonigal, K. The Willpower Instinct 2012 Avery
- ▶ Fogg, B. J. Tiny Habits 2020 Houghton Mifflin Harcourt
- ▶ Wood, Wendy Good Habits, Bad Habits 2019 Farrar, Strauss and Giroux