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Chapter 4: Building Your Habits, Pages 41/42

Why is the story of the 100 push-ups a great example of a small but cumulative improvement?

My cousin Phil runs Shindo Karate in my home city of Melbourne, Australia. One Christmas, when I was visiting, Phil said he was concerned about his karate students losing focus over the Christmas break, so he had decided to give his students homework to keep them fit. I was intrigued.

The basic concept is that they needed to build up to 100 push-ups every day. Phil gave them some simple rules to follow:

- 1) The first set of push-ups each day must be the maximum number of push-ups you can do
- 2) The first set should be, at a minimum, as many as the first set from the previous day
- 3) By the end of the Christmas break, the goal was to complete all 100 push-ups in one single set

This last part I perceived as daunting, and I could see how it would be quite the achievement if one should make it to that final goal.

Upon returning home to Canada, I decided to incorporate this challenge into my daily routine. I could perceive many benefits to this health regime, and hindsight has confirmed this:

- 1) I slowly built a very healthy daily habit
- 2) I felt challenged every day
- 3) I produced dopamine every morning
- 4) I felt the desire to succeed within myself
- 5) I became physically stronger
- 6) My body became more toned
- 7) My metabolism received a kickstart every day
- 8) Tracking the numbers became a satisfying act in itself
- 9) I felt a boost in my self-confidence

My first set was only ten push-ups, but after a few days, I progressed to twenty. As I became stronger and more toned, I was able to increase my opening set by factors of ten every two to three weeks until I was finally able to achieve the full 100 push-ups in one set. I felt like a great success and still marvel at my own body's ability to do this when I consider my humble beginnings.