

INSPIRING BETTER HABITS:

The Science Behind Making Commitments

On this episode of the [Behavior Change](#) podcast, Greg Stielstra, Senior Director of Behavioral Sciences at Lirio, spoke with [Evelyn Gosnell](#), Managing Director at [Irrational Labs](#). Evelyn discussed a wide range of behavioral science topics, such as why we struggle to keep New Year's resolutions, the power of fresh starts, Ulysses contracts, how incorrect metrics can mislead, and the benefits of the BE bootcamp she leads.

**GUEST****Evelyn Gosnell**

Managing Director at Irrational Labs

**HOST****Greg Stielstra**

(GS), Senior Director of Behavioral Science at Lirio

Episode Takeaways

Greg provided an overview of *Commitment and Consistency Bias*, in which self-perception in the form of making a commitment tends to guide individuals' choices. From that foundation, Evelyn explained how lack of awareness of intent, goals, or future obstacles can impede behavior change progress.

Here are the key takeaways:

- Not following through with New Year's resolutions is most often caused by **present bias**, or a lack of awareness of future benefits when designing interventions for ourselves. The best solution is to design a resolution that doesn't rely on self-control.
- **We're most likely to succeed in an intervention if we increase friction and choose an objective third party to reward positive behavior.** If you're eliminating junk food from your diet, ideally it shouldn't be in the house, but if it is, it should be in an inconvenient place.
- Making commitments around dates like New Year's, the first day of spring, a Monday, etc. can help us succeed with **temporal landmarks**. The longer the temporal landscape is, the harder it is for us to consider all the details that might get in the way.
- **An intention-action gap refers to the difference between what people say they're going to do versus what they actually do.** Since human behavior is so complex, there's no concrete solution to closing the intention-action gap.
- **When considering user intent in product and/or app design, there's a responsibility to align the product or app's functionality and design with the user's goals and motivations.** Users spending time in an app should not act as a proxy for whether the app met their intended goal, or if they enjoyed it.
- Product managers may want users to engage with their app as much as possible, but if users become disillusioned and leave, the product manager has misinterpreted **user intent**.
- **You can't drive behaviors unless you're measuring behaviors.** Product teams should consider long-term metrics equally important to or more important than short-term metrics. Avoid reporting anything and everything you can record. Align metrics with what future actions you want users to take.
- **A Ulysses contract is a commitment device that creates better habits.** Instead of relying on self-control, the commitment is binding.
- **Irrational Labs' Behavioral Economic Bootcamp (BE Bootcamp)** discusses how humans make decisions, sheds light on cognitive biases, and encourages product professionals to consider how behavioral science applies to their work.
- **Irrational Labs offers three versions of its BE Bootcamp** for different interest levels and price points. There's a 10-week bootcamp, a four-week bootcamp, and a two-day intensive introduction.
- In addition to teaching a behavioral science framework, **BE Bootcamp walks product professionals through the necessary steps for making a behavioral diagnosis:** map out an entire product flow, identify the behavioral biases that are at play, and come up with concrete solutions.

Learn More

To listen to the full episode or read the transcript, [download the podcast here](#). And, if you'd like to find out how Lirio can help your organization, contact us for a [strategic consultation](#).