The **Light Phone** keeps you connected to your smartphone, but without all the other distractions that come with it. When anyone calls your normal smartphone number it will be diverted, but removes many of the functions that cause constant distractions.

Environmental interventions can also provide a layer of friction to slow down decisions. When stone speed barriers, called **zebra stripes**, appear to be hovering a foot above the road, it'll slow you down *fast*... even if they really turn out to be just fake 3D bollards painted on the ground.
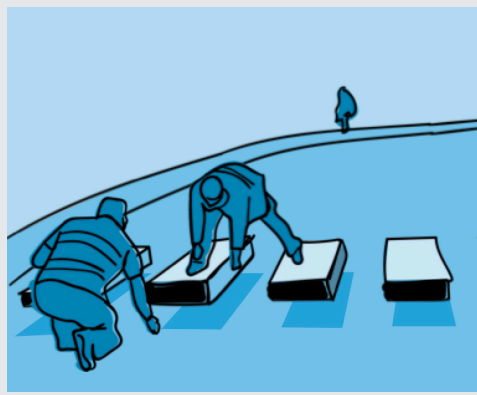
In Kensington, on **Exhibition Road**, curbs were intentionality removed to create "shared space" between cars and pedestrians. This heightens our need to pay attention, since we can no longer rely on autopilot; it's the *absence of the expected* that provides friction, and makes us sit up and take more notice.

A father and son are in a horrible car crash that kills the dad. The son is rushed to the hospital; just as he's about to go under the knife, the surgeon says *"I can't operate, that boy is my son!"*

Some mental models have exceedingly **deeply embedded implicit biases.** Many people – even professional women, who have professional moms – still bend themselves into knots trying to figure out if the kid has two dads or the surgeon is somehow his grandfather. *(Spoiler: Mothers can also be surgeons.)*

The Urban Lab's '**Becoming a Man**' program at the University of Chicago uses cognitive behavioral therapy to help at-risk youth curb impulsive behaviors that otherwise might lead to violence. These techniques to slow down before acting on urges have cut violent-crime arrests in this population by 50%, while also increasing high school graduation rates by nearly 20%.

Google Goggles let users introduce positive friction into email settings in the form of math problems. Sending messages required solving math problems with a countdown clock, which no doubt saved more than one late-night partier from pressing send when their next-morning self would surely regret it.
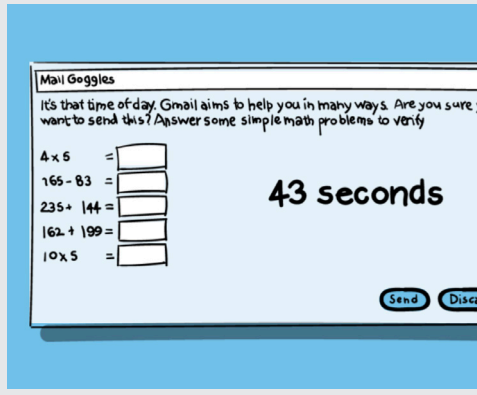
In the 1950s, nearly all symphony orchestra members were men. The **blind audition** – in which performers sat behind a screen and a rug underfoot hid the sound of footfalls – was first introduced in 1952 by the Boston Symphony Orchestra, and has increased the number of female musicians to nearly equivalent levels.

Sometimes positive friction supports self-control by reinforcing mental models that make us *uncomfortable*. None of us like airport **security lines**, but the process supplies an important, almost soothing, sense of order and oversight. In fact, our need for friction might (perversely) make the experience more anxiety-inducing if those measures went away.

TO SUPPORT

SELF-CONTROL
INTERVENE TO SHAKE UP EXISTING BEHAVIORS

THROUGH

STRUGGLING WITH TEMPTATION OR INABILITY TO FOLLOW THROUGH

INDIVIDUALS (OR THE SYSTEMS THEY FUNCTION IN) HAVE EXPLICIT GOALS

IMPLICIT BIASES IMPEDE ONE'S ABILITY TO DO THE RIGHT THING

DESIRE TO EXPLORE NEW KINDS OF "RIGHT" ANSWERS

SUPPORT ACTING ON "CORRECT" BEHAVIORS

INTENTIONALITY

Dampen temptation by ceding control or reducing functionality

Change the environment: disrupt the norm or add "speed bumps"

Impose waiting periods or other intentional pauses

Positive friction helps people from doing things (either willfully or 'cause they just can't help it) that they know they should do, yet don't.

SAVE ME FROM MYSELF

Recognize–and design around– when mental shortcuts rule

Introduce structures that slow down autopilot behaviors or processing modes

Intentionally remove cues to raise awareness or accountability

When our existing mental models hold too much control over what could be, positive friction can break those bonds and open our minds.

QUESTION ASSUMPTIONS

REFLECTING ON WHAT "GOOD" LOOKS LIKE

EXPANSION

MOTIVATE ACTION

Ever need just a little extra shove to build confidence when trying something new? Positive friction can supply the spark that helps people engage.

Make the abstract more concrete

Present a sense of where I stand

Redirect attention to adjacent goals or by introducing novelty

Externalize commitment and accountability

INTENDED TO SUPPORT A SPECIFIC BEHAVIOR

USING NEW CUES TO PROMPT ACTION

DEPRIORITIZE EFFICIENCY

Not everything benefits from being logical or faster... positive friction helps slow things down just enough to prompt new approaches and help them stick.

Support exploration, not just search

Recognize where trusted sources matter more than convenience

Heighten a sense of ownership and investment

**INCREASING EXPOSURE TO NEW KINDS OF VALUE OR EXPERIENCES**

DESIGNED TO TRIGGER ACTION

TO SUPPORT

STIMULATION
ACTIVATE NEW BEHAVIORS

THROUGH

A famous experiment tested the effectiveness of **energy-saving messaging in hotels**: Stating that others who'd stayed in the hotel had reused their towels helped, but hearing that previous guests who had stayed in that room increased reuse rates another 10%. Similar prompts have helped getting out the vote.
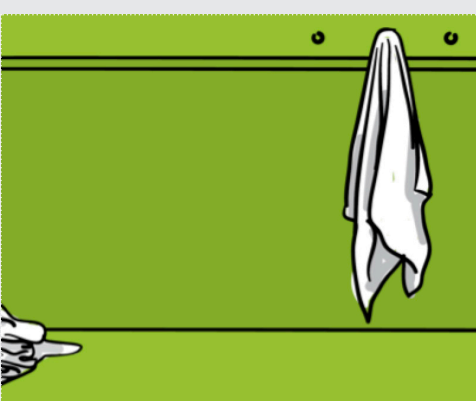
A sense of novelty can disrupt the norm by adding "speed bumps," at least temporarily. The Fun Theory's **Piano Staircase** in Stockholm turned a set of public transit stairs into a functional piano, resulting in 66% more people choosing the stairs over the escalator than the norm.

Doing work, rather than being a chore, can help us engage and invest in things more deeply. The **IKEA effect** indicates that people value things they constructed more than pre-built ones... less about seeking perfection than the genuine satisfaction in investment of time and effort.
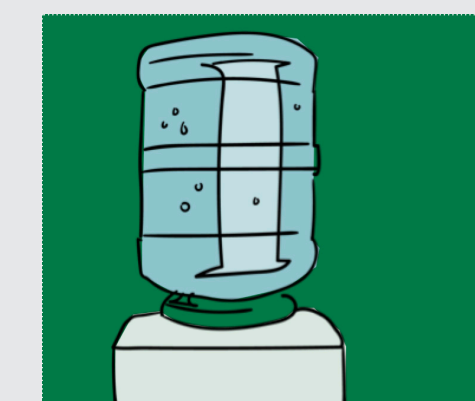
The ability to work remotely and binge-watching TV shows have, without a doubt, improved our sense of living life on our own terms... but the reduction in "water-cooler conversations" as ways to connect and share personal experiences has reduced serendipitous chances for connection.

Research shows that just writing something down, or making a to-do list, increases the likelihood of "sticking with it." Signing your name amps up that likelihood, and if you really want to go all out, you can use formal "**commitment contracts**" to make that accountability even stickier.

Addressing climate change is a challenge partly because it's so abstract. **Paul Nicklen**, a photographer from National Geographic, makes this issue more concrete and motivating by following and photographing the animals losing their food supply due to climate change.

Expertise doesn't come in one flavor. Despite a lack of health care or financial services expertise, people often turn first to "**experts in me**" – family, friends, and colleagues – for advice over professional experts who lack that personal connection that helps me know you're looking out for my best interests.
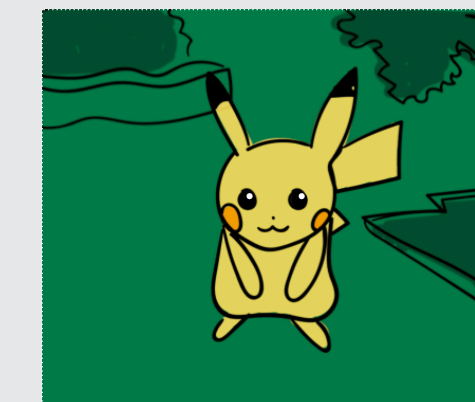
The **Pokemon Go** craze that swept the nation in 2016 wasn't just about the cool factor of augmented reality; its mix of digital and actual space encouraged new behaviors in a downright fun way, creating new forms of family time and incentivizing kids to get off the couch more effectively than good-intentioned wellness messages never could.

Friction is usually assumed to be negative, so frequently the goal of behavioral economics is to make things *too easy not to do*. We see this in "nudges" like organ donation and saving for retirement, as well as everyday services like Amazon's One-Click. **But efficiency ≠ effectiveness.** When brakes on the system are useful, positive friction can stall user behavior for powers of good.
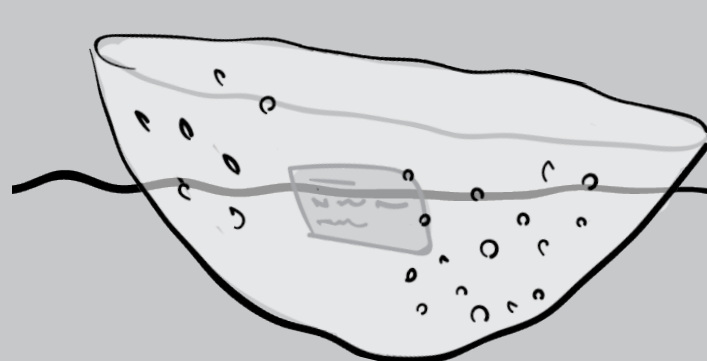
In the old pre-internet days, people were required to provide a physical credit card to purchase things. They sometimes froze their credit cards in ice and stored them in the freezer as a preventive measure against impulsive spending... the time and effort required to chip away or melt the ice created a strong deterrent.

But friction can also be useful at a systems level. The housing crisis of 2008 was partly caused because mortgages were too easy to get. The lack of friction seemed great, but let people purchased homes they couldn't really afford. This led to "underwater mortgages," in which homes were worth less than the money still owed on them.

+ POSITIVE FRICTION
MAKING SOME THINGS *JUST A LITTLE HARDER* FOR ALL THE RIGHT REASONS