

— The Science of Daily —

SELF - DISCIPLINE

USING SCIENCE TO BUILD WILLPOWER
SELF-CONFIDENCE & EVERYDAY HABITS



The Science of Daily Self-Discipline

*Using Science and Daily Practices to Build
Your Willpower, Self-Confidence, and
Everyday Habits to Achieve Long-Term Goals*

Oliver McAndrew

Prologue:

*“With self-discipline most
anything is possible.”
-Theodore Roosevelt*

Remember when you were young and you asked your parents a question they couldn't fully answer? Often times when I experienced those moments the answer was “just because.” This is not a *just because* book. *The Science of Daily Self-Discipline* is the first book in the series *The Science of Self-Help*. A series of self-help books using the results of behavioral science for personal development and growth. The books are designed to deliver information backed by cited case studies, quantifiable data, and accredited research performed by scientists and professionals in their respective fields. I stick to the facts and give you, the reader; real, reliable, and proven information to help you succeed in creating permanent and productive changes in your life. I don't bore you with the unnecessary details of the science (honestly, I doubt I could even if I wanted to). I leave the details to the scientists. Instead, I show you how to apply the proven concepts in your life to achieve real change.

Self-discipline is simply having the ability to do what needs to be done when it needs to be done. This extremely simple concept is often times the defining factor between success and failure in near or long-term goals. Whether that goal is to diet and exercise, write a novel, learn a language, build a business, or any other long-term goal; self-discipline is the quintessential component for the day-in and day-out actions that eventually lead to success. Without consciously developing self-discipline it is easy to fall victim to unhealthy temptations and continually fall short of achieving your goals. However, by building your self-

discipline you are able to make healthy lifestyle changes, patiently pursue and achieve your most desired goals, and live a life of great fulfillment and happiness.

Don't fret. If you currently feel that you lack in self-discipline you have found your solution and key to salvation. This book will serve you as a definitive guide to build your self-discipline and reap the many rewards the change and improvement will bear.

Using the suggestions in this book I have built successful businesses in varying industries, developed sustainable and healthy eating habits, performed at the top levels of sports competitions, lost 20.4 pounds of water weight in a 24 hour period (to make weight for collegiate wrestling), I have vomited on several occasions from physically pushing myself to the limit and beyond, and currently I write no less than 4,000 words a day come hell or high-water (that is almost 500 pages a month). Why do I stack myself against these less than sane metrics? One reason and one reason only. To shatter the limitations of what I believe possible. The only thing that has enabled me to keep going despite the many times I have wanted to throw in the towel and quit is self-discipline. But this book is not about me. I will only offer personal remedies for the purpose of illustrating with an occasional real world example. This book is about helping *you* develop self-discipline with tactics and suggestions backed by real science to give you real results!

One last promise, these suggestions truly work if you are willing to apply them in your life. Your self-tailored rewards along the road of increased and compounded self-discipline are very real. It all boils down to one simple question. Are you ready to make self-discipline your highest priority? Yes? Awesome and congratulations! Well then put on your thinking cap, get comfortable, and read on because we have a lot to cover.

-Oliver McAndrew

Chapter 1: Your Big Why!

“The mystery of human existence lies not in just staying alive, but in finding something to live for.”

— [Fyodor Dostoyevsky](#)

I solemnly swear that we are going to dive head first into the science, research, case studies, and quantifiable data for building and developing self-discipline.

However, before we tackle self-discipline we should make sure that we are using it appropriately and maximizing the value of its output. Otherwise we may find we are diligently disciplined in our pursuit of long-term goals, but in the wrong direction.

Your *Big Why* should be the reason that you have your goals. It is not necessarily your goals. Let me illustrate this with a hypothetical scenario

You are in business for yourself or have a great career, you enjoy a level of success measured by normal societal metrics (generally monetary), but you never fully enjoy it or feel fulfilled. I know some of you out there are nodding your heads in agreement and the rest of us, at the very least, know a person living under these circumstances. If this is the case for you, there is a good chance your current direction is not aligned with your *Big Why*.

The problem so many of us face when setting our goals is that we are focused on external motivational factors. There has been research in the academic context of motivation which demonstrates that intrinsic personal goals increase the long-term and short-term perseverance to continue learning, more than extrinsic personal goals [1]. Intrinsic goals are motivated by internal factors. With these

goals you are motivated to take action because the act itself is fun, feels good, or you it is aligned with your internal values (you believe it is the right thing to do). External goals differ in that the driving force for motivation is external reward or to avoid punishment, the most common being financial gains [2]. The correlation between the cited research and studies with our *Big Why* is that we are more motivated to persevere, and thus more likely to succeed, if our goals are based on intrinsic values which define the goals we hope to achieve. You reading this book is an example of you learning to achieve an intrinsic based goal of personal development. These goals far outweigh those based off external values like money, fame, or physical appearance. Yet, so many of us unwittingly develop our goals based on external factors as the driving force of our internal engine. The problem is doing that is like putting diesel in a gas engine or vice versa, it's not the right fuel to get you to your destination.

However, we are definitely not frowning on external motivation. External goals can play a heavy hand in motivation, but they are best when aligned with your internal goals as a byproduct of the pursuit for your *Big Why*. We will go into more regarding goal setting later in the book but for now familiarizing yourself with your *Big Why*, or at least the concept, will get everyone on the same page.

After this process we will have built a foundation to build upon for the remainder of the book. It will be our North Star when we are faltering and veering off course over the many months and years ahead in the development of greater self-discipline.

Questions and Tips to Help Discover Your Big Why:

1) When do you get so lost in the moment and the 'now' of an activity that you completely lose track of time? Hours fly by, you forget to eat, and you only snap out of it when your bladder is about to burst or your stomach starts eating itself. That is a good indicator of a passion. So, during what activity does time cease to exist for you? Note, this could easily be something you are not getting paid for, yet.

2) If the answer to the above questions is "I don't know", then maybe try to get out and

experience new and different things. Usually we don't just figure this out, we discover it. So go on some adventures of self-discovery. Sign up for some classes; take up some new hobbies, travel, somewhere along the road of new experiences and discovery happens.

3) Release any bias on the magnitude of what purpose is. Society has created a hierarchy of ideals for occupations, careers, and skill sets as though one is better than the other. This is an external factor as described above and it cannot be a factor in the search of your Big Why. Not to promote any religion over another, but Jesus was a mere carpenter.

4) What is the one thing you want to experience, or do, or accomplish, before you die, so that on your last day on earth you feel satisfied and have no regrets in that area?

5) Lastly have fun in discovering your why.

I don't want to give you false hope or unrealistic expectations. If you do not already know your *Big Why* it is unlikely that you are going to have defined your *Big Why* by the end of this chapter or even book. The truth is defining your *Big Why* is rather difficult. It is like asking somebody to describe their purpose in life. Often times it comes to us through experiences, trials, and tribulations.

Sometimes it is an '*aha moment*' resulting in an immediate paradigm shift. Sometimes it simply manifests over time and the experience of compounded decisions that lead you to your purpose. And unfortunately some people live their entire lives without ever discovering it. But rest assured that you have a *Big Why*, you have a purpose, and if you are willing to keep your eyes and ears open to discover it then you surely will.

The great news is that after you have read this book and are applying all of the principles in self-discipline in your life you will naturally steer towards your *Big Why* because you will be using intrinsic motivation to light your life's path.

Chapter Synopsis:

1. The Big Why is our personal purpose and mission in life. It is in alignment with our intrinsic values and motivation.
2. We are more likely to persevere in our endeavors if we are fueled by intrinsic motivation.
3. Discovering your Big Why is usually done over time and with experience. Keeping yourself intrinsically motivated with your goals ensures that you are heading in the right direction.

Chapter 2: The Self-Discipline Environment

“You are the average of the five people you spend the most time with.”

-Jim Rohn, Motivational Speaker

Have you ever heard the saying birds of a feather flock together? Turns out it is more true than not, not only for mallards but for humans as well. A review of research on the obesity epidemic in America conducted by Ross Hammond concluded that social influence is a significant factor in obesity [3].

Essentially the study showed that the people you are around the most can influence your behaviors and actions to less than desirable eating habits. The understanding that this transcends well beyond your eating habits is a foregone conclusion. There are real life examples everywhere around you. Think back to high school and all the different cliques and groups of people. They shared opinions, speech patterns and slang, shared interests in activities, behaviors, and habits.

If your current social environment is not conducive for the development of your self-discipline, meaning your friends or family lack self-discipline, then the research suggests it is in your best interest to make a change if you hope to make any real headway in developing your self-discipline. This is asking a lot of anyone but in all reality it is simply a change. A change does not suggest you dismiss all of your friends or pack up and leave the house. Yes, in some cases you may need to eliminate the cancerous personalities from your life, you know who they are. But there are many people in your life who give other positive contributions to your life, like love, who may not be on the same page with you regarding developing self-discipline. That's okay. Luckily it is 2016 (as of the publication of this book) and the internet has been around for public use for nearly 30 years. You have a world of new social networks in which you can use

to help create your personal environmental bubble for creating self-discipline. I have a lot of habits and traits that I consciously choose to practice daily that my friends and family do not. Change is very possible even while maintaining the friendships with those who are not necessarily as involved with their personal development as you are.

To create your own personal environmental bubble, try getting online and searching for forums, Facebook groups, or any other social network where personal development is a focus. These people will share your passion for self-improvement and you can befriend them and communicate with them daily. Share inspirational messages with each other, encourage each other during rough times, and hold each other accountable to continue developing.

Take it a step further and consider adding some real life, face-to-face, new friends to your social circle. A phenomenal resource tool when adding to your face-to-face social network is the website, Meetup.com. Meetup.com is a site that promotes getting out of the house and meeting real people, face-to-face, who share joint interests. Virtual friends are great but being able to shake someone's hand brings a whole new dimension to the relationship. It will catapult you in the right direction. Personal development is a common theme on the site. There are no shortages of personal development groups for many different areas of life.

Self-Discipline Accountabilibuddy:

Okay so maybe it's a cheesy header, but the concept is golden. Through utilizing the suggestions for building the right environment to create self-discipline you will put yourself in a position where you meet people who are aligned with your goals. By holding each other accountable for the actions and goals you are both committed to you will create a synergistic effect. This synergistic effect could be the deciding moment between faltering in your commitment or maintaining your self-discipline and following through at pivotal moments of weakness.

Bypassing the Naysayers:

As your self-discipline increases your successes will directly and proportionally increase as well. You will start to achieve milestone after milestone and goal after goal. You will become the person who succeeds in accomplishing what you set out to do from business to health, personal to spiritual, plus everything

in-between. As great as this is it will also create envious individuals who will start to harbor some level of ill will or jealousy. Do not let their issues become yours. There's no need to confront them unless it is a blatant invasion of a healthy personal boundary. Instead use their envy and jealousy as motivation.

The truth is these people are secretly hoping you fail. I know, it sounds terrible but it is unfortunately very true in many cases. Every time somebody tells you "you can't", "isn't that a bit ambitious", or anything of the sort throw their log of doubt onto your fire and let it drive you. Keep in mind though that it is not to stoop to their level in the end. It may feel great to emerge victorious and successful in your endeavors with your thumb on your nose saying *nanny nanny boo boo* to all the naysayers. But that moment will be fleeting once the realization sets in that you stooped to such a trivial level. Use the naysayer as motivation to achieve your goal because you get so much satisfaction and fulfillment from achieving the goals you set in front of yourself, especially because they are intrinsically motivated. The person you are most happy to prove that you are a 'doer' who accomplishes your goals and milestones stares you in the mirror every morning, yourself! You aren't human if you don't harbor a level of self-doubt. So the truth of the matter is when someone discredits your potential a small part of you identifies with this. Use their doubt to help prove you to yourself. Over time and after consecutive successes that part of you that harbors self-doubt will shrink until it's almost nonexistent.

Mentors for Self-Discipline

There is not a successful person who will not attribute some level of their success to a mentor, predecessor, or role model. It is best to have a real mentor who you can meet in person, call on the phone, and share ideas with. I believe this is possible for anyone, however, it requires people getting out of their comfort zone and searching for a mentor. This would entail going to seminars, meetup groups, and developing a relationship that eventually leads to mentorship or simply asking someone to be your mentor. That may be too much to bite off initially, which is okay, so when starting if you prefer pick a virtual mentor or role model. A very well-known virtual mentor for millions of people is Jesus Christ (this is not a religious opinion). Think of the very popular phrase WWJD, What Would Jesus Do? For millions of Christians they let this concept guide them in decision making moments. This is a fine example of a virtual mentor.

The easiest way to find one best suited for you is through books. I personally have many virtual mentors including Tim Ferris, author of the *4 Hour Workweek/Body/Chef* and Robert Greene, author of *Mastery*. I read their books with pen in hand, post-it-notes, writing in the margins, and I read the books more than once. I use their gems of wisdom as motivation to dig deep and find the self-discipline to continue taking the actions to keep me on the life path I have chosen.

When picking your mentor there are two easy rules to follow. Ask yourself if their values are aligned with yours and do they have what you want? Perhaps a multi-billionaire, who has what you want financially, has made his billions selling firearms to warring nations in Africa. Perhaps his intrinsic values do not align with your intrinsic values. It is important that they are virtuous through your eyes. That means they have attained what you want and they did it in a way that you will feel ethically and morally protected.

Picking a virtual mentor who has what you want is extremely important. Let's say for example you want to learn French. I speak English, Spanish, and Thai so I would not be a wise selection as your French teacher. I don't have what you want. People can only teach you what they know and the best indicator and metric of what they know is what they have. This is not limited simply to possessions, money, and material things. Look at the intangible. Like their happiness, are they always smiling, do they seem fulfilled. Choose wisely and reap the benefits.

It was Otto von Bismark who once said, "Only a fool learns from his mistakes. The wise man learns from the mistakes of others." By using a mentor you are able to reduce the length of time it takes you to achieve your desired goals considerably. They have already driven the road to success and they have hit the bumps in the road, they know what works and what doesn't, and they are able to guide you on a more streamlined path to success.

Chapter Synopsis:

1. Your self-discipline is affected by the people with whom you choose to surround yourself. By creating a social environment conducive to personal development you are more likely to continue your personal growth. This environment can be virtual but you will add more dimensions and quality if you can create face-to-face groups, meetup is a great resource.
2. Get a mentor and accountability buddy either virtual or real but preferably both. Use the relationships with these people to help keep you committed to your self-discipline.
3. Rise above the naysayers and use their envy and jealousy to fuel your commitment.
4. Only a fool learns from his own mistakes, get a mentor and shorten the length of your road to success.

Chapter 3: Habits and Compounded Returns

“The chains of habit are too weak to be felt until they are too strong to be broken.”

— [Samuel Johnson](#)

The most effective way to greatly increase your self-discipline is to create new habits that achieve your desired results. A habit is nothing more than a pattern of behavior that is acquired through frequent repetition. The more skilled we become in an action or behavior the more likely we are to acquire that behavior as a habit. By definition our habits form our mental makeup and composition [4], thus habits make us who we are. It is much easier to say no to temptation once you have become the person who is no longer tempted.

Imagine you have a long-term goal to stop consuming caffeine. You start by building a new habit every morning that you replace with your morning coffee, such as drinking a cold glass of water (we will go into depth regarding how to successfully create new habits shortly). Twelve months later you have made this a habit and over the past year you managed to completely stop your caffeine intake for 9 of the last 12 months. If someone offers you a cup of coffee or caffeinated soda at this point your knee jerk reaction is to say no. You don't even think about it, it is an automated response created from a habit and once it is a habit there is no self-discipline or battling of your urges needed. Thus, the focus is on creating habits to automate behaviors to do the things that need to be done, or in other words, to automate self-discipline.

Self-Discipline 401k: The Economics of Self-Discipline

To help in choosing new habits we can use economics to assist in guiding the decision making. The Pareto principle [5], popularly known as the 80/20 rule, states that 80% of effects are a direct result from 20% of causes. In business it is a rule of thumb, 80% of sales comes from 20% of clients, 80% of complaints comes from 20% of clients, 80% of products sold comes from 20% of products

available. The Pareto principle has been observed from land and wealth ownership to plant and fruit production.

If you are going to invest your self-discipline in creating new habits it is best to make sure you are getting the greatest return on your investment as possible. Think of this as your *Self Discipline 401k*.

This is not a finance book, but to illustrate an applicable concept, I want to introduce a financial concept known as a compounded return. For those who may be unfamiliar with this concept here's a simple explanation and example. A compounded return means that any gains from an investment are reinvested and they in turn create greater gains by adding to the principle (invested amount earning return). So here is our example posed in the form of a question. What is a penny compounded at 100% for 31 days, meaning you have one penny today, two pennies tomorrow, four pennies the following day, and eight pennies the next day continuing this process for 30 consecutive days? Go ahead make a guess.

The answer may surprise you; the resulting figure is \$10,700,000. Actually the real figure is slightly higher than that but I rounded to the closes 100 thousand. Habits are similar to investments in that they compound on top of themselves. Bad habits lead to more bad habits and good habits lead to more good habits. Take drugs for example. Someone decides to start shooting heroin which will in turn lead to a series of other bad habits that may include stealing, robbing, and many other less desirable practices. On the other hand let's say this individual chooses to write 1,000 words every day for a novel. In turn and in time their daily writing actions will make them better at editing, quicker at writing, and more effective in their creative thinking. Let's not overlook the fact that after 100 days they also have a manuscript for the novel completed, or at least a rough draft, and they have hit a major milestone in their long-term goal of writing a novel all because of the creation of one new habit.

When choosing where to invest in your *Self Discipline 401k* it is important to choose wisely. Remember the goal is to get the greatest return on investment, or to get the most benefits possible from your efforts.

Habits with the Greatest ROI

Transformational habits, also known as keystone habits, were first coined by Charles Duhigg in his book *The Power of Habit: Why We Do What We Do in Life and Business*. Transformational habits are habits that create many additional habits; they have a domino effect. One of these transformational habits is physical activity. Further research performed by scientists on the behalf of *Public Health Reports*, demonstrated that regular physical activity also led to the reduction of alcohol consumption, overeating, smoking, and unnecessary risk taking behaviors [6]. In an additional study participants were asked to make one single change in their eating behaviors, record what they ate on a daily basis through food journaling. With that one change in their eating behavior the participants consumed less and made healthier options when choosing food [7].

The above examples demonstrate the power of transformational habits and compounding effect. These are the best habits to focus on when choosing to invest in your *Self Discipline 401k*. Provided below is a list of these habits as defined by Duhigg, but don't feel limited to these habits. As illustrated above there are many transformational habits, these are simply some of the more noteworthy.

- Making your bed every morning (reports by Psychology Today back this claim [8])
- Exercise Regularly
- Family Dinners
- Tracking What You Eat (Institute of Health backs this claim)
- Developing Daily Routines
- Meditating [9]
- Planning Your Days
- Having Willpower [10]

It would be nice if we could just flip a switch and *presto*, we've created a new habit. Well, with the right knowledge and approach it is almost that easy.

Making a Habit a Habit

Extensive studies have been conducted to demonstrate the domino effect of a behavior chain. Habits are formed in a part of the brain called the Basal Ganglia

through neural pathways. Overtime and with repetition hubs are created through repetitive use of the pathways, which in turn create our habits [11]. The good news is that we don't need to understand the science of how this works and the better news is these studies show that we can *piggy-back* on an established hub (habit) and create a new one. We do this through something known as a behavior chain.

Duhigg has dissected the habit into its 3 most basic elements of cue, action, and reward. For example you wake up to the smell of coffee, the coffee aroma is the cue. You walk to the kitchen and pour a cup of coffee which is the action. You drink the coffee and feel more awake and a burst of energy; reward. Utilizing this concept you can use an already established habit as a cue to take action on a new transformational habit. Cues are recognized through sensory reception with sight being the most dominant sense in recognizing a cue. Couple sight with the established habit and all you need is the self-discipline you already have to start building your new habit.

With some clever manipulation and implementation of our transformational habits above we can use *Developing Daily Routines* as an umbrella habit that compounds into additional transformational habits.

Allow me to illustrate this concept with an example from my personal life. Over ten years ago when I decided to get serious about personal development and self-discipline I implemented the above concepts and it truly has transformed my life. All it took was a post-it-note and a little self-discipline.

Every morning and evening, without fail, I have brush my teeth in front of the bathroom mirror for as long as I can remember. 10 years ago I put a post-it-note to serve as my visual cue on the bathroom mirror. This way I was sure to see the reminder every morning and every evening. The note read *Morning and Evening Routine*. I then planted two additional safeguard reminders that I coupled with two additional, different, and already established habits. The purpose of the safeguard reminder was for the days when I was low on self-discipline and didn't want to, or feel like, performing my routine. I brew coffee every morning so one of my safeguard reminders was on the coffee machine right next to the on/off button. It read, "*If you want results you take action: Morning Routine!*". The other was tapped on the shower door with clear packing tape to protect it from water that read, "*If you want results you take action: Evening Routine!*". On the days when I skipped my initial reminder the

safeguards were usually enough to get me off my butt and to start my routine. My routine was pretty simple at first. All I had to do was pick up a composition journal on my desk and open it to the marked page. The page read:

Morning Routine:

12 Month Goal: (My goal at the time was written here)

Today's Tasks: (This was 3-5 listed tasks/actions that brought me closer to my long-term goal)

Meditate: (at first I would do 5 minutes but now I often meditate around 20-30 minutes per session)

Evening Routine:

Did You Complete Your Tasks?

If not, why?

(This is where I built my self-discipline through accountability, over time, to perform my tasks daily without exception. We will discuss this in the last chapter.)

Gratitude List: (Studies show that writing down 3 things daily in which you are grateful for led to a consistent increase in happiness [12])

Lay Out Tomorrow's Clothes

Plan Tomorrow

(I would then flip the page, and on the following blank piece of paper I wrote my morning and evening routines for the following day.)

*Note: There are at least 20 scientifically proven benefits of meditation that permeate into all areas of life [13]. We will go into much further depth in *Chapter 6: Brain Training*.

By focusing on one transformational habit I was able to develop a cyclical and compounded effect that worked wonders for me and it allowed me to simultaneously build additional transformational habits. If this example appeals to you then by all means give it a go, if not don't worry. Come up with something that is unique, comfortable, and natural for you to increase your probability of success. Over the years the cues I have used have come in varying forms. Just to mention a few additional options, consider using daily reminders

synced from your calendar to your phone, set alarms on your phone to repeat at a certain time every day, or use dry-erase markers on your mirrors, but most importantly whatever you do whether listed here or not make sure you see it every day.

Research shows [14] that it can take up to 254 days for a habit to be formed in the Basal Ganglia. This means it can take up to almost 8.5 months for a habit to become a habit. The average amount of time is 66 days with minimum amount of time being 18 days. The only way to guarantee success, based on the research, is to commit to the new habit for 254 days. The good news is once the habit is created it will require no self-discipline to perform regularly.

Resisting Temptation and Beating Bad Habits:

The best way to beat temptation, as mentioned earlier, is to become the person who is no longer tempted. But that can take up to 254 days if we are basing changes off of habit formation, which is valid considering habits are your mental composition. What do you do in the meantime? Temptation and already established poor habits will be the greatest hurdle to overcome.

Inelastic Goals

Once again we can look to social science and economics to illustrate a concept. In economics when a good/product has an elastic demand it means that if the price of that good/product increases the demand of that good/product will decrease. On the other hand an inelastic demand means that even with an increase in price the decrease in demand will be minimal or nonexistent. Think of insulin for a diabetic. Their life is dependent on this insulin so even if the cost were to rise substantially they would still buy insulin. They may grumble and gripe about it but nothing is going to stop them from getting their insulin. Your goal is the demand of a good/product and temptation/bad habits are the price. No matter how high the “price” gets; temptation or deeply instilled bad habits, if your goal is *inelastic* you will persevere pass these obstacles. If you are selective in your long-term goals and select the ones as though your life depended on them then you will undoubtedly succeed in beating temptation.

One of the best ways to select your goals to guarantee they are inelastic is by

using your *Big Why*. Even if you have no idea what your *Big Why* is you are undoubtedly familiar with your intrinsic motivations. As we covered earlier you are much more likely to succeed in accomplishing your goals if your motivation is intrinsic. Not only are you more likely to accomplish intrinsically motivated goals, further research [15] shows that you are less likely to succeed if you deem the necessary tasks as unpleasant. So in selecting your goals it can be greatly beneficial to ask yourself if they are aligned with your intrinsic motivation and values. External motivation can be extremely strong. I spent a decade of my life chasing money, the biggest external motivator of all, only to find out that I was unfulfilled, unhappy with my routines, and in desperate need of change despite all the external rewards. Once I aligned my goals with my intrinsic values I found that many of the external rewards I was so focused on were often times a byproduct of pursuing the goals aligned with my intrinsic motivation and *Big Why*. Despite succeeding in my externally motivated long-term goals I had, to some degree, failed by not succeeding in the areas of life that truly mattered to me. Self-discipline in the pursuit of the goals not aligned intrinsically can become a cross to bear, in that it keeps you diligently marching down the wrong path. Self-discipline in the pursuit of the right goals becomes a sense of joy and happiness in that it helps you to continually achieve greater fulfillment in life. Being highly discriminatory and selective in your goal setting is the easiest path to developing self-discipline.

Are You Visualizing Correctly?

Even when you pick inelastic goals you are going to have difficult times staying the course day in and day out. A common motivational tool is visualization and when used properly it is a very powerful transformational habit. However, the more popular practice of visualization has been shown to actually cause the opposite of the intended effect; it creates demotivation. Lien B. Pham and Shelley E. Taylor of UCLA conducted an experiment that compared the popular visualization method with sports visualization [16]. The two visualization methods differentiate in that the more common practice is to visualize the moment in the future when you achieve your goal, this is event focused visualization. Sports visualization focuses on visualizing the process in detail.

Without a doubt the results showed that process visualization is far more effective than event visualization. The reason is twofold. One, through visualizing the actions you must take on a daily basis you are much more likely

to take those specific actions. It is the compounded effect of daily actions that actually get you to your goal. So when the going gets tough in the pursuit of your long-term goals, as it undoubtedly will, you are much more likely to persevere, push through, and ultimately succeed in your goal because you have trained your brain to do so through proper visualization. The other reason is simply one word, demotivation. When you utilize event focused visualization the emotions and sensations in which you are conjuring up and feeling trick your brain into releasing dopamine. Dopamine gives the sensation of pleasure when released, it's the reason we feel good when listening to our favorite types of music. The result, you get to enjoy the feeling of achieving your goal without actually achieving it. It is a form of instant gratification that derails your long term goals. If the brain tells the body it is not hungry then you won't eat. The same goes for goal achievement. If the brain and body think you have succeeded then you won't put in the necessary effort and work to succeed.

Real World Example:

I first learned the power of process visualization when I was 14. I played competitive sports year round; lacrosse, football, and wrestling. Every winter for roughly four months I had to endure wrestling season. I had grown up wrestling since the age of 6. Due to the one-on-one component and cutting weight while maintaining high levels of physical output I consider it the hardest and most grueling sport I've ever played. I was good but there was room for growth. One of the downsides to wrestling was my 2 hour jog after every practice to keep my weight down. I hated those jogs! To help the time pass and not focus on my exhaustion and the fact that I strongly disliked running, I started what I considered at the time, escaping from the exhaustion. I wrestled in my head. For two hours every evening 5 days a week my sophomore year I went through moves and techniques. I must have taken thousands of single and double-leg shots in my head, performed thousands of escapes, and acrobatic crowd pleasing moves-all in my head. I remember getting so lost in the moment at times my body would react to my thoughts and my hands would perform a move or my legs would side-step or feint a shot without me consciously taking action. The season ended and I won the district tournament for the first time but fell short in the regional tournament. In the off-season I found myself constantly continuing the mental rehearsals. When I walked the dog, I wrestled in my head; walked to a friend's house, I wrestled in my head; essentially anytime my mind was wandering I wrestled in my head simply because I enjoyed it.

The following season I was a different wrestler. I performed moves I had invented in my head that none of my teammates or coaches had ever seen before. I was written up as one of the best technical wrestlers in the state and by the end of the season I had walked away with the district and regional championships and was one of the highest placing wrestlers in the state tournament, in what was considered the most competitive weight class in the state. College scouts contacted me from all over the country including Penn State, UVA, and Columbia University. I held the school record for takedowns in a season and I was the 3rd wrestler in school history to get 100+ cumulative varsity wins, and I did it in my junior year. On the drive back from the state tournament one of my teammates and close friends asked me how I improved so dramatically in such a short period of time. It was a thought that had never occurred to me. I looked at him and the answer was immediate and obvious. Though at the time I had never heard the term ‘visualization’ I knew that the countless hours of wrestling in my head over the past year and a half was the reason. I told him “I wrestle in my head all the time. By now I’ve wrestled thousands of matches in my head.”

My friend was my drill partner, a grade level below me, and he competed in the weight class below mine. He was a phenomenal wrestler but had continually fallen short of succeeding in clutch moments. He too started wrestling in his head on a regular basis and by the end of his junior year he was the 4th wrestler to win 100 cumulative varsity matches. By the end of his senior year he had shattered my school record for wins and takedowns, and he was a top wrestling recruit for colleges. He also became the best clutch athlete I have ever seen.

Years passed before I introduce visualization into my daily practice for business and personal goals. When I was introduced to the concept formally it immediately resonated because of my prior experience. It is now part of my daily routine and it has been for many years now. I credit it for a lot for my self-discipline and grit. Oh, and my friend received an Ivy League education because of his wrestling prowess and is now an extremely successful and wealthy entrepreneur in NYC. He too utilizes process visualization as part of his daily morning routine. Visualizing properly truly is a game changer!

Tips for Process Visualization:

- Although all the visualization research I have found suggests getting in a meditative state prior to visualization, visualizing while jogging or doing

any mundane task, in my experience, was highly effective. It is also a great way to reduce the displeasure of jogging for those who don't particularly enjoy it – like me.

- Visualize in a quiet place, relax, create the environment in as much detail as possible, use first person point of view, hone in on the feeling that you confidently operate at peak performance under varying pressures through the day. Associate this with the feeling and emotions for success, lastly visualize the goal being accomplished.
- Use a past memory of a success to give momentum to the feelings and process [17].
- Create a guided visualization recording. Guided visualizations are beneficial because they require less mental energy in creating the experience allowing you to put more emphasis on the sensory (sounds, sights, tastes, smells, movements, and feelings) creation of the experience. It allows you to make the visualization very real. [18]. You can do this by making a recording and listening to it as you visualize. Perhaps play some meditative music in the background and narrate the process, describing in detail all the sensory feelings. This allows you to focus on feeling the process and not using mental energy to create the detailed environment.
- It is best to perform the visualization as part of a daily routine. It is also very effective to visualize after meditating.
- Remember that it is the daily actions that will achieve your long-term goals. Have patience and trust the process.

Chapter Synopsis:

1. Self-Discipline is best developed through creating good habits.
2. The best habits to create are transformational habits due to the compounding effect they have in creating additional good habits.
3. Behavior chains coupled with cue, action, and reward, are extremely effective in creating new habits.
4. By focusing on a daily routine as a transformational umbrella habit, it is very easy to introduce other new transformational habits to your day.
5. Studies show habit formation in the brain can take up to 254 days to create a new habit with the average being 66 days. Guaranteeing successful habit creation means maintaining the new practice for 254 days or roughly 8.5 months.
6. In choosing goals make sure that they are inelastic to increase the probability of persevering through temptation and resistance.
7. Visualizing using the process approach (sports) is an amazing transformational habit that will help train your brain to stay committed to daily actions and increase yourself-discipline.

Chapter 4: Dopamine, the Double Edged Sword

“Dopamine is released when you accomplish something you set out to accomplish, when you cross something off your to do list, when you hit the goal. Dopamine makes us achievement machines, but we have to know that we’re making progress.”

-Simon Sinek

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Dopamine is a chemical released in the brain that gives us pleasure [19]. The natural release of Dopamine is cued by sight, sense, or smell. These cues are associated for a need or want for reward and instant gratification. This could be the smell of coffee for a coffee lover, fresh baked cookies for a foodie, or the visual image of a chiseled body for the avid gym enthusiast. Dopamine is the initial internal *push* that gets the ball in motion. It not only plays a big role in our motivation and reward thought process but it also plays a critical role in our decision making and creativity. The greater our urge and motivation for reward the more creative we will become in figuring out a way to attain that reward. So there are many upsides to dopamine.

The Bad Side of Dopamine:

The opposite edge of the sword is not as appealing. When we do not fulfill a

craving the result is a decrease in dopamine. Simply put this decrease in dopamine feels pretty awful. This is why it is so hard for us to resist the temptations we are bombarded with while trying to make a change. I am sure we can all attest to the frustration and bad feelings accompanied by not receiving an anticipated reward. These temptations are lurking around everywhere in our life. The cues are similar to a complex matrix where many different variables, chain reactions, and input factors are simultaneously linked to a single reward. For example imagine that you are trying to eat healthy. The time of day when you normally have a snack is a cue to eat poorly, walking through certain aisles at the grocery store exposes you to the visual cues of unhealthy foods you want, if you have a night out on the town and have a few drinks intoxication could be a cue if you generally eat poorly at the end of the night when you get home. Perhaps you normally have an unhealthy breakfast (croissant, doughnut, candy bar) with your morning cup of coffee, making breakfast time, the aroma of coffee, the urge for caffeine, and coffee itself a cue. Our bio-chemical makeup has already put us at a disadvantage to making change especially when we are faced with years of deeply rooted triggers/cues embedded in our day to day life.

Making Dopamine Work for You:

The good news is that with proper focus and development on self-discipline the ball is back in your court. Education is a crucial factor when combating dopamine, not simply understanding your enemy and what you are up against, but learning your body and being cognitive of your cue/reward associations or triggers. A very basic illustration of this is when the dieter on the quest to start eating healthy rids the house of all junk food and unhealthy eating options. This is done to reduce the temptation by minimizing cues and triggers to eat poorly. Another example is when the dieter changes their route to work because over the years when they drive by the doughnut shop they stop and get a doughnut. The mere sight of the doughnut shop is a huge cue. They almost instinctually pull into the parking lot without thinking. Habits can be so deeply embedded that we act on them without realizing it. These are very real subconscious wirings that have created a worn and well-trodden path over many years of repetition *. To beat dopamine you need to educate yourself and be aware of your cues and triggers. The next step is to reduce your daily exposure to these triggers.

We can't realistically put ourselves in a glass bubble and block off all triggers. Inevitably we will come face to face with temptation and the greater the change we are making in our lives the greater the foe, temptation. Imagine you are trying to create a completely new daily routine, like the example in the transformational habit section. You may be battling years and years of well-developed and deeply rooted habits. This is why you must do everything you can to reduce your exposure to temptation. You can also use your dopamine to associate new reward with new behaviors. If you are anything like me you love coffee. To make my morning and evening routine habitual I only had to have the self-discipline to have my coffee *after* I finished my morning routine. It allowed me to use my coffee as a reward and the dopamine to stem a change in behavior through its natural reward aspect. I simply added another layer of cue/triggers that created the motivation from dopamine. Finishing my daily routine led me to my cup of coffee which was enough of a reward to get the ball rolling.

Overtime and through the creation of new habits you will find an additional benefit of dopamine as you start to develop new cue/reward associations that create positive results. If are able to stick to a new behavior for 254 days, you are scientifically guaranteed to create a new habit. Over the course of this habit creation the natural release of dopamine from the new rewards you experience will become more habituated eventually altering your cue/reward association. For example, I found after about 6 months of completing my daily routine the sense of success at the end of the day became a great reward for me. When I woke up in the morning the simple sight of my coffee cup next to my laptop put me in a highly excited and motivated state to start my day with my morning routine. I felt good throughout the day as I completed small milestones that eventually accumulated to a successful day. I knew that at the end of the day the euphoric and fulfilling feeling of self-accomplishment was waiting. It kept me pushing with intermittent bouts of cue/reward as I achieved the varying milestones.

** Once after a long day at work I was so exhausted I drove all the way to a neighboring state, to a*

house I had moved out of 4 months earlier. I had made the drive so many times over in the past that in my vulnerable (exhausted) state I instinctually drove to the old house from habit.

Promise Reward Behaviors:

Food

There are many ways to trick your brain with promise-reward behaviors. The family dog and you have something in common. You are both biologically engineered to perceive food as a reward. Using your favorite snack (in moderation) or a guilty pleasure will help you to create new cue/reward associations. This of course can be a slippery slope but it is noteworthy due to its effectiveness. This is exactly what I did by drinking coffee as a reward after my morning routine. Below are several more techniques to use dopamine and the promise of reward to start creating the new habits.

Listen to Music:

Studies have demonstrated that music reduces the perception of effort during an activity by distracting the brain from the effort exerted [20]. This is why I play dance music instrumentals as background music when I am working on the less enjoyable and more tedious parts of my day. I am not a huge fan of dance music but it helps me with my productivity. A recent study by Mindlab International on behalf of MusicWorks took 26 participants and for five days exposed them to varying tasks and played different genres of music and compared it to the results of participants without music [21]. The results are pretty interesting. The optimal genres for varying tasks:

- Classical music: if your work involves numbers, attention to detail, or

creativity.

- Pop music: if your work involves data entry or working with deadlines.
- Ambient music: if your work involves solving equations.
- Dance music: if your work involves proof-reading and problem solving.

Taking Breaks

Back in 2009 I had the privilege to employ the most amazing salesman I have ever worked with. He was charismatic, young, and ambitious. His preferred approach to sales was the very grueling and exhausting cold call approach. On his first day of employment he walked into the office with a TV and an Xbox 360. I stood by in amazement wondering if this young man was intending on playing video games. Sure enough he plugged everything up and turned it on. When I asked him exactly what he thought he was doing he looked at me and with relative indifference responded, “The Pomodoro Technique.” Being open minded and strongly believing in empowering employees I left him to his work. That was my first introduction to the Pomodoro Technique and he went on to be the most productive salesperson on the team by a factor of 3:1 to the next highest producing salesperson.

The Pomodoro Technique, developed by [Francesco Cirillo](#) in the late 1980’s, broke down work hours into two 25 minute work sessions and two 5 minute breaks in between those work sessions. The concept is that the 5 minute breaks improves mental agility. Daunting tasks can completely deplete us. This approach works twofold in that it reduces the level of difficulty because work exposure is for only 25 minutes and it creates a reward, the 5 minute break, to get you started on and motivated through the next 25 minute block of work. For two years I watched this young man make cold calls for 25 minutes and play RPG’s, first person shooters, and Madden in five minute intervals. There were days when he did this for 12 hours, from 8AM to 8PM, and the dividends paid for his efforts were quit handsome. I am now an avid enthusiast of this technique and even now as I write this book I have a timer next to me breaking my writing sessions into 25 minute blocks. When I come back I find that I often times have new insights, thoughts, or ideas. Actually this happens a lot after my breaks. Another benefit I found is that the meaningless and frequent breaks I used to take over long stretches of work like checking email, walking to the

kitchen, getting up and looking out a window, jumping on Facebook or YouTube disappeared after I utilized the Pomodoro Technique. I believe this is because I know a break is coming and I am more able to focus on the task at hand. I get disappointed in myself when I indulge in a meaningless distraction during my 25 minute work session. There are many free apps available under the search *Pomodoro Timer* in your app-store. Get creative with your breaks and make them truly enjoyable. I have personally watched all seasons of *Game of Thrones*, *The Walking Dead*, and *Breaking Bad* in five minute intervals!

Power Nap

Very similar to the Pomodoro Technique in that it keeps you mentally sharp and flexible is the power nap. Naps increase alertness and focus [22]. Scheduling in an occasional 15 minute power nap or guided meditation (15 minute guided meditations on YouTube are very plentiful) is a great way to recharge your battery during the day.

Massages, Meditation, and Relieving Tension

Relax and relieve tension. I have lived in Thailand off and on over the past few years. Whenever I am in Thailand I get a 2 hour massage once or twice a week for \$7.00. I find the benefits quite amazing and on the scheduled massage days I am always excited to finish my work so I can go get my massage (they are G-Rated guys). The stress reducing benefits of massages has been well documented [23]. Cue/reward behavior also plays a role in this scenario. When we know that we have a reward waiting for us it is easier to tackle our tasks. As great as massages are they can get pricey dependent on where you call home. Other options are taking walks in nature, watching a movie and cuddling with your significant other, hitting the gym to relieve some stress and then hitting the sauna or steam room afterwards.

Meditation was briefly mentioned in Transformational Habits and will be covered in more depth in Brain Training. A daily meditation routine, among many amazing benefits, includes increased relaxation and tension relief.

Experiential:

Experience is not only the greatest teacher, but it gives us a much longer state of joy and happiness than things do [24]. With the exception of food all the suggestions change the experience (Pomodoro Technique, Music) or they are experiential themselves (Meditation, Massage). Try scheduling in these experiences, like a special outing or gathering with some friends at the end of the work day. Strategically using experience reward association can create magical changes in habit creation.

Chapter Synopsis:

1. Cues and triggers for well embedded habits come in many forms and cover all aspects of sensory reception.
2. Dopamine is a chemical that is released into the brain and gives us pleasure. It is released after the *reward* from phase of a habit sequence (cue, action reward).
3. By familiarizing yourself with cues associated with habits you want to break you can reduce exposure to these cues by making proactive changes to remove them from your environment. In the event that a cue is unavoidable understanding it for what it is, a cue, you can wait it out until the urge dissipates.
4. The promise/reward technique allows you to use dopamine to create new habits. In this technique you create an association between an action and a reward to release dopamine and assist you in creating the habit.
 1. Different types of reward for this technique could include food, music, breaks, naps, tension relief/relaxation (massages), and scheduled experiences.
5. Altering your perception of an experience through associating rewards is the greatest way to make a habit more pleasurable and therefore use dopamine more effectively.

Chapter 5: Grit, Willpower, and Discipline Training

“...grit is essential to high achievement evolved during interviews with professionals in investment banking, painting, journalism, academia, medicine, and law. Asked what quality distinguishes star performers in their respective fields, these individuals cited grit or a close synonym as often as talent. In fact, many were awed by the achievements of peers who did not at first seem as gifted as others but whose sustained commitment to their ambitions was exceptional. Likewise, many noted with surprise that prodigiously gifted peers did not end up in the upper echelons of their field.”

—Angela Duckworth

Grit

In one word self-discipline is grit, the ability to persevere and maintain passion for long-term goals. Grit is a non-cognitive trait (any trait outside of the realm of intelligence). Intelligence is the single most measured trait in the field of psychology and at one point it was thought to be the greatest indicator of

success. However, over the past few years there has been a great deal of research into the subject of non-cognitive traits and their roles in behaviors, habits, and goal accomplishment. Most notable is grit and its correlation to success. These studies have measured grit, along with other attributes including IQ, leadership ability, and physical aptitude to determine what is most directly correlated to success. Perhaps the greatest in depth study was performed at The United States Military Academy, West Point, by psychologist Angela Duckworth of the University of Pennsylvania [25]. Her research discovered that grit was the single greatest determining factor in succeeding one's goals. At West Point cadets with the greatest grit scores were significantly more likely to succeed in the university's most rigorous and grueling summer training program known as Beast Barracks. Athletic abilities, leadership potential, and even intelligence shadowed in comparison. This discovery led her to expand the research beyond West Point and she found this to be true across varying competitive fields. Undergraduate Ivy League students who scored high on the grit scale but did not score as high as their peers in IQ still had higher GPAs than the peers with high IQ but lower grit scores. Despite the fact they were "less intelligent" by conventional metrics the grittier students still outperformed their "more intelligent" peers. In comparing two different people of the same age with different education levels, grit was a better predictor for who was more educated than intelligence (as measured by IQ) proved to be. This means that grittier individuals have a greater drive to continue learning. Grit and practice is the single greatest predictor for winners of the National Spelling Bee regardless of IQ.

Angela Duckworth has created a simple and effective test to measure an individual's grit called the 8-item grit scale. If you're interested in taking the test the link is below. If you choose to take it you will receive a score and percentile rank. It is a free survey and it could offer you a base measurement of your current grit level.

<http://bit.ly/1KpJZh8>

How did you score? Don't be discouraged if you were not in the top percentile, yet. The good news is that through continually improving your self-discipline your score will improve. Try to recognize this for what it truly is; an exciting chance to improve yourself and succeed in your long-term goals.

The Debate about Willpower:

Ah, back to our dear friend economics again. If willpower were a resource many would claim it to be an economic anomaly because there is no finite amount available to you. On the other side of the coin others would concur that it indeed follows the criteria of a resource in that it is limited in supply. So which is it? Is willpower limited or limitless?

There have been popular authors, including an accredited Psychologist, who have stated that willpower is a finite resource. In his research, Roy Baumeister suggests that willpower is the same as any muscle in the human body. It can be strengthened through exposing it to a level of strain but it can also be fatigued. He also stated that blood-glucose levels have a direct effect on self-control. The findings found that when a person's glucose level drops so does their self-control capabilities [26]. This concept is further validated by the common suggestion to not go grocery shopping when you are hungry. The belief is that you are more inclined to make unhealthy purchasing choices if you are hungry, insinuating that your willpower is lower than normal. Personally, I have definitely experienced this phenomenon.

If willpower is like a muscle then if it is used, it stays in shape, and if it is neglected, it shrinks. Small challenges make it grow, but it collapses when faced with too-heavy a load.

The key to building willpower, exercise it. A willpower workout can be any sort of exposure that tests your willpower. However, it needs to be easy enough that you pass the tests you set in front of yourself. Don't go too easy but don't overdo it either. Increase the difficulty level bit by bit, and it will grow. Sooner than later, with consistency, it will be able to take on the big challenges and win.

But wait; there is another side to the story. Do you remember the economic anomaly group?

I know I just went into some depth on training willpower like a muscle. So this may seem contradictory but bear with me.

German studies have emerged demonstrating that blood-glucose level's relation

to willpower and fatigue is likely false [27]. The Germans are historically a pretty sharp group of people. Furthermore, some very interesting studies suggest that an individual's belief in whether their willpower is finite or infinite is the determining factor in whether it is or is not [28]. This is very similar to the concept of a limiting belief. A limiting belief is the concept that an individual's thoughts and perceptions control their decisions and behaviors. If you think you are limited in willpower then you are most likely to behave and act as though your willpower is limited. Think of it. If a doctor told you were diabetic you would immediately change your diet, right? Then imagine that two weeks later you receive a phone call from the doctor's office saying that there was an error in the test results and in fact you are not diabetic. It was not whether you were diabetic or not that changed your behavior, it was your belief that you were diabetic that did.

So the answer to the subjects opening question is that perhaps it is up to you. There are studies that suggest that both approaches are correct. In respect to the studies I am obligated to share both sides of the story. For those, who from personal experience deem willpower as limited, I provided a suggested plan to build willpower through exercising it. However, if you are on the fence I suggest optimistically error on the side of caution. Assume willpower is not limited, but hedge that assumption with willpower exercises. Build the difficulty until after several successes in testing your willpower you are convinced that willpower is indeed unlimited. If you find the opposite to be true then continue building your willpower muscle. Either belief is irrelevant in the sense that developing self-discipline will require time and patience. Both approaches will get you to the same destination; one just has a slight detour on the path.

Dig Deeper, Fatigue is Not a Fact:

Many people throw in the towel at the first sign of fatigue. Who could blame them? Fatigue is the body's way of saying "slow down, you're overworking me, I need a break." But this isn't necessarily true. Studies show that when we feel fatigue it is not a signal that our bodies are whipped and need a break, it is simply an emotion because we have reached our perceived current limit [29].

This is very reminiscent of limiting beliefs and willpower isn't it? Our perception of our limits is exactly that, our perception. Prior to Sir Roger Bannister it was believed that humans could not physically run a sub-four minute mile. It was simply outside of the human body's capabilities. In 1954 he proved

the world wrong. Not only did he break the four minute barrier but over the years it has been done by numerous athletes and it is now the standard baseline for professional middle distance runners. In 2000 Bannister was quoted saying, “It’s the brain, not the heart or lungs, that is the critical organ, it’s the brain” [30].

The key to beating fatigue is training your brain to continually push past your perceived limitation and fatigue levels.

The easiest way to imagine this concept is in the weight room or on an athletic field. It is the proverbial ‘dig deeper’ concept. But pushing past fatigue goes way beyond sports. It can be applied to all your goals and will greatly help build self-discipline.

In virtually every goal you pursue you will meet the point of fatigue. This is when you are mentally spent and the white flag is seconds away from being hoisted up the flagpole. These are the defining moments when self-discipline is developed and strengthened. When you are at the very edge of completely breaking, dig deeper inside and push a little further. Put in the extra hour on your new business project at the end of a long and grueling day. Run that extra mile when your legs are about to give out on you. Write that additional 1,000 words when your brain is already thinking of bed. Whatever your goal is when you face the wall of fatigue dig a little deeper. That wall will continually get further and further until one day you run a four minute mile, most likely in the figurative sense.

Chapter Synopsis:

1. Grit is the ability to persevere and maintain passion for long-term goals. It is the single greatest determining factor in goal accomplishment. You can take Angela Duckworth's 8-Point Grit Test for free and get a baseline measurement.
2. The jury is still out on willpower. Both sides presented convincing arguments backed by research and science, however, the jury is still deliberating and may continue deliberation indefinitely until further evidence is presented. Until a verdict can be reached the decision is up to you.
3. Fatigue is an emotion. It is not a factual limitation of the body and mind. Both body and mind can go further than emotional limitations. When facing fatigue dig a little deeper.

Chapter 6: Brain Training

“The first step to success is getting out of your own way.”

-Steve Stromick

Meditation is a highly effective way to train your brain. We touched in on it briefly while discussing transformational/keystone habits and it was highlighted as an umbrella habit under daily routine in the example of a behavior chain. A daily meditation routine is life changing. Meditation is nothing new; as a matter of fact it is ancient. Some of the earliest records of meditation date back to 1500 BC [31]. If anybody is counting, and we are, that is over 3,500 years. How does something remain such a relevant practice for such a long time? The answer is simple, it is highly effective.

There is an overwhelming abundance of scientific research validating the physical [32], mental, and emotional health benefits of meditation [33, 34]. It has even been proven to create white matter in the brain [35]. In 2009 Jan Schultz and her colleagues demonstrated how white matter is linked to our ability to learn new skills [36]. Studies have also shown benefits of stress reduction and improved stress management [37]. At the University of Oregon Yi-Yuan Tang and colleagues scientifically demonstrated meditation’s ability to help the body heal and the brain shift towards prioritizing the use of the right prefrontal cortex instead of the left, which has a direct effect on increasing happiness, relaxation, and emotional balance while reducing depression and anxiety [38]. If the benefits of these studies don’t provide enough solid reasoning for you to start meditating, I don’t what will.

Meditation is a method to transform your mind. It is finding your mental place of serenity, peace, and calmness. It can awaken a spiritual consciousness or grow an already existing one. The transformative effects are too many to list, however, in our quest for building self-discipline to succeed in long-term goals, rest assured meditation is one of the greatest weapons available in your arsenal.

There are many extremely successful and notable names that publically give a great deal of their credit for their success to daily meditation practices. Oprah Winfrey (CEO Harpo Productions Inc.), Rick Goings (founder of Tupperware), Marc Benioff (CEO of salesforce.com), Ray Dalio (CEO and founder of Bridgewater Associates), Russel Simmons (Co-Founder of Def Jam Records), Robert Stiller (Founder of Green Mountain Coffee Roaster), Arianna Huffington (President, Editor-in-Chief, Huffington Post Media Group), actually the list is rather extensive and goes well past these notable names.

Even after reading the many benefits of meditation, if you find you are still a non-believer please just bear with me. Being open and trying new experiences is an essential part of any personal development. What's the worst thing that could happen anyways? You feel silly meditating and quit. Well if that's the case at least you stepped outside your comfort zone and the cost was nothing.

How to Meditate:

A very popular meditation practice that anyone alive and breathing can do is Anapanasiti. Anapanasiti means *mindfulness of breathing*. It's that simple, you are just going to breath. You are already doing half the work 24 hours a day 7 days a week; meditation is simply going to take it a few steps further.

First find a place to practice. It should be a place you have regular access to on a daily basis. This is important if you decide to make meditation an everyday practice. This place should be quiet, give you a sense of safety and security, and a place where you can be undisturbed for a period of 5 consecutive minutes or more.

Posture is a subject with some varying opinions. For Anapanasiti purists there is a specific posture that is suggested. We will cover that posture and speak about other postures later but if you choose this posture take the following steps, otherwise adapt the posture to fit your comfort level:

Posture:

- Sit cross-legged with each foot resting on the opposite thigh.

- If you're not Gumby yet go ahead and just sit in a comfortable cross legged position.
- Sit upright and imagine a vertical line perpendicular from the floor running up your tailbone and right through your spine, this will ensure your head is well supported.
- Placing your hands in your lap turn your palms upwards. Place your left hand under your right in a cradling position.
- Softly close your eyes and slightly tilt your head down.
- Let your body fall into its chosen posture. Meaning cognitively relax all your muscles starting at the tip of your head and slowly go down. Feel your muscles relaxing before you allow the cognitive relaxation to go further down the body. Once you have done this your body will have found its chosen posture.
 - Note: make sure to keep the spine straight with the head supported.

Breathing:

- Start focusing on your breath. Don't think about your breathing, but focus on it. Feel the air come in through your nostrils, down through your trachea, and into your lungs. Let your focus find a place to rest. As you focus on the inhaling and exhaling of your breathing your mind will naturally start to hone in on one area of focus. Perhaps the air rushing through your nose, or maybe the air filling the lungs, but once you find your focal breathing point keeps your focus there.
 - Counting can be extremely helpful, especially for those new to

meditation. Count 1-10 with every number being counted twice, once on the inhale and once on the exhale. So 1 (while you inhale), 1 (while you exhale), 2 (while you inhale), 2 (while you exhale)...10 (while you exhale), Then start over again at 1.

- For many people this is a great mental place to simply sit and meditate. Once you feel your mind start to center and you're in a rhythm stop counting and just follow your breath. Do this for 5 minutes when you are just starting and gradually build the time up as you become more adept at meditating.
- When your mind wanders simply

The Next Level:

After mastering holding focus for on your breath and staying in a meditative state for a little while I encourage you to take it a little further.

- At this point you have focused on your breath for a period of time and you have entered a meditative state. You are calm, serene, and peaceful. Now slowly let your focus move from its current chosen position on breathing and allow it to turn inwards.
- Place your focus centered between your eyebrows and an inch or so above them.
- Focus on this point and continue the rhythmic breathing in your meditative state.
- Observe. Simply sit in your meditative state and observe that focal point almost like watching a movie. You are playing the role of audience and not the producer.

If only it were that easy! Meditation requires a great deal of focus and self-control. This is one of the reasons it is so great in building self-discipline. The mind is a very active place. Thoughts are happening all the time, even when you sleep. Beginners will often have the “What the hell am I doing?” thought. Frustration creeps in when you can’t seem to quiet your mind and the internal chatter. How do you combat these issues and find some inner calm?

Tips for Success:

- When your mind strays acknowledge it, detach, and slowly bring your focus back to its focal point.
- Do not be judgmental. There’s no telling what crazy thoughts are going to pop into your head. Do not judge yourself. Simply acknowledge them, detach, and bring your focus back to your breathing.
- Meditate with another person. Like with so many things, partnering up can be great, just make sure you are both serious about it.
- Meditate early in the morning or right before bed.
- Let the stress rest. No matter what happens don’t get stressed about it. Just do the best you can each time and let meditation take its course.

This is like riding a bike, once you get the hang of it you will naturally and quickly get to your meditative state faster and faster.

Mindfulness:

Once relegated to the realms of esoteric beliefs, religion, and thought to be selectively attainable; scientific researchers have translated the concept of mindfulness into one that is measurable and provides an operational definition [39]. Essentially they liberated it from the view that it was limited to spiritual practices and put it into quantifiable contexts and demonstrated its real life effects on the human condition. In 1977 Clive Sherlock, a British doctor, developed Adaptive Practice. It is a structured program of self-discipline to combat emotional issues through the utilization and the development of an individual's mindfulness [40, 41].

There have been studies that also show the adverse effects of not being mindful. In 2005 researchers Nowlis S. M. and Shiv B. demonstrated that distracted shoppers are more likely to display a lack of self-discipline while shopping and are more likely to sample the available food samples [42].

A cluttered mind is less capable of good decision making and shows less ability to demonstrate self-restraint and exercise self-discipline. Most likely many of you have experienced these moments in your personal life.

In today's fast paced world we have evolved into amazing multi-taskers, which is awesome, but it has come at a price. Many of us have lost our true awareness of the present moment because our mind is on permanent multi-task. To illustrate this very real concept imagine this scenario:

Someone is driving her kids to a soccer game Saturday morning. Where is her mind? It is thinking of the oranges she left on the kitchen counter that she was supposed to bring for the team to enjoy at halftime, it's wondering if her son really finished his homework, it is cringing at the embarrassing moment she had two days ago with a coworker, it is wondering if it will be awkward the next time she sees her coworker on Monday, and by the time she pulls into the parking lot at the soccer field she doesn't even know how she got there. Her mind seems to be everywhere but in the present moment.

How do you start living in the present moment? For starters meditation is a phenomenal road to greater mindfulness. There is a plethora of scientifically proven methods to practice mindfulness [43], the following are a few examples that can be applied today.

Turn off Auto-Pilot:

Throughout your day you have many routines you do with little thought. What's the solution? Consciously take a moment and be present during these routines. If walking the dog is an auto-pilot routine take a moment and look up.

When was the last time you looked up at the trees above you? Took a moment and actually looked at the branches, how they connected to the tree, and maybe noticed a squirrel flicking its tail? Smelled the fresh autumn leaves; listened to the sounds of the wind rushing through the trees or the cars driving by on the highway behind the houses. If you take a moment and simply slow down and become aware, you are practicing mindfulness and making a cognitive effort to be more present in your life.

Nobody knows for sure what happens after we die but what is 100% undeniably true is that right now, in this present moment, we exist. Isn't that an amazing gift and opportunity? We can choose to be present in this existence if we so desire. Every second that passes us by is a second we will never get back or have another opportunity to experience again. It is our choice if we are present to experience life fully.

Take breaks and Take Time:

Mindfulness requires concentration and that concentration will initially require more effort in the preliminary stages of development. Think of it like learning a language. If you grew up in the U.S. chances are you studied a foreign language; it is generally a required subject of study in the U.S.A. Maybe you never became fluent in French or Spanish, but you did learn something at one point, although it may be long and forgotten by now. Remember how hard it was at first when you were first learning simple conversational questions and responses. You most likely had to study, concentrate, and learn. But by the following semester you were able to say, *hello, how are you*, and appropriately respond in that foreign language. You can't just decide one day you want to speak French and pop some internal switch. It takes time. So don't overdo it. Take breaks when practicing mindfulness. Do it in short bursts of maybe 10-15 seconds and then let the mind wander again. After a moment or two pull it back and hit another 10-15 second burst. Secondly, be willing to allow yourself time

to fumble around with the process. More often than not people are bad at something before they are good. Try not to be critical or cynical. Practicing mindfulness is a difficult task.

It is also a great way to enjoy your 5 minute breaks if you are practicing the Pomodoro Technique!

Start Mindfully Listening:

Next time you're in a restaurant take a look around. Count how many couples you see sitting in front of each other with their eyes down at their cell phones having a 'conversation'.

Many people are simply waiting for their turn to speak. They hear the other person; naturally understand them and all the while their inner-voice is actively at work. When they hear a break in speech they let that inner-voice manifest into verbal thoughts. Chances are the other person is doing the same thing. They hear each other, process and comprehend what is communicated, but are not truly connected and communicating as fully as possible. Next time you are in a conversation try some mindful listening

- Make eye contact
- Process what they say
- Be and remain open to the speaker's perspective
- Don't interrupt
- Let go of the need to be right (very liberating)

- Let your defenses down and don't be defensive
- Put away distractions (cell phone conversations?)
- Paraphrase what you heard in your response without being antagonizing
- Take a mindful breath before you respond
- Don't jump to conclusions
- Listen to tone, look at body language, note what their eyes are saying
- Ask open ended questions to encourage dialogue

Mindful listening isn't relegated to the realms of arguments, disagreements, or debates (though it is highly recommended for all 3). It is for any conversation. It is a common component of truly stimulating conversations. Both participants are absorbed and very present in the moment during these conversations.

Another noteworthy tip is to not discount people because of age, social status, or any other factor. Everyone has a unique and personal voice. Who's to say where the next amazing insight or inspiration will come from? Approaching the world with that type of open mind and attitude will undoubtedly spur amazing growth as well as condition your brain to recognize opportunities in areas that once eluded you.

Other Ways to Train Discipline:

Exposing yourself to your limitations and continually pushing them increases

your self-discipline as well as augmenting your personal limitations (pushing them further and further). If you are able to successfully conquer several obstacles your confidence builds and your self-discipline grows. Confidence and self-discipline are the byproducts of success as well as the precursors. Some of the following suggestions may seem a little, well, extreme. But if you are someone up to a real challenge and want to test your limits there is no harm in trying.

During my competitive wrestling days, which spanned nearly 20 years, I found that it took an extreme amount of self-discipline to manage my diet as strictly as necessary to consistently weigh in at a weight lower than my natural weight, considerably lower. Today with the boom in MMA there are many great ways for athletes to cut weight, like water loading, but in my days it was calories-in and calories-out. This meant a lot of fasting.

Fasting:

Fasting can be a great way to exercise your self-control and self-discipline through diet and food. Many religions observe periods of fasting. The main benefit of this practice is it trains your brain to push past its perceived limitations (fatigue) for long periods of time.

In addition to developing amazing self-discipline research shows that intermittent fasting benefits the cerebrovascular and cardiovascular systems [44]. It may even hold the answer to healthy and successful brain aging as a chosen eating pattern [45].

This discipline will undoubtedly change your relationship with food and there is a good chance you'll drop a few pounds. There are popular and misleading myths in the health and fitness sectors. The five meals a day to burn fat and ward away hunger myth has been debunked by real research [46, 47]. For those who are worried that fasting will affect your performance or mood extensive studies have proven otherwise [48]. And my personal experience of performing at peak ability on a fasting diet during wrestling seasons makes me a complete believer that it does not harm your performance. There's no harm in giving it a shot.

Cold Showers:

Katherine Hepburn swore by them and they have become popularized in the last few years with many celebrities touting the beauty and anti-aging benefits. It also takes a lot of self-discipline and self-control to endure one of these. The many benefits of cold showers have been well documented [49] including relief from depression, temperature regulation of the body, improved circulation, fat loss, and improved immune systems [50]. Cold exposure in Sweden and Siberia, where they let babies take naps in the cold outdoors (Sweden) and they dump ice cold buckets of water on a child's head between the age of 2-6 years old and year round in a practice known as Rodnichok (Siberia), has been commonplace in the culture for hundreds of years. In both cases the children grow up more disease resistant and enjoy a deeper and more sound sleep [51].

The benefits are plentiful and a wonderful byproduct is increased self-discipline. It isn't easy to resist the overwhelming temptation and urge to turn the hot water back on while you stand in frigid cold water. Over time it becomes easier. I was first introduced to this concept my freshmen year in College when a health professor suggested ending every shower with 2-5 minutes of cold water because of the benefits it poses to the immune system and its health benefits for skin. I carried that habit well into my adult life. Not to mention, James Bond does this too (at least in the books), and he is pretty badass!

Control What You Can:

In all of my businesses regardless of the business model, structure, or market there was one common motto I drilled into everyone's head. Control what you can and manage the rest. If you control all the things you have direct power over the unexpected obstacles become fewer and further between. When they do pop up, and if all other systems within your control are cohesively functioning smoothly, it is much easier and less stressful to allocate additional focus into coming up with a proactive solution to help achieve your goals and persevere past the obstacle.

Discipline is similar in a sense. There are many things you have direct control over in your life; your words, actions, and behaviors specifically. By becoming mindful of those and exerting direct control over them you are exercising and increasing self-discipline. Do you have the mouth of a sailor? Try and stop cursing. Become aware of it and make a conscious and daily attempt to stop. Over time with continual internal pressure the curse words will become a less dominant part of your repertoire. Do you find that you never apologize, blame

others, never make your bed, don't clean dishes as you cook, feel the need to always be right? Make a conscious effort to stop. Like most things in personal development changing one bad behavior into a good or neutral one has a snowball and compounded effect on other behaviors. It also puts you in a position to control bigger things. Every time you succeed in maintaining self-control over the small items you condition your self-discipline to be able to handle larger things down the road.

Chapter Synopsis

1. Meditation is a phenomenal tool to develop self-discipline. There are step by step directions in the section *How to Meditate*. It is a transformational habit and is scientifically proven to improve virtually every aspect of your life experience (mental, emotional, and physical).
2. Mindfulness is living in the present moment. It has become a focus of behavioral science and has been proven to also improve several aspects of your life experience like meditation. There are several suggested ways to practice mindfulness:
 1. Turning off auto-pilot
 2. Taking breaks and being patient
 3. Practicing mindful listening
3. Intermittent fasting has many health benefits. It is also a great way to change your relationship with food while building self-discipline.
4. Cold showers and cold exposure has been shown to develop the immune system and create better sleep. Enduring a cold shower is a great way to test your limitations while building greater self-discipline.
5. Consciously making an effort to control the small things you have direct control over will prepare you for the unexpected obstacles that pop up and

help you control the bigger things down the road.

Chapter 7: Pitfalls to Avoid When Building Self-Discipline

*“Most great people have attained their greatest success just one step beyond their greatest failure.”
-Napoleon Hill*

It is inevitable that you will encounter challenges during the development of your self-discipline. You will see them on a daily basis. This chapter is dedicated to becoming aware of the more common pitfalls.

“Tomorrow I’m going to...” - Are you really?

The word tomorrow in the context of taking action is a dream-killer. Committing yourself to an undertaking at a later point in time, rather than now, creates comfort and the internal impression that you are taking action when in fact no action has been taken. You can thank dopamine again for this. Most everyone has all undoubtedly been there, delaying tasks to avoid the unpleasant experience of doing them.

In a productive day the two hardest things to do are start and stop. Once the ball is rolling and inertia takes control it is hard to stop the progress and productive momentum. Even harder is starting the daily tasks in the first place. This is when we sometimes fall victim to the “I’m gonna do it tomorrow...” or the “And but...” thought processes. Once we start thinking like this the chances of actually starting are pretty doubtful. But if you just force yourself to start on a task, inertia takes over and things start getting done.

Tips for Starting:

Start Easy:

Start with a habit that is too easy to avoid. Transformational habits can be created by piecemeal development. Let’s say that your goal was to create the transformational habit of exercising but you can’t seem to get yourself motivated to actually go to the gym. Instead of going out and buying an expensive CrossFit gym membership and new workout clothes to get yourself motivated,

just make it your goal to work out for 1 minute today even if it's at home. This is too easy to say no to. There is always time to build intensity but by allowing yourself to acquire a new habit piece by piece you improve the chances of building a new habit that may have evaded you previously. Once the habit is becoming instilled then you can add intensity.

It's very easy to look around and compare yourself to others and then have the urge to optimize or "go all out" and do more. A common example is the guy who just got a gym membership and starts adding extra weight to his exercise because someone else is lifting a considerable amount more. He wants to look a certain part and avoid appearing weak. Men and the need to be alphas have caused many unnecessary gym injuries. The downside, besides being plain silly, is that this can pull him off track more than it can help him steer the course. Don't worry about that guy or gal with the Greek Adonis six-pack. Just prove to yourself that you can stick to something small for 30 consecutive days even if that's just 1 minute of pushups every day! After 5, 10, 15 or even 30 days of sticking to a small habit you will have built confidence. Not necessarily the confidence that makes you put 300 pounds above you on the bench press but the type of confidence that shows you that you can stick to a habit. After the habit is instilled performance becomes the focus. That's when intensity becomes the focus. Of course starting easy goes for any new habit, I just used the gym example for illustrative purposes. But if you wanted to write a novel just start with a sentence a day for 30 days (or whatever is easy enough for you to stick to). Don't tell yourself you are going to write 4,000 or 5,000 words every day when you haven't even written your first sentence. It is the perfect recipe for disaster.

Stack the Pain Early:

Behavioral scientists have discovered that one of the most effective ways to make an experience enjoyable and pleasurable is to stack the painful parts of the experience early in the process [52]. I know that may sound counterintuitive but science has demonstrated it time and time again. The psychology behind this plays a part in the huge success behind all-inclusive resorts and vacations. You pay the lump sum up front, the painful part, and the rest of the vacation is parties, food, drink, and relaxation. The overall experience is awesome, your recollection of the vacation is not all the money you shelled out daily because you paid up front, and with a pleasurable memory you may find yourself looking for another all-inclusive resort for your next vacation. This segments the

pleasure and combines the pain. Lawyers use this approach when giving news to a client, they always give the bad news first and the good news second, this creates a more pleasurable memory for the client.

When scheduling your daily routines for the next day make sure to schedule in the least pleasurable parts first. This way you go from a bad to good experience leaving you with a more favorable view of the entire day. If you enjoyed your day you are much more likely to repeat it the following day.

For example if working out is your goal then start with your least favorite exercise and finish with your favorite.

However, this approach may need to be revised if you are pursuing a creative outlet. If you are an artist, author, or pursuing any other creative task and you find you are most creative first thing in the morning than start with that. Just be sure to finish the day with something that you enjoy to ensure your recall of the day is pleasurable. Ending on a bad note today makes starting tomorrow much more difficult.

Revisit Goals:

If you find that you are still having difficulties building a habit even after utilizing the above techniques then perhaps revisiting your goals and their driving force is a good idea. Remember that the most powerful motivation is intrinsic motivation. You are much more likely to find yourself consistently motivated if the driving force is relevant and true to your *Big Why* and intrinsic values.

A lot of people struggle to go to the gym on a regular basis. Personally I had years on years where I would commit to the gym, get in shape, stop going to the gym, and then fall out of shape all within a 5-6 month period. My on-and-off workouts lasted for almost 5 years during my mid-20s. It wasn't until I revisited my goals and the driving force behind them that I was able to develop a consistent long term habit. Instead of using external motivation which was how I looked, my vanity, I turned to my former passions and started wrestling on a weekly basis and I joined a flag football team. When I started training again it was clear that I was nowhere near peak performance capabilities. Being the highly competitive individual I am improving my performance became my driving force for going to the gym. I wanted to fully enjoy my passions and

performing my best was crucial to that enjoyment. Almost overnight my workouts at the gym became considerably more tolerable and eventually they became the highlights of my day. Instead of thinking how good I was going to look during a workout for motivation I imagined how great it was going to feel once I was performing at a higher level athletically. By revisiting my goal and motivation for working out my experiences at the gym changed and now I truly enjoy my gym time, not to mention it led me to many other sports like MMA, boxing, and Muay Thai that I thoroughly enjoy now. Finding a way to align goals with intrinsic motivation can work wonders. The best part is I also succeeded in my goals that were externally motivated as a byproduct of aligning my goals intrinsically. It's the same concept behind the saying *–Do what you love and the money will follow.*

It is worth noting that often times external motivation factors are initially strong. They can really ignite a spark of motivation. Using those factors to get started is completely okay, actually it is great idea. However, in the end for long-term goals and life-long habits, at some point the motivation needs to come from intrinsic values. Revisiting your goals and clarifying the intrinsic motivation for each could prove greatly beneficial in the long run.

Realistic Goals are Difficult and Achievable!

A lot of people fall victim to setting their goals with unrealistic expectation. In creating their goals they expect that it will cost little sacrifice, come with ease, and happen quickly. This is a detrimental practice that destroys the chances of success and causes people to get stuck in a miserable cycle. This behavior is known as the false hope syndrome [53].

Similar to the event focused visualization it gives a temporary boost in the sense of success and instant gratification from the exciting thoughts of how good life is going to be soon. You have already enjoyed some of the rewards of success, thanks to dopamine, without having actually done anything yet.

If you have found yourself victim to the false hope syndrome don't fret. You are not alone. It is actually one of the reasons that so many self-help books make insane promises in their titles and throughout the book. The high people get from these empty-promise books is almost addictive. I remember when *The*

Secret, by Rhonda Byrne, came out claiming the amazing effects of the Law of Attraction one of my best mates thought he was simply going to visualize millions of dollars in his bank account. He did but his bank account never changed, but boy did he love daydreaming about the nonexistent millions he had. I have read *The Secret* and I believe there is a lot of great stuff as far as positive mental attitude. I really believe that thinking in that mindset creates some magical results. I don't know if I would go as far as to make the claims the book does but I do know there is no success without work, period. The way to liberate yourself from this cycle is to learn how to set realistic goals and be prepared to sacrifice work for them. I think one of the best books on the market today that can ground any reader into realistic but high expectations is *Mastery* by Robert Greene. It focuses on the process, sacrifice, and time required in becoming a master in whatever pursuit you choose. No empty promises, no getting rich quick, just good old fashioned self-discipline, hard work, and a fulfilling existence. Now that's living!

When setting your goals do some research and learn the "industry standards" so to speak. If your goal is weight loss find out what you can really expect. Don't research a bunch of flash and shine ads with outrageous promises that try to sell you false hope. You know the ones with fake before and after photos, crazy promises, and claims of how easy it is? Do yourself a favor and research verifiable input. Once you know the industry standards you can set a more realistic goal.

Be patient with yourself and understand it will take time. The prologue to every overnight success is the years of work we never hear about that were put into the endeavor. This is why goals aligned and fueled by intrinsic motivation are so important. For a real long-term goal you may need to commit years to the process. Over those years there will be a great deal of sacrifice, commitment, learning curves, and difficulties. To steer the course will require an immense amount of self-discipline. Be patient with yourself, understand that it can take a long time to succeed in your goal, and find a way to enjoy the process. If you hate the process then the goal is most likely not aligned with your intrinsic motivation or *Big Why*.

Write your goals down, break them down into smaller achievable milestones with realistic timelines that still test your limits, break the milestones into daily achievable tasks, and simply focus on the tasks every day (this is why daily routine is in my opinion the greatest transformational habit). If you do not hit

your milestones in the given timeframe re-evaluate and adjust your daily tasks. Is it a matter of losing productivity somewhere? Is there something you can change like how your hours of the day are allocated to varying tasks, to increase your productivity? Are you on the right path but your timeline was unrealistic? To effectively adjust your tasks means you will also have to measure your inputs and outputs. If you want to be an author but have yet to experience any success despite having a great product there is a reason. Are you allocating time to marketing, building a dedicated reader base, or are you simply pumping books into the abyss of publication hoping that you catch a break? Adjust accordingly and proceed forward.

Lastly, take on one project at a time. Overloading your plate is a surefire way to fail. I experienced this after I started my first business. About 6 months into it I had another great business idea. I pitched the business plan and found some investors. To make a long story short both ventures failed because I tried managing and building two different projects which independently each demanded full-time dedication and attention. Despite confidence (or more likely the arrogance of youth) I was not able to juggle these huge demands. On top of the failures I was miserably churning out 15 hour days, seven days a week, for months on end. Once I started focusing on one big project at a time I discovered a great deal of success was waiting.

“People think focus means saying yes to the thing you’ve got to focus on. But that’s not what it means at all. It means saying no to the hundred other good ideas that there are. You have to pick carefully.”

-Steve Jobs

Chapter Synopsis:

1. By postponing start dates for a project or task your dopamine will work against you and create a sense of comfort as though you are doing something or making progress when truly you are not. If you convince yourself all you have to do is commit to that first moment of action now and not later, inertia takes over and real progress towards your goals starts happening.
2. To make starting easier make your task too easy to fail. Stick with this easy task for 30 days. The purpose is to show yourself you can stick with a new habit and build the confidence needed to start adding difficulty. In the early stages performance is not the focus, sticking with the action of going through the process is.
3. Studies show that by getting the less pleasurable or painful tasks done first and finishing with the pleasurable ones you end on a high note. Ending on this high note gives you an overall more pleasurable experience. When an experience is pleasurable you are more likely to repeat it.
4. If sticking with a habit continually proves to be too difficult revisit your goals and evaluate the motivation behind it. Align your goals with intrinsic motivation and you are more likely to stick with the routine. Often times external motivation is a great way to get the ball rolling and if the underlying motivation is intrinsic your long-term success is more likely. Strengthen your motivation by coupling both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.
5. In setting unrealistic expectations for goals you can fall victim to the false hope syndrome (when you are super excited at the start due to the unrealistic expectations and dopamine release). The end result is usually failing to reach your goals and this creates a real decrease in motivation.

Research industry standards and adjust your goalsetting accordingly. Be patient with yourself. Some real worthwhile long-term goals may take years to achieve.

1. Write down goals, break them into milestones, break milestones into daily tasks and focus on the daily tasks. Periodically evaluate your progress and process and adjust accordingly.
2. Focus on one big goal at a time. For example don't try to start 2 different businesses at once.

Chapter 8: Reducing and Utilizing Stress, Future Strangers, Choices, and Overestimation:

*“Don’t judge me by my successes, judge me by how many times I fell and got back up again.”
-Nelson Mandela*

Pitfalls of Stress:

Who hasn’t fallen short in resisting temptation in the midst of overwhelming stress? Don’t feel bad, it is part of the human condition.

A study in Australia demonstrates how stress reduces willpower [54]. In this study students found themselves less capable of exhibiting self-control, and they were more prone to give into temptation during the stressful stretches of time during exam periods.

As soon as stress becomes too much the brain starts looking for a course of action that can make you feel better. It resorts to its friend and cohort dopamine for relief and instant gratification. These activities include mindlessly surfing the web and social media, eating unhealthy foods and snacks, drinking, smoking, etc.

Without a proactive approach to stress you will be left open to its negative effects during crises situations or long periods of stress exposure. The best way to beat stress is to consistently manage it. Here are a few great ways to manage your stress regularly:

- **Physical activity.** This is one of the most effective ways to reduce stress and it also doubles as a transformational habit with many great additional benefits.

- Listen to your favorite tunes and unwind. Music improves mood as well as reduces stress [55]. It also boasts a small pain relieving effect [56] this is why it is great to bring your headphones with you to the gym.
- Go for a hike, start a garden, or go for a walk in the park. Studies have demonstrated that outdoor activities and nature have a stress reducing effect as well as a host of overall benefits to people's wellbeing [57].
- Take a break from stressful circumstances and spend some time with family and loved ones. This allows your body to settle again as well as give your brain a break. When you come back refreshed and rested you will find you have new insights and ideas on how to approach a situation.
- Massages and their stress reducing benefits were covered Chapter 4. It has been proven as a great way to reduce stress [58]. Go ahead and pamper yourself a little and get a massage.
- Last but not least the most effective way to manage stress is to create a daily meditation practice. I have spoken in great detail about meditation because of its amazing benefits. Visit Chapter 6 for further details on how to meditate.

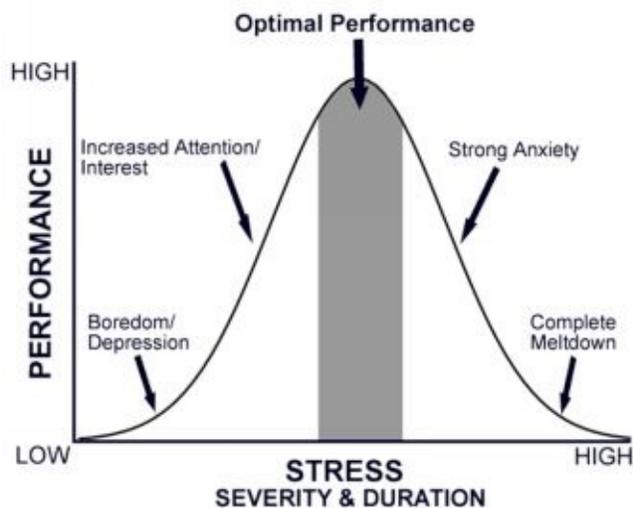
Benefits of Stress:

Stress is wired into the more primitive components of our brain. It was essential 200,000 years ago when our species, homo-sapiens, first started to evolve.

Stress was the majority of what we felt at that time. It was, and still is, the predecessor and motivational spark for quick and decisive decisions, like fight or flight. Luckily we are not exposed to situations where we have face to face encounters with sabre-tooth tigers in our daily lives anymore. With the birth of civilization, man's brain has developed well past what it once was in prehistoric

times, but stress has not gone anywhere and honestly we should be thankful for that. It gives us the opportunity to learn how to manage it and use it to further our abilities.

Managing emotions and remaining calm are key factors in peak performance. Research conducted by TopSmart found that 90% of top performers were highly skilled in managing stress and remaining calm during crises situations. The sample population for this study was 1,000,000 participants [59]. You don't need to be a statistician to appreciate the reliability of a study of this magnitude. Studies done by Elizabeth Kirby at the University of Berkeley [60] have shown that stress not only encourages the growth of new brain cells for improved memory, but that there is also a level of stress where we are at our peak performance level. When you learn to manage stress you are able to create your peak performance abilities and remain calm in crises moments. These studies were done with intermittent stress exposure. Prolonged stress has many serious negative health effects both mentally and physically.



(Source: <http://news.berkeley.edu/2013/04/16/researchers-find-out-why-some-stress-is-good-for-you/>)

The stages of stress go from low to high with the low end of the spectrum being characterized by boredom or even depression. As stress levels increase we find heightened attention and our interest increases. This is the sign that you are about to enter your peak stage of optimal performance. The key to keeping this stage in tact is your ability to remain calm.

Remaining calm when it's figuratively *hitting the fan* is easier said than done.

So what should you do when you're in the midst of stress? First and most importantly you practice and take all the different actions, techniques, and methods we have discussed throughout the book on a daily basis. This is the most important component to being able to manage stress. It is much easier to become the person who can manage stress then to try and figure it out on the fly.

When you are confronted with a highly stressful situation take a moment and simply stop. Just stop. Take a deep breath and be mindful of that breath. Do ten consecutive breaths in this fashion. Then take a moment and reframe your perspective.

Reframing Perspective:

There are a lot of things outside of your control. People who are often stressed find themselves in a negative thought pattern a lot because they are constantly focusing on these external factors. Take a moment and accept that some things are simply out of your control. What is within your control, however, is how you choose to respond to them. When you are finding yourself stressed detach from it. Step away and get a clear picture of it. List what is *actually* going wrong. When you can narrow in on what the real issues are you will usually find that your stress level is not proportionate to the issue causing the stress.

Think of a time when something like traffic completely threw your whole day off. It put you behind schedule and then everything seemed to compound negatively from there on out. When you enter these negative thought patterns you are prone to continue choosing to react negatively to external stimuli.

A good tip when reframing perspective is to imagine this stressful moment or event on a timeline of your life. While visualizing this timeline mentally zoom out and look at the entire timeline of your life. Sure enough there are numerous moments along that timeline where you had previously encountered stress and the outcome was probably not as devastating as you thought it was going to be while in the midst of the stress induced moment. In 1, 5, or even 10 years' time is this event going to hold much magnitude? It's probably not going to. This helps put perspective on what the true level of stress really is and its real severity level. In addition it has a calming effect by seeing that in the grand scheme of

things the current situation is really not a huge deal.

Befriend Your 'Future' Self

In the early 1990's a study was performed on the military drawdown program [61] and it showed that people, when faced with the options for a smaller lump sum now or an annuity payment (which had a higher present value), consistently take the smaller lump sum. In the end instant gratification cost these individuals 17% of the total value of the money they were owed [62].

Why would any sane and rational person do this? Well, personal financial decisions are not always based on financial facts. The irrational reactions of financial news of investors helped me make a small fortune in the stock market in my late 20s. Anytime there is a hiccup in the world economic scene people irrationally oversell their positions. A bit of rationale and a temperament for some risk netted me 123% of return in my portfolio in 12 months. Psychology plays a heavy role in all decisions and studies show that people value immediate gains over future reward. This phenomenon is referred to as temporal discounting [63]. The psychology behind this phenomenon is that people feel disconnected from their future self; essentially they view them as strangers.

The retirement age over the past 20 years has steadily increased. The 30 years prior to that trend wrote a story of an earlier retirement trend. The differentiating factor was the shift from company ran pensions to self-ran 401k's and other retirement vehicles [64]. When individuals were given control over their retirement options they continually make decisions that hurt their future-self's quality of life (like taking money out of a 401k early resulting in paying penalties plus losing the compounded return of that money over the years until retirement). An individual's rate at which they trade future dollars for present dollars is known as a personal discount rate [65]. The higher the rate the more likely you are to sacrifice future gains for instant gratification.

There is a simple solution that researches have suggested changes this behavior and trend [66]. Think future reward first. For example assume someone is considering buying a new \$20,000 car by taking the money to purchase it out of their 401k. Instead of thinking of how nice that new car would be to have now, instead think first of how amazing it will in 30 years when you retire and that \$20,000 is worth \$150,000 after moderate compounded returns in safe investment vehicles. In 5 years the car will be worth less than half its cost today. Apply this thought process to your urges to sacrifice future rewards for

instant gratification. This will aid you in resisting temptation.

To help you create this thought process, envision your future self. Whether you find it more motivating to envision the future self you want to be (retired early and living the life, successful entrepreneur, fit and in shape, etc.) or the one that you are fearful of becoming (70 year old door greeter at the local megatron shopping center, miserably going to a job you hate, fat and depressed on the couch, etc.) doesn't matter. Studies confirm that imagining your future self, either 'hoped for' or 'feared of', is an effective way to delay gratification in the present for greater gains in the future [67]. An experiment at McMaster University that aimed to get people to exercise more proved that the sample group who practiced visualizing their future self reported that they exercised more than other participants in the study [68]. To help build the self-discipline to commit to delaying gratification and taking daily action to achieve long-term goals befriend your future self.

Choices, Choices, Choices

Making several choices leads to a reduction in self-control. This was demonstrated in a study which the participants displayed many signs of reduced self-control including increased procrastination and less persistence [69]

This is true for the most disciplined among us. I am sure everyone would agree that judges have a high level of self-discipline. It is a very difficult position to obtain and it requires years of persistence and work. However, they are still human. A study conducted on judges found that after making repeated rulings over and over they encountered decision fatigue and went with the path of least resistance and stuck to the status quo [70]. Specifically, the percentage of favorable rulings they rendered after consistent exposure to decision making during a decision session plummeted from an average of 65% to almost 0%. It is very noteworthy that after a short break the favorable rulings sprung back up to 65%.

What's the solution? Well, The Pomodoro Technique of course! Make sure to schedule in breaks frequently especially during intense times of decision making or prolonged stretches of mentally draining work. The Pomodoro Technique does this for you by embedding regular 5 minute breaks through your work and project time.

President Obama and Mark Zuckerberg both have a similar and interesting way to decrease the number of decisions they need to make on a daily basis. They wear essentially the same thing every day [71, 72].

Even menial decisions add to decision fatigue. By streamlining menial decisions you are able to reduce the number of decisions you must make throughout the day. Planning your day the previous night is an easy way to avoid decision fatigue during the following day. Leave your daytime work hours for optimal productivity and reduce the chances of suffering decision fatigue. Set your clothes out for the following day, prioritize your 3 greatest tasks for the day, and do all this the previous night. Checking tasks off is also a very rewarding feeling. It is a physical action that shows you have succeeded in accomplishing a milestone and task. Momentum is a great extension for Google Chrome. It becomes your default new tab and opening home screen page when you get online. It provides you with an opportunity to fill in a daily goal and plan tasks which can be checked off throughout the day. It is one of my personal favorite productivity extensions.

Another amazing way to streamline your day is committing and sticking to the transformational habit of having a daily routine. Having a daily routine decreases the decisions you must make considerably. Coupling this with planning the following day the night before creates a strong habit that will help you avoid decision fatigue.

Additional studies show that decision fatigue [73] makes you more likely to simply take the path of least resistance and go with what you are accustomed to. This can be very counterproductive when creating new habits to build self-discipline. Streamline your day as much as possible to help avoid this. Also, try and make all important decisions after a break when you are most capable of making the most favorable decision.

Dunning-Kruger Effect and Contradictory Self-Analysis

An ingenious botched set of bank robberies inspired Cornell University's David Dunning and Justin Kruger to research the relationship of inflated self-assessment and incompetence. The scientist's results created what is known as the Dunning –Kruger effect. This is a cognitive bias where highly skilled individuals underestimate their abilities while the unskilled individuals overestimate them [74].

The robber McArthur Wheeler was a man of science, in a sense. He was aware that lemon juice can be used as invisible ink when the paper is held close to a heating source. Being the man of science that he was he decided to cover his face in lemon juice and then proceeded to rob two banks, because surely the security cameras could not record his invisible face. It was broad daylight, but Wheeler confidently strolled into the two banks and robbed them. Hours later when the cops were at his door he was dumbfounded, “But I wore the juice?” he stated to cops as they put him in handcuffs.

The Wheeler story is amazingly true. Although the Dunning-Kruger effect captured this cognitive bias through scientific studies, McArthur Wheeler is still the true pioneer of overestimating his capabilities.

Further studies that followed proved that in general people overestimate their abilities to control their urges and resist temptation, known as the restraint bias [75]. As a result people are more likely to overexpose themselves to unnecessary temptation for the simple fact they are overly confident that they can resist it. In the end many become a statistic in support of the restraint bias and falter to temptation.

To combat this dilemma it is best to error on the side of caution, and doing so while avoiding paralysis by analysis. Paralysis by analysis is the fear of taking action while stuck in a state of over-analyzing and consumed by the potential opportunity costs [76]. Simply assume your self-control skill set is a work in progress. In practicing the error on the side of caution approach you are more able to fully evaluate your options, however, it is essential that you are able to commit to a decision once it is made. And though contradictory to the advice to some degree, you must still be willing to take risks...measured risks.

The Need to Avoid Change

The status quo bias is the preference to leave things unchanged [77]. This is where an individual, consciously or subconsciously, perceives any change as a loss. For example say that you have a great diet plan you are about to start, but your house is full of foods that don't fit into the diet regiment. The best course of action is to get rid of the food and not expose yourself to the unnecessary temptation. The problem is that through the combined effects of the restraint bias (believing you are more capable to resist urges than you are), the Dunning-

Kuger effect (overestimating your capabilities), and the status quo bias you find yourself deciding to keep the food. You focus on the fact that it is yours; subconsciously that in itself creates a greater perceived value of the food (endowment effect; [78]). You may also find yourself feeling that getting rid of *your* food would be more of a loss than a gain (loss aversion; [79]). All these factors make the decision simple, keep the food. What are the results? You guessed it! In the end you will most likely eat the unhealthy foods lying around the house. The psychological makeup of a human really makes creating change an uphill battle. Luckily there are many approaches and strategies to combat the status quo and its collection of bias cohorts.

Counteracting the Dilemma:

1. Create a hypothetical scenario where the status quo would be the results from the alternative scenario. In the above example this means that you imagine that the house is already empty of junk food as the status quo. In this hypothetical scenario you created would you want to change the status quo? Would you go out and buy junk food to bring back into the house? If the answer is “of course I wouldn’t go out and buy junk food to bring into the house”, then you know that your psychological makeup is playing against you for change.
2. Revisit your goals. Is the current state of affairs creating forward momentum for change or potentially providing friction? Whenever the answer is leaning towards friction then there is probably a need to make a change.
3. Ask someone you trust. Ideally your role model or mentor. They are unlikely to lead you astray. Sometimes getting another set of eyes on a decision provides you with solutions you hadn’t even thought of.

Chapter Synopsis:

1. Studies show that heightened and prolonged exposure to stress reduces willpower and the ability to exhibit self-control. Reduce stress through physical activity, music, outdoor activities and times in nature, massages, meditation, and breaks.
2. Stress has been proven to be an ally during crises moments and allow us to enter a stage of peak performance. To enter this stage takes 10 deep mindful breaths when things start getting stressful. After the breathing exercise reframe your perspective. Put the magnitude of the stressor in real terms of its actual severity. Imagining it on a timeline of your life from start to finish can help bring calm and clarity to the stressor's true severity level.
3. Studies showed that people are prone to sacrificing future gains for present rewards. This is because they view their future self as a stranger creating quite an obstacle in resisting temptation. To avoid this imagine your future self (either feared or desired future self) before making a decision. The studies showed that this improves our abilities to make better decisions in the present for greater gains in the future.
4. Studies show that decision fatigue encourages you to make the easiest, but often times not the best, decisions. The studies also show that after a short break effective decision making returns. Use the Pomodoro Technique to embed your productive hours with 5 minute breaks. In addition streamline as many menial decisions as possible. Using a daily routine and planning your next day the night before is a great way to streamline menial decisions. Try and make important decisions after a break.
5. Studies show highly skilled individuals underestimate their abilities while unskilled individuals overestimate them. Additional studies showed that in general people overestimate their abilities to control their urges and resist

temptation. To combat this, assume your self-control skill set is a work in progress. Error on the side of caution and fully evaluate your options. Commit to a decision once it is made. Be willing to take measured risks.

6. Many biases that create psychological makeup of a human really make creating change an uphill battle. To gain an upper hand on this obstacle, imagine a hypothetical scenario where the status quo would be the results from the alternative. If the imagined scenario is more desirable than the current reality you know the decision to make. Evaluate if current circumstances are creating friction on your path to your long-term goal
7. When unable to reach a clear optimal decision ask a friend, role model, or mentor. A second or even third pair of eyes on a problem can bring ideas to the table you could not have alone.

Chapter 9: Tips for Success

*“Start small, think big.”
-Steve Jobs*

Start Small:

This is possibly the single greatest tip in the book, start small. Michelangelo's first commissioned work was not the Sistine Chapel. It took years of self-discipline and honing his craft to become the man who painted the Sistine Chapel. Don't write down fifteen new habits you plan to start implementing in your life tomorrow. BJ Fogg of Stanford University suggests that if flossing is a habit you want to develop, start with flossing just one tooth. That's how small things should start. Pick one new habit and ask yourself, "How can I make this habit so easy that it's impossible to fail?" By starting this small you improve your chances of success to near certainty. And don't get caught up on your performance. In the early stages performance is not nearly as important as sticking to the new habit and action. Focus on your successes!

Recognize Victories:

Sometimes it's hard to recognize success, especially when it comes to recognizing your growth. Day in and day out you are exposed to yourself and the subtle changes may not be immediately noticeable. If you have children think of it in the context of their physical growth. You may not have noticed that they are shooting up like a bean sprout but when a friend or family member who hasn't seen them for months comes for a visit they are shocked at how much the child has grown. Constant daily exposure can desensitize you to recognizing gradual change. Couple that with being your own worst critic at times and it becomes very difficult to see small victories and successes. However, it is extremely important that you take a moment and recognize your successes to maintain your motivation and momentum.

Studies have shown that people who rapidly drop weight in the initial phases of a diet and exercise routine lost more weight in than those who don't [81]. Though this may contradict popular perception (tortoise and the hare) it is true, even in the long-term [82]. The reason is that these small victories are validation of your

daily efforts. They are rewards; we have covered in depth the beneficial contributions rewards give to the human psyche and motivation.

It also gives you the desire to take things to the next level. Imagine after weeks of dieting and exercising you don't notice any results. Chances are you abandon ship and quit dieting. On the other hand imagine that if after a week of dieting your friend comments on how you look more fit and slim. You take a peek in the mirror and sure enough there is a noticeable difference. This would encourage you at the very least to continue dieting and very well may be the confidence you needed to put more energy and effort into your fitness and diet regiment.

However small the victories may be, take time and recognize them. If your goal is to practice a new daily routine and all you have accomplished is a post note on your mirror as a reminder then congratulate yourself. You took action! The next morning when you see that post it note you can take it a step further and start. It most likely will take time to consistently perform your routine on a daily basis, but there will come a time when you have completed the routine every day for 7 consecutive days. Success! That in turn will compound on top of itself and soon enough, with some patience, you will be looking back at countless milestones and small successes that led you to a new habit of a daily routine.

“Be Patient”

Patience is not simply one thing. It is a concept that transcends many areas of our personal makeup and affects nearly every characteristic and behavior we possess or act on. So what is patience? By definition patience is the ability to bear less than ideal circumstances with *fortitude* and *calmness*. Patience is also the ability to quietly and *steadily persevere*. It is the ability to do something in a *careful way over a long period of time without haste or rush* [86].

Notice the italicized words? They are italicized because they are the building blocks for patience. ‘Fortitude, calmness, steadily persevere, careful over a long period of time without haste or rush.’ It sounds an awful lot like self-discipline doesn't it? We cannot succeed in building patience without firstly building and developing the prerequisite attributes of fortitude and calmness. Furthermore we must develop a methodical and careful approach to the things we choose to do. These concepts extend well beyond the realm of ‘less than ideal circumstances’ and ‘irritation’, it transcends into our personal world as a way of mastering life.

Thus, Patience = Mental Fortitude x Calmness

By practicing self-discipline you will create greater patience as a result. If you really want a great read that will motivate you but also keep you grounded with realistic expectations read *Mastery* by Robert Greene.

Things are going to take time. Be patient with yourself and have realistic expectations. Don't get discouraged if something doesn't happen as quickly as you want it to. Reevaluate the situation, the input, the output, and adapt. Whatever you do don't quit. Stick with it and be persistent, patient, and positive. It is the combination of those three things that bring a dream from conception to reality. It is the day in and day out tasks done consistently over time that creates change. This requires a great deal of time and patience. Sure, some people advance quicker than others and you very well may start to reap the rewards of your efforts sooner than later. But approach every goal ready to practice patience.

“Put Some Skin in the Game!”

In the *4 Hour Body* by Tim Ferris introduces a great idea to help you stick with a goal. Put some skin in the game! Putting skin in the game simply means you have something at stake, something to lose in the event of failure. Very few people would pick a business partner who wouldn't put money into starting the business. The potential partner's commitment to the venture would be highly suspect if they did not want to commit a financial investment. It is the same concept behind paying upper level management bonuses with stock as opposed to cash. Upper level management's performance directly affects the value of the stock. By paying their bonuses in stock upper level management is put in a position where they have more skin in the game, so to speak. The higher the stakes the more motivated people are.

For example, say that you are trying to get in shape. Undoubtedly you have friends who also share this desire with you. Get a couple on board, pool together an amount that none of you want to lose (the more money the more motivation of course), and set up a competition. The winner(s), however defined, would get the money in part or total depending on the payout scale. This is a great way to use competition and loss aversion (the feeling that losing something outweighs

the benefits of gaining something) in your favor. If you stick with it and don't win you still come out with a priceless foundation for a new life habit.

If your goal is something that you are doing alone than you can still utilize your friends. Find the '*gambling man*' in your social circle and propose a wager. If you don't accomplish your goal/milestone in a given period of time they win. If you do, you win. There are popular websites that act as an escrow (3rd party that holds a fund for different groups until an agreement is solidified) and will hold the money for both all parties involved. A popular one is stick (www.stickK.com); it is a website that facilitates these types of commitment contracts.

If you really want to test your limits write a check out to a friend. They owe you nothing if you fail but in the event that you do fail, they get to cash the check. If you succeed you get the check back. This really uses loss aversion as a motivator!

Of course money is the greatest and most obvious 'skin' to put in the game but it isn't the only one. Get creative and find something that works for you. I have a good friend (I met at an entrepreneurial meetup.com mastermind group*) and we have a running wager that has been going on for years now. We share our monthly goals and we each get to select one measurable goal/milestone from the other person's list that they must achieve for that month. If one person wins then the other has to take them to dinner at a restaurant of their choosing. If both succeed then we go Dutch and get to have a night out on the town. We send each other taunting messages (in good fun of course) and words of encouragement when needed. It has proved to be a great way for me to stay focused.

Setting stakes is easily one of the best ways to keep you committed. The single act of setting a real stake shows a level of commitment most people don't make.

**Note: One of the many benefits of having real face-to-face friends that creates the environment to succeed and help you reach goals.*

Create the Environment for Success:

Temptations are abundant. Increase your chances of staying strong by taking

action to limit your exposure to temptation as much as possible. We have discussed this with the dieter throwing out the unhealthy foods. Ideally these environments are where you spend most of your time; home, office, etc. Maybe you want to quit smoking but the smell of coffee makes you want a cigarette. Take a different path in the office so you don't pass the break room and smell the coffee. Maybe you want to stop binge watching TV and start spending that time building your dreams? If you are serious then sell your television. Perhaps your goal is to curbe your spending and start saving? Create a budget, cut up your credit cards, and carry cash only. There are countless measures, extreme and not so extreme, that you can take to create an environment void of temptation.

Don't Quit Guilty Pleasures:

The cheat day/meal in a diet or exercise regimen actually increases weight loss, as long as it is scheduled at the right time [83]. One cheat day/meal in a week is ideal, 3 or 4 and there goes all the results. The same is true in building self-discipline. Don't give up on those guilty little pleasures you love. Go ahead and schedule in that binge day for Netflix. After a week of being productive and staying resolute on your new habits and development of self-discipline you deserve it. When the frequency of an indulgence decreases the enjoyment and pleasure of the indulgence increases and the guilt associated with it diminishes when it is a reward for hard work. In other words, after a week of using self-discipline to stay committed to your goals, daily tasks, and personal development you will enjoy watching 6 addicting episodes of your favorite show free of guilt! This will help you keep your sanity and surprisingly keep your momentum building.

Behavior Chains:

This is the other arguably greatest tip in the book. I covered it in great detail in Chapter 3. Using a behavior chain is the single greatest way to create a new habit. Start small, use cues, and piggy back on existing habits. If you walk away from reading this and your only takeaways are starting small and behavior chains as a new practice then you got your money's worth. Add meditation and it's a steal!

Failure's a Pit Stop:

The most common stop on the road to any success is failure. Treat this like a pit stop. You know you will encounter it at some point while developing self-discipline and pursuing your long-term goals. Be prepared and ready for it. When you encounter it get back on the horse and back to developing habits. So you missed a workout, oh well. Don't do it tomorrow. You cannot dwell on the failures or it will stop your progress in its tracks. Recognize failures, hold yourself accountable for them, adjust, adapt, and move on. Make sure that you use them as the learning opportunities they are. Keep a positive mentality and a no-quit attitude until a new habit is a habit.

Plan Ahead:

To make sure you are fully prepared to battle temptation you need this in your arsenal. If your goal is dieting then make sure your house is stocked with healthy food all the time. This way when you are hungry you have healthy options. If the fridge and pantry are barren wastelands and you find yourself extremely hungry, then the chances of resorting to the good old status quo and ordering a pizza are much more likely. If your goal is not spending every night in front of the TV then plan an alternate activity during the time you normally watch TV. Go to the gym, read a book, visit a friend. By doing this you are making a preemptive strike at temptation. By planning out how you can avoid being exposed to temptations during your weaker moments when you are more vulnerable take preemptive measures and you will prevail.

Resonating Reasons:

When exploring long-term goals and identifying whether they are intrinsically motivated, try and identify 3 ways the goal resonates with your intrinsic values or passions. For example, when I was deciding whether or not to become an author and get into the publishing business or pursue a different but very viable business plan elsewhere, my 3 reasons for being an author and publishing was the perfect combination of business, writing, and learning. All three resonating reasons are passions of mine. It made my decision easy and verified that my long-term goal was indeed intrinsically motivated. If you find it difficult to find reasons that resonate with your intrinsic values or passions then the goal may not be intrinsically motivated.

Chapter Synopsis

1. Start small. You improve your chances of sticking to something less daunting at first so make it too easy to fail. Don't focus on performance in the early stages of creating a habit.
2. Give yourself a pat on the back anytime you succeed in a milestone. The size of the milestone or goal doesn't matter, it is the confidence building acknowledgement that is what matters.
3. Change takes time, be patient with yourself.
4. Put some skin in the game and have something to lose. This is a great way to continually enforce motivation.
5. Create an environment that is most conducive to your goals. Eliminate as much exposure to temptation as possible when creating this environment for success.
6. Schedule in your guilty pleasures and indulgences. These rewards are a great way to improve momentum and motivation, plus they help you keep your sanity.
7. Behavior chains are your best bet at creating a new habit.
8. It's okay if you fail and you most likely will. Failure is not quitting though so be sure to get back on track and refocus.
9. Take preemptive measures against temptation and plan ahead. These

preemptive measures make sure that you are not exposed to temptation when you are most weak and vulnerable.

10. When planning goals first look for reasons that the goal resonates with you. Try and identify where it is intrinsically motivated.
11. Use resonating reasons to help align goals with intrinsic motivation and your *Big Why*.

Chapter 10: Suggestions for How to Apply this Information:

“Without self-discipline, success is impossible, period.”

-Lou Holtz

Hopefully right now you're feeling pretty motivated. You just read a book with numerous helpful and actionable ideas, suggestions, and plans to help you start growing your self-discipline. If I were to leave you now without any suggestions on how to actually apply this information in your life then it may have all been for naught. Attempting to simply start practicing everything in this book goes against one of the greatest tips of for building self-discipline and success for long-term achievements; starting small. The following suggestions for how to apply this information are based off of years of my personal experience and they have worked wonders for me. If you already feel that you have a good idea on how you are going to start utilizing the various suggestions throughout the book; then by all means please skip this chapter. I don't want to distract your vision with my plan. If things don't seem to work out the way you hoped you can always come back and read this chapter later.

So how and where do you start?

Right now get a pen and paper, ideally a notebook or composition journal with a lot of blank pages. Go ahead and do it now, don't worry I'll wait, I'm not going anywhere, I promise.

Got it? Great! Let's begin:

The concept of this approach is to use a daily routine as an umbrella transformational habit where you will introduce other transformational habits in the routine. You will start small but build quickly. Starting small guarantees you get the ball rolling and create momentum. By beefing up the daily routine

quickly you will start seeing results in the early stages of habit development (remember the weight loss study?).

First thing's first. Write down your personal goal. Just write one goal. It could be anything from dieting to writing a novel. Make sure when writing your goal that it is measurable, very clearly defined, and has an attainable timeline that you still have to strive to accomplish. Research the 'industry standards'. Your goal should be difficult yet attainable. Write reasons that resonate with you and your intrinsic motivation.

Tip: Take this time as an opportunity to make this goal as good as possible. If you are having a hard time writing your goal feel free to do some research on the internet about proper goalsetting. But the rule of thumb is that your goal must be measurable, difficult yet attainable, have a timeline for completing, and laser focused in nature (not vague).

Once you have done this take the Grit-Test. The link is: <http://bit.ly/1KpJZh8>

Be completely honest and detach yourself from any current boost in motivation you are feeling as a result of reading this book. Often times self-help books create temporary motivation. As great as this can be to really start creating change, it can also skew your baseline score. This happens when you answer the questions on the Grit Test under the current and temporary mindset of what behaviors you intend to practice, due to your increased motivation and optimism from reading the book, as opposed to what they truly and historically are. To measure progress you need a true baseline score.

Once you have finished the Grit Test write your score down under your goal.

Next:

In Chapter 3, I went into some detail regarding my daily routine and how I used it as an umbrella habit to introduce other transformational habits simultaneously. My morning routine was written in a composition journal.

On your sheet of paper write:

Morning Routine:

Read Your Goal:

(Read your goal at this time. Reading it out loud is best, and as cheesy as it sounds, try to do it while looking at yourself dead in the eyes in a mirror.)

Meditate for 1-5 minutes

Evening Routine:

Lay out Tomorrow's Clothes

Did I meditate?

(Yes or No)

Plan Tomorrow:

(For right now planning tomorrow is simply flipping the page and writing your daily routine, the same as this one, on a new piece of paper.)

By using the 'start small' approach it's almost impossible not to succeed in this daily routine. You are also simultaneously creating two transformational habits, meditation and a daily routine. Doing this for 7 consecutive days without missing a day is the goal. If you do miss a day make sure you do not miss 2 in a row. Keep in mind that it may take you 30 days or more to get 7 consecutive days in a row (hopefully not but it is well within the realms of possibilities). Remember to be patient with yourself and to stick with it.

Use a behavior chain to piggy back the daily routine. I went into great detail about this in Chapter 3 as well. A lot of people have told me the suggestion of putting a post it note on the mirror (or using dry erase marker) works very well.

I swear by it. Whatever habit you choose to use as your ‘piggy back habit’, make sure that it is a habit you are guaranteed to do every single morning and evening. Brushing teeth is a great habit to use as your piggy back habit. Make the new cue to perform your daily routine a written reminder that you cannot miss seeing. Sight cues are the strongest.

Once you have completed this for 7 consecutive days (without missing a day) it’s time to beef up the daily routine. Before you do take a moment and congratulate yourself! Success! You completed 7 consecutive days and you should acknowledge your achievement!

It is essential to wait until the days are consecutive. This is a necessary milestone that shows you that you are ready to beef up the daily routine. Add these items to your daily routine:

Morning Routine:

Read Your Goal:

(Read your goal at this time. Reading it out loud is best.)

Meditate for 1-5 minutes

1 Mandatory Task for Today:

(This needs to be something new, it should not be something you do every day. Make sure you have to take action to do it. It could be anything from washing the dishes to reading a chapter in a book, or a half of a chapter, or dedicating 30 minutes to brainstorming your novel. Don’t make it too hard!)

Evening Routine:

Lay out Tomorrow’s Clothes

Did I meditate?

(Yes or No)

5 Item Gratitude List:

(Just make sure to get 5 things down.)

Plan Tomorrow:

(What is your 1 Mandatory Task for Tomorrow? Ideally it is a different task but it can be the same.)

You have added a task that requires you to start taking action to do something new. You have also added a gratitude list (transformational habit). These lists are life changing, they truly are. The goal again is 7 consecutive days of successfully sticking to this new daily routine. Make sure when you finish your gratitude list you don't just throw it aside. Read it again and *feel* the feeling of gratitude.

Once you have 7 consecutive days of this under your belt take a moment and congratulate yourself. At minimum you have stuck with a new habit for 14 days! That is awesome and you are really creating a strong foundation to build upon.

At this point it's time to revisit your goal. Go back to the first page and read your goal. Does it still resonate with you? Good! Write that goal on a separate piece of paper and put it in your wallet, purse, or whatever item you carry daily. Keeping your goals on you at all times will serve as a reminder throughout the day of what you are working towards [85].

Tip: Making this goal your screen saver is also a great way to remind you throughout the day.

By now you have a foundation for the new daily routine habit and you have simultaneously created many others as a result. Now it's time to really beef up your daily routine.

Morning Routine:

Read Your Goal:

(Read your goal at this time. Reading it out loud is best.)

Meditate for 5-20 minutes:

(Notice that the time has increased)

3 Mandatory Tasks for Today:

(These are actionable tasks that bring you closer to your goal. Make them realistic and attainable. Remember at the beginning it is about the process and not performance. Performance will naturally become the focus after the process, habit development, has been achieved.)

Midday Goal Reminder:

Set up a repeating alarm event on your calendar to remind you every day to take your goal out and read it. The time should be midday or whenever you are most sluggish and tired during the workday.

Evening Routine:

Lay out Tomorrow's Clothes

Did I meditate?

(Yes or No)

5 Item Gratitude List:

(Just make sure to get 5 items on paper.)

Plan Tomorrow:

(What are the 3 tasks that you will do tomorrow? It's okay if these tasks repeat day after day at this point. For example if your task was to write 1,000 words for your novel every day that task would repeat.)

At this point, if you have managed to stick with your daily routine, the goal is to

stick with this new one indefinitely and continually build. It will evolve and change over the next few months to suit your needs the best. I do suggest sticking with 3 tasks per day and not adding more. Of course you will often times do much more in a day than 3 tasks, however, these tasks are the ones that must happen and without exception. They are the most important tasks/actions that you must make to get yourself closer to your goal. As time passes and you are confident in your ability to maintain a daily routine as a habit start adding other transformational habits. Don't overdo it in the beginning. Remember that studies show you are more likely to fail if you start with too much on your plate.

Use the book synopsis to browse through the many key points of the book and add them into your daily life piecemeal.

After you complete 6 consecutive months of your daily routine successfully, take the grit test again, setting a reminder on your calendar now will ensure you remember. It is a quantifiable way to measure how much your self-discipline has grown. It should prove to be a very rewarding set of results!

Tips To Succeed:

- Be patient with yourself. Change can happen quickly or slowly. But if you are consistent it will inevitably happen.
- Throw in a set of affirmations that keep you motivated as part of your morning routine if you would like.
- If you do not already use a calendar Google offers a free one to anybody with a Gmail account. Calendars are great ways to plan far into the future and to make sure we don't forget things.
- Schedule a day for your guilty pleasure or indulgence. Make sure you have

a reward on a weekly basis.

- Try and stack the pain early so you end the day on a high note and have a better recollection of your daily experience. The exception to this is if your goal involves a level of creativity (writing, art, music, etc.). There are studies that suggest people are most creative in the mornings. If you find this to be true for you make sure your day still ends on a high note. In this approach the pain would be in the middle of the day.
- Set dates on your calendar (30, 60, 90 days) to review your progress. Identify any opportunities to become more productive and apply those changes to your routine.
- Try The Pomodoro Technique. Download a free app on your phone that will signal the breaks and work times. Get creative with your breaks. I generally use them to practice a few minutes of mindfulness or watch a television series.
- Look for opportunities to improve your environment and make it as conducive as possible to help facilitate change in your life. This could include writing inspirational quotes with dry erase marker on your mirrors, listening to motivational tapes in your car, or anything else that keeps the environment pristine and positivity.
- Schedule a midday power nap or 15 minute guided meditation (YouTube has many free options).
- Remember, failure is only permanent if you quit or give up. Treat failures and setbacks as pit stops on your road to success. Push past fatigue and change your life!

Lastly Living Sublime Inc. and I are conducting a study on this approach. The participants are readers who have decided to apply the concepts in this book as

suggested in this chapter. If you are interested in being part of this non-invasive study please use the link below. It will only require that you fill out 3 short surveys (less than 2 minutes) at a 30 day, 90 day, and 180 day period so we can quantifiably measure the results and effectiveness of this approach. The data will help to create the best formula for achieving long-term goals. Those who choose to participate in the survey will also receive a gift from us, a Science of Self-Help book, free of charge. Participants will also receive the book that is based on the results free of charge as an additional gift and thank you for participating.

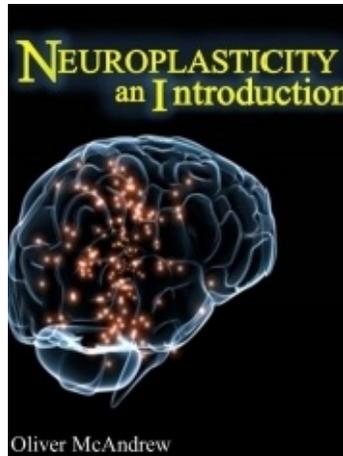
In Parting

It has been my absolute pleasure in spending this time with you. I thoroughly enjoyed writing this book. The number one aim of the book is to help its readers create a real and permanent change in their lives. The reality, however, is that it is entirely up to the reader. I cannot take action on your behalf; change requires you do that. I hope more than anything you start applying these principles today. Get organized and structured with how you plan to apply the concepts and take action with them. If you need any assistance in developing your plan please read Chapter 10.

You will find at the very end of the book a Book Synopsis. I have compiled the Chapter Synopsis from each chapter in this section for easy review. It can serve as a great refresher down the road. Though the statistic is quoted with slight variations at times, the general rule of thumb is that we only retain 10% of what we read [85]. The Book Synopsis is a great way to continually increase that percentage. The best way to retain a great deal of information when learning a new subject is to teach it, retention rates are roughly 90% when we teach information to others. Become an advocate of personal development and share your knowledge with others. And of course, if you enjoyed this book please invite others to share in this experience with us!

Thank you so much for purchasing this book. I truly hope that it helps you to create real and permanent change in your life! As a thank you I want to offer you another one of my Self-Help Science books as a gift. If you would like to receive this free book click the link below.

Neuroplasticity



<https://livingsublime.leadpages.co/neuroplasticity/>

A lot of what we have covered involves neuroplasticity. This book is an introduction to Neuroplasticity and is not available for sale anywhere else. It is a gift to my readers for purchasing this book.

In addition to receiving, *Neuroplasticity: An Introduction*, you will also have an opportunity to get my other books for free, enter giveaways and receive other valuable emails with great self-help and motivational tips.

About the Oliver McAndrew:

The author of this book is a man who writes under the pen name Oliver McAndrew. Currently he is a publisher and author with over 50 other books covering varying subjects in both non-fiction as well as fiction. Writing is one of his greatest passions.

He is an economist with a background in finance but more than anything he is a human constantly chasing his dreams and pushing his limits. He has dedicated his existence to experiencing life as fully as possible. That has entailed committing a great deal of his time to learning, coaching, and educating others on his greatest passion; personal development for a fulfilling existence. His life is in a constant state of flux as he continually seeks growth by pitting himself

against difficult challenges and pushing his limits at every opportunity, yet he has a strong foundation of self-understanding.

He owes a great deal of his self-discipline and dedication to achieving long-term goals to his many years, while growing up and in adulthood, to highly competitive sports involvement. At 19 he dropped over 20 pounds of water weight in a 24 hour period to meet a weight deadline for wrestling. In his adult life he has built 3 successful businesses in 3 different industries, jumps out of perfectly good airplanes and loves it, trained Muay Thai 2 times a day 6 days a week in rural Thailand for over 90 days, and has traveled the world alone and lived months on end in foreign countries to immerse himself in different cultures. He has self-taught 2 foreign languages, he is currently learning a third, and as an author he has committed himself to writing no less than 4,000 words a day and averages 400 pages a month. He calls the world his home and though he does have a permanent residence somewhere in the USA, he spends most of the year in foreign countries, living, learning, and visiting friends he has met from his travels over the years. He learned at an early age that growth is best achieved by leaving one's comfort zone. He strives to test his limits and shatter his comfort zone at every possible opportunity.

His greatest joy is to share his love and passion for growth and personal development with others. If you want to share in this passion with him you will love his other books. This is the first book in this series; however, he will be launching 5 new books covering varying topics of self-improvement using behavioral science methods. If you would like to be updated on the release of these books in the very near future, and have the chance to receive them for free then simply grab your free book offer and he will be sure to keep you updated.

Book Synopsis:

1. The Big Why is our personal purpose and mission in life. It is in alignment with our intrinsic values and motivation.
2. We are more likely to persevere in our endeavors if we are fueled by intrinsic motivation.
3. Discovering your Big Why is usually done over time and with experience. Keeping yourself intrinsically motivated with your goals ensures that you are heading in the right direction.
4. Your self-discipline is affected by the people with whom you choose to surround yourself. By creating a social environment conducive to personal development you are more likely to continue your personal growth. This environment can be virtual but you will add more dimensions and quality if you can create face-to-face groups, meetup is a great resource.
5. Get a mentor and accountability buddy either virtual or real but preferably both. Use the relationships with these people to help keep you committed to your self-discipline.
6. Rise above the naysayers and use their envy and jealousy to fuel your commitment.
7. Self-Discipline is best developed through creating good habits.
8. The best habits to create are transformational habits due to the compounding effect they have in creating additional good habits.

9. Behavior chains coupled with cue, action, and reward, are extremely effective in creating new habits.
10. By focusing on a daily routine as a transformational umbrella habit, it is very easy to introduce other new transformational habits to your day.
11. Studies show habit formation in the brain can take up to 254 days to create a new habit with the average being 66 days. Guaranteeing successful habit creation means maintaining the new practice for 254 days or roughly 8.5 months.
12. In choosing goals make sure that they are inelastic to increase the probability of persevering through temptation and resistance.
13. Visualizing using the process approach (sports) is an amazing transformational habit that will help train your brain to stay committed to daily actions and increase yourself-discipline.
14. Cues and triggers for well embedded habits come in many forms and cover all aspects of sensory reception.
15. Dopamine is a chemical that is released into the brain and gives us pleasure. It is released after the *reward* from phase of a habit sequence (cue, action reward).
16. By familiarizing yourself with cues associated with habits you want to break you can reduce exposure to these cues by making proactive changes to remove them from your environment. In the event that a cue is

unavoidable understanding it for what it is, a cue, you can wait it out until the urge dissipates.

17. The promise/reward technique allows you to use dopamine to create new habits. In this technique you create an association between an action and a reward to release dopamine and assist you in creating the habit.
 1. Different types of reward for this technique could include food, music, breaks, naps, tension relief/relaxation (massages)
18. Altering your perception of an experience through associating rewards is the greatest way to make a habit more pleasurable and therefore use dopamine more effectively.
19. Grit is the ability to persevere and maintain passion for long-term goals. It is the single greatest determining factor in goal accomplishment. You can take Angela Duckworth's 8-Point Grit Test for free and get a baseline measurement.
20. The jury is still out on willpower. Both sides presented convincing arguments backed by research and science, however, the jury is still deliberating and may continue deliberation indefinitely until further evidence is presented. Until a verdict can be reached the decision is up to you.
21. Fatigue is an emotion. It is not a factual limitation of the body and mind. Both body and mind can go further than emotional limitations. When facing fatigue dig a little deeper.
22. Meditation is a phenomenal tool to develop self-discipline. There are step by step directions in the section *How to Meditate*. It is a transformational habit and is scientifically proven to improve virtually every aspect of your life experience (mental, emotional, and physical).

23. Mindfulness is living in the present moment. It has become a focus of behavioral science and has been proven to also improve several aspects of your life experience like meditation. There are several suggested ways to practice mindfulness:

1. Turning off auto-pilot
2. Taking breaks and being patient
3. Practicing mindful listening

24. Intermittent fasting has many health benefits. It is also a great way to change your relationship with food while building self-discipline.

25. Cold showers and cold exposure has been shown to develop the immune system and create better sleep. Enduring a cold shower is a great way to test your limitations while building greater self-discipline.

26. Consciously making an effort to control the small things you have direct control over will prepare you for the unexpected obstacles that pop up and help you control the bigger things down the road.

27. By postponing start dates for a project or task your dopamine will work against you and create a sense of comfort as though you are doing something or making progress when truly you are not. If you convince yourself all you have to do is commit to that first moment of action now and not later inertia takes over and real progress towards your goals starts happening.

28. To make starting easier make your task too easy to fail. Stick with this

easy task for 30 days. The purpose is to show yourself you can stick with a new habit and build the confidence needed to start adding difficulty. In the early stages performance is not the focus, sticking with the action of going through the process is.

29. Studies that shown that by getting the less pleasurable or painful parts done first and finishing with the pleasurable ones you end on a high note. Ending on this high note gives you a more overall pleasurable experience. When an experience is pleasurable you are more likely to repeat it.
30. If sticking with a habit continually proves to be too difficult revisit your goals evaluate the motivation behind it. Align your goals with intrinsic motivation and you are more likely to stick with the routine. Often times your external motivation is a great way to get the ball rolling and if the underlying motivation is intrinsic your long-term success is more likely. Strengthen your motivation by coupling both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.
31. In setting unrealistic expectations for goals you can fall victim to the false hope syndrome (when you are super excited at the start due to the unrealistic expectations and dopamine release). The end result is usually failing to reach your goals and this creates a real decrease in motivation. Research industry standards and adjust your goalsetting accordingly. Be patient with yourself. Some real worthwhile long-term goals may take years to achieve.
 1. Write down goals, break them into milestones, break milestones into daily tasks and just focus on the daily tasks. Periodically evaluate your progress and process and adjust accordingly.
 2. Focus on one big goal at a time. For example don't try to start 2 different businesses at once.
1. Studies show that heightened and prolonged exposure to stress reduces willpower and the ability to exhibit self-control. Reduce stress through physical activity, music, outdoor activities and times in nature, massages, meditation, and breaks.

33. Stress has been proven to be an ally during crises moments and allow us to enter a stage of peak performance. To enter this stage takes 10 deep mindful breaths when things start getting stressful. After the breathing exercise reframe your perspective. Put the magnitude of the stressor in real terms of its actual severity. Imagining it on a timeline of your life from start to finish can help bring calm and clarity to the stressor's true severity level.
34. Studies showed that people are prone to sacrificing future gains for present rewards. This is because they view their future self as a stranger creating quite an obstacle in resisting temptation. To avoid this imagine your future self (either feared or desired future self) before making a decision. The studies showed that this improves our abilities to make better decisions in the present for greater gains in the future.
35. Studies show that decision fatigue encourages you to make the easiest, but often times not the best, decisions. The studies also show that after a short break effective decision making returns. Use the Pomodoro Technique to embed your productive hours with 5 minute breaks. In addition streamline as many menial decisions as possible. Using a daily routine and planning your next day the night before is a great way to streamline menial decisions. Try and make important decisions after a break.
36. Studies show highly skilled individuals underestimate their abilities while unskilled individuals overestimate them. Additional studies showed that in general people overestimate their abilities to control their urges and resist temptation. To combat this, assume your self-control skill set is a work in progress. Error on the side of caution and fully evaluate your options. Commit to a decision once it is made. Be willing to take measured risks.
37. Many biases that create psychological makeup of a human really make creating change an uphill battle. To gain an upper hand on this obstacle, imagine a hypothetical scenario where the status quo would be the results

from the alternative. If the imagined scenario is more desirable than the current reality you know the decision to make. Evaluate if current circumstances are creating friction on your path to your long-term goal

38. When unable to reach a clear optimal decision ask a friend, role model, or mentor. A second or even third pair of eyes on a problem can bring ideas to the table you could not have alone.
39. Start small. You improve your chances of sticking to something less daunting at first so make it too easy to fail. Don't focus on performance in the early stages of creating a habit.
40. Give yourself a pat on the back anytime you succeed in a milestone. The size of the milestone or goal doesn't matter, it is the confidence building acknowledgement that is what matters.
41. Put some skin in the game and have something to lose. This is a great way to continually enforce motivation.
42. Create an environment that is most conducive to your goals. Eliminate as much exposure to temptation as possible when creating this environment for success.
43. Schedule in your guilty pleasures and indulgences. These rewards are a great way to improve momentum and motivation, plus they help you keep your sanity.
44. Behavior chains are your best bet at creating a new habit.
45. It's okay if you fail and you most likely will. Failure is not quitting though so be sure to get back on track and refocus.
46. Take preemptive measures against temptation and plan ahead. These

preemptive measures make sure that you are not exposed to temptation when you are most weak and vulnerable.

47. When planning goals first look for reasons that the goal resonates with you. Try and identify where it is intrinsically motivated.
48. Use resonating reasons to help align goals with intrinsic motivation and your *Big Why*.

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