



How to Master the Art of Self-Discipline

The key to achieving your goals

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How to Master the Art of Self-Discipline

So we're here to talk about self-discipline, but why? Self-discipline isn't fun or exciting. It's not even really a thing, is it? But self-discipline is at the heart of almost any goal we want to achieve.

Did you ever watch the Olympics? If you ask any Olympic medalist, they'll tell you that in order to achieve winning status you have to have self-discipline to train every week for years.

But for us regular folks in our own daily lives, we don't really take things that seriously. *Maybe for Olympic athletes, we think, but certainly not for our simple lives and aspirations.* What's more, in today's society, media messages oversimplify success and make us feel like it shouldn't take so much time and effort to achieve our goals.

Check these out...

How to Lose Weight: 30+ Fast, Easy Tricks

You know the drill when it comes to losing weight: take in fewer calories, burn more calories. But you also know that most diets and quick weight-loss plans don't work as promised. If you're trying to drop a few pounds fast, these expert tips will make it easy for you to lose the weight quickly.

From *Stealth Health* (Reader's Digest Association Books)

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Write down what you eat for one week and you will lose weight.

Studies have found that people who maintain food diaries wind up eating about 15 percent less food than those who don't.

Revised by Dr. Aronson, M.D. and Dr. Aronson, M.D. for this book.

How to Get in Shape Fast - Get Into Shape at Home, Cheap, and Easy



Homepage / Secrets & Advice / Career Advice & Money Tips / 12 Ways to Save Money Fast

12 Ways to Save Money Fast

Financial crisis got you down? Here's how to keep the numbers in your bank account up!

BY LEONORA EPSTEIN



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1. Shave some extra cents off your gas costs by checking out [GasPriceWatch.com](#) to find the cheapest offerings in your area. For example, you'll find that the Chevron on Olympic Boulevard in Los Angeles is selling

5 Ways to Make Money Faster Than Fast

In a cash crunch? Here are quick ways to earn money you really needed yesterday.

By Geoff Williams

Nov. 14, 2013

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Here's the truth – If you're reading about a fast and easy method to achieve anything, you're probably not getting the whole story. Anything that's worth anything takes time, from losing weight to saving money, to career success to building a business.

Let's look at Apple, for example – we take its success for granted. But actually, Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak first met 47 years ago in 1968. They worked for different companies including Xerox and Hewlett-Packard until they registered the Apple Computer Company 8 years later in 1976.

It's common knowledge that Jobs got ousted from Apple in 1985 and returned 12 years later in 1997, which is when he and the company made their meteoric rise. That's more than 20 years from the company's inception.

There really is no such thing as overnight success, and if by chance you did come across it, it's more the exception than the rule. Here's the thing - there is no hidden secret and there is no magic bullet. To achieve any goal that's worth it, to have lasting success in anything, you have to put in the time and effort.

And to put in time and effort, you need to exert self control and develop the habits to keep you on track.

So today, I'd like to take you through nine principles to help you understand more about what it takes to develop self-discipline, to achieve any goal whether it's personal, professional or both. I hope that pulling back the curtain on the art of self-discipline today will help you see that anything is possible, that you definitely can achieve your goals.

So let's get started...

Start by Defining Your Goal

I'd like to invite you to think of your most important goal. It could be anything...

- **Become a better leader**
- **Improve my parenting abilities**
- **Start and build my own business**
- **Win a promotion**
- **Be more healthy**
- **Lose weight**
- **Be more productive**
- **Save money**
- **Keep a cleaner or neater work environment/home**
- **Other**

Whichever goal we choose, it will likely require us to change certain behaviours or commit to certain practices over time. Many goals ultimately require that we make a “lifestyle” change, meaning they call for us to modify parts of the way we live our daily lives, in service of maintaining the results over an extended period of time, or permanently.

Let's say your goal is to buy a larger home. You may have to commit to saving money, to selling your current home which could require renovations, cleaning and/or upgrades, to searching for a new home, and more. In the end, buying a larger home may require certain financial and time commitments beyond what you currently have available now. You may need to modify your spending in order to save money, or you may need to make time in your schedule for this project, or more.

Think about this goal in particular, and what would be required of you to achieve it. As we go through these 9 principles, reflect back to this goal and

how you'd use this learning to create a plan to achieve it. This way, you're designing your intentions as we speak, and you'll walk away with a foundation for your plan to achieve this goal. Time well spent, I hope.

PRINCIPLE #1:

BELIEVE that it IS Possible to Develop Self-Discipline and Achieve Your Goal

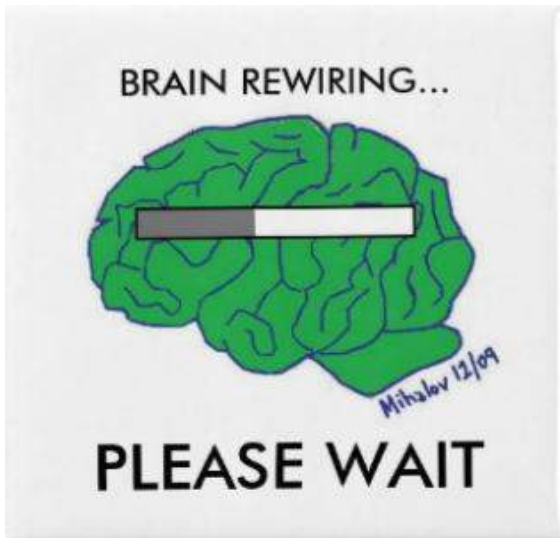
In order to achieve any goal, the first and most important element that determines your success is the sheer *belief* that you can make the appropriate behavioral changes to get there.

If you have any doubts at all, the subconscious conversation in your head lies in wait to convince you that it's not possible. You've probably already experienced such thoughts in the past, as have we all. This harmful internal dialogue is especially powerful when you're at your most vulnerable, like when you've had a long day, or any kind of set-back.

This first principle focuses on our *belief* around the notion of change of any kind. Up until recently, the scientific community believed that once our brain matured, it was impossible to change.

In 2007, a Toronto-born psychoanalyst named Norman Doidge authored a book called *The Brain that Changes Itself*, which outlined a series of breakthrough discoveries that revolutionized our understanding of the human brain.

Because the brain is seen as the primary control center of human activity, this research has literally transformed our world. We now know that the brain is *plastic* (which is short for *neuro-plastic*). Basically, it has been proven that the brain can change its structure and its function as we go along.



Up until the point of these discoveries, we all believed that your brain is formed in childhood and by the age of 21 or so, it's basically complete, that you can't really change the way you think or what you do after that.

We now know that the brain is changing every second - it responds to the environment, as we imagine things, as we

think, as we act, and as we do things and learn. In other words, we as human beings have the power to change the way our brain thinks. What that means is that, from a physiological and neurological standpoint - not just hocus pocus - we have the ability to make fundamental changes to the way we think. And if we can change the way we think, we can change the way we behave.

Ultimately, neuro-plasticity proves that we have the ability to change our behaviours, and therefore, we have more control over our destiny than we ever realized.

Now, you may be thinking, "Sure, I know my brain can change, fine. But that's just a general concept. If I've never been able to keep a routine before, how realistic is it that I can develop self-discipline now?"

The answer is, "Very realistic." To explain why, we refer to Martin Seligman, a world-renowned American psychologist, educator and author, and affectionately known as the father of positive psychology.

Seligman is Dean of the Department of Positive Psychology at the University of Pennsylvania. His primary interest is to study what makes people happy and fulfilled, what contributes to their feeling of well-being. He researched people of all ages, all over the world, from different cultures and countries. He even studied different tribes in South America and Africa, and found that all human beings, no matter who they are or where they're from, possess 24 strengths

that he calls our Character Strengths. The only difference between one person and another is the ranking of the three to five top strengths that we access most naturally in our daily lives. He calls these “Signature Strengths,” and basically since we’re all different personalities, we all usually have different Signature Strengths. But ultimately, every human being possesses all 24. And guess what one of them is:

VIA Signature Strengths Test for 24 Character Strengths

Self Control & Self Regulation:

You self-consciously regulate what you feel and what you do. You are a self-disciplined person. You are in control of your appetites and your emotions, not vice versa.

You see, even if you don’t feel like you do, you have the human potential to self regulate. Martin Seligman explains that even if a strength isn’t at the top of our list, we can still choose to develop it by focusing on it.

The research conducted by Ben Hayden, Assistant Professor of Brain and Cognitive Sciences at the University of Rochester, concurs with Seligman’s thesis: we can literally [learn to exercise self-control regions of the brain through bio feedback.](#)

So even though you may not FEEL as though it’s possible, science shows that you absolutely can develop self-discipline, and I hope that as we continue you’ll see what you can do to help yourself develop this strength you inherently have.

Take-Away #1 – BELIEVE

In order to develop the self-discipline you need to achieve your goals and dreams, you must BELIEVE that you can. If you need more proof, take some time to research more about the brain. Believing that you can is the foundational step in the process that keeps you on track long term.

Watch what happens to this penny over thirty days!

Day 1	\$.01	Day 11	\$10.24		
Day 2	\$.02	Day 12	\$20.48		
Day 3	\$.04	Day 13	\$40.96		
Day 4	\$.08	Day 14	\$81.92		
Day 5	\$.16	Day 15	\$163.84		
Day 6	\$.32	Day 16	\$327.68		
Day 7	\$.64	Day 17	\$655.36		
Day 8	\$1.28	Day 18	\$1,310.72		
Day 9	\$2.56	Day 19	\$2,621.44		
Day 10	\$5.12	Day 20	\$5,242.88		

Okay, so over 20 days, it turns into \$5,242.88. Impressive, but not over-the-top... but wait...

Watch what happens to this penny over thirty days!

Day 1	\$.01	Day 11	\$10.24	Day 21	\$10,485.76
Day 2	\$.02	Day 12	\$20.48	Day 22	\$20,971.52
Day 3	\$.04	Day 13	\$40.96	Day 23	\$41,943.04
Day 4	\$.08	Day 14	\$81.92	Day 24	\$83,886.08
Day 5	\$.16	Day 15	\$163.84	Day 25	\$167,772.16
Day 6	\$.32	Day 16	\$327.68	Day 26	\$335,544.32
Day 7	\$.64	Day 17	\$655.36	Day 27	\$671,088.64
Day 8	\$1.28	Day 18	\$1,310.72	Day 28	\$1,342,177.28
Day 9	\$2.56	Day 19	\$2,621.44	Day 29	\$2,684,354.56
Day 10	\$5.12	Day 20	\$5,242.88	Day 30	\$5,368,709.12
				Day 31	\$10,737,418.24

In 31 days, your penny turns into over \$10,000,000! Woo hoo!

See, small dividends do pay off. We may not realize it day by day, in the moment. But the rule of the compound effect, for better or for worse, is operating silently whether we recognize it or not. It's this invisible undercurrent that's working away, even if we can't see it.

Think of a plant - you plant a seed and you water it for days, weeks, maybe even months. You get impatient and wonder, is this thing ever gonna grow??? And then one day, unbeknownst to you, you see that little sprout pushing through. What you didn't see are all the little roots growing under the surface, out of sight down below. But there's a whole ecosystem underneath working its magic whether you see it or not.

Anything we do consistently over time will have a result. If we want to intentionally create the results we want, we do things consistently, whether we can "see" results or not.

THE POWER OF HABIT

As human beings, to do things consistently, we create habits.

You may be thinking, "Well I have plenty of habits, some good, some not so good, but I don't have to think about them, they're just there and they come naturally. Changing habits or installing new ones is easier said than done."

There's definitely truth to this. You see, our brains are basically habit-making machines. In fact, we couldn't function in society without habits. And while habit-making is largely a subconscious task we pay little or no attention to, we have the ability to manipulate our brains to adopt the habits that will help us achieve our goals. To do this, let's look at how habits are formed by learning about the brain's memory system.

THE MAKING OF A HABIT

**This is the size
of your sub-
conscious
mind.....**



Your brain's subconscious is incredibly vast – in fact, we don't even have a handle on how much capacity the brain's subconscious has, but for the purposes of this exercise, think of it as the size of all the water in the ocean. Now imagine your conscious memory, how much volume of water do you think it represents? In comparison to the vastness of the water in the ocean, your brain's conscious capacity is...

**This is the size
of your
CONSCIOUS
mind.....**



... roughly the volume of an eight ounce glass of water. Yes, I'm serious.

CONSCIOUS



SUB-CONSCIOUS

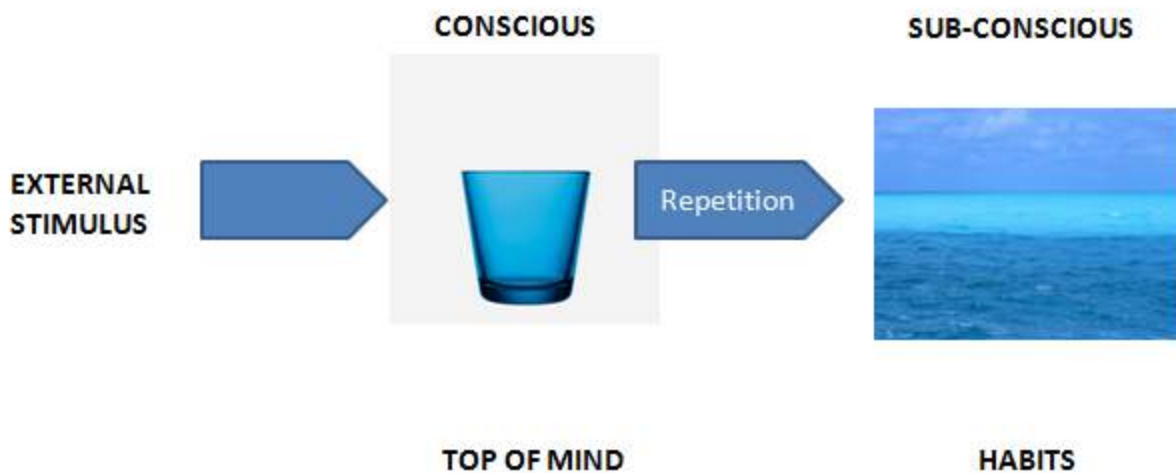


Your conscious brain has this teeny weeny memory capacity of a cup compared to your subconscious, which has the capacity of all the water in the ocean.

That's why the brain's natural function is geared to using the little eight ounce cup for immediate needs and urgencies, and why its natural desire is to move other important memory to the subconscious. Anything we do repetitively eventually makes its way to the subconscious because it's a more economical way for the brain to use its memory.

When memory moves to the "ocean" of our subconscious, it becomes more automatic and permanent. The subconscious sends signals to us so that we can complete those repetitive tasks during the day, and that's how we're able to function at the high levels that we do. In other words, our brains are NOT wired to retain information in our consciousness. Our brains are wired to create habits.

The Brain is a Habit Machine:

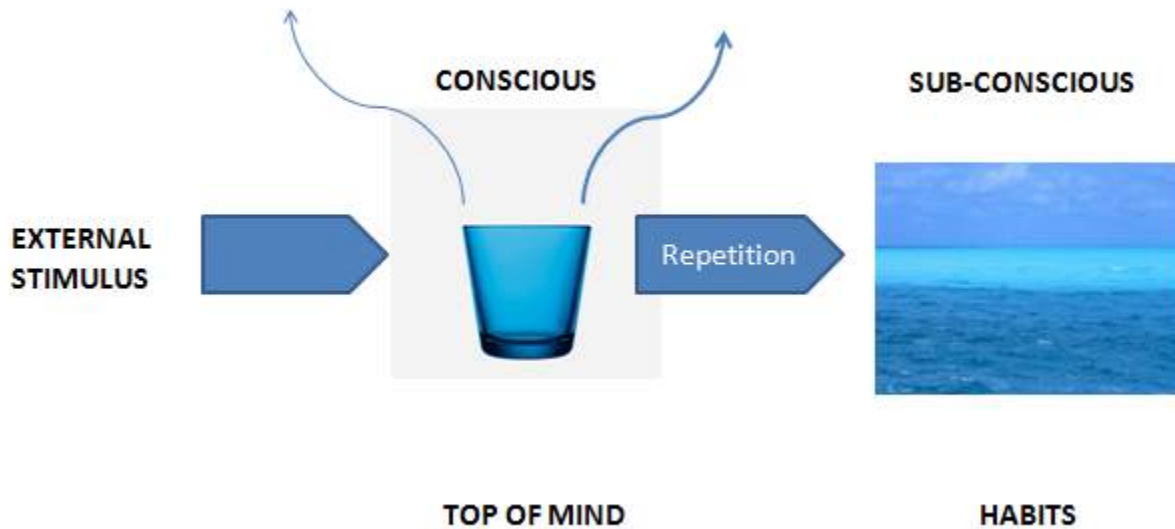


The thing is, virtually everything you do during the day requires no thought at all but just gets done - brushing your teeth, as an example. Can you imagine if you actually had to think about how to brush your teeth? Pick up the tooth brush with the bristle side up. Reach your hand to the toothpaste, remove the cap, turn the tube upside down toward the bristles on the toothbrush and squeeze.... etc. etc. Now, think of what kind of energy it would take if you had to think about almost everything you accomplish in a day, all the complexity: get dressed, make breakfast, drive to work (as you talk on your hands free mobile phone), etc. etc. What we do on a daily basis is so unbelievably complex that the only way we could possibly get it all done is for our subconscious to be working on automatic pilot!

Think about it this way – if you meet someone today and they give you their phone number verbally, and if you call them 20 times over the next 24 hours, and then another 20 times tomorrow, and again and again, then eventually, you won't even be thinking of the numbers at all when you dial, you'll just be tapping away with your fingers and you'll reach them.

But if they give you their number verbally and you don't call them, you probably won't remember their number tomorrow... and the memory will vanish from your consciousness, never having made its way to your subconscious.

The Brain is a Habit Machine:



If you stop and think about all the habits that make up what you do every day, from brushing your teeth, to drinking coffee, to what you do when we arrive at work, to how you act and react to people and situations, to the words you use, the things you say, to what you do at home after work and everything in between, you'll see that the lion's share of what you do is ALL habit triggered by external cues, for better or for worse, that is. In fact, only 2% of our brain is designed to retain memory in our consciousness. The rest is all subconscious.

The brain WANTS to create habits so that we're not required to use up conscious effort.

It only follows then that performance is achieved not by what our conscious mind tells us, but largely through the subconscious cues that guide us throughout our day.

Now, clearly, I could go off on a tangent here and cite all the dangers and pitfalls of our subconscious ruling our behaviors, but that will be a subject for another book! However... just for the fun of it, here's a good story...



One of my favorite real life examples of the dangers of habit creation was depicted in the recent movie, *The Wolf of Wall Street*.

It's based on the true story of Jordan Belfort, a New York stockbroker who ran a firm that engaged in securities fraud and corruption on Wall Street in the 1990s, and ended up spending years in jail.

It's a cautionary tale, and in a stunning interview with Piers Morgan on CNN, Belfort explains how a young man raised in a typical middle class home, with good family values, could turn into such a criminal. He says, "You don't lose your soul all at once, you lose it a little bit at a time, incrementally. When I lost my ethical way it did not start off that way. It's like these tiny imperceptible steps over the line. Each time your line of morality moves a bit, and before you know it you're doing things you thought you would never do and it seems perfectly okay. What seems amazing first becomes commonplace after a period of time and you become numb. Day one it's one thing, and a year later it's completely off the rails." Watch this video from 7:30 to 8:52 minutes, to see [Jordan Belfort](#) describe this.

Belfort's story is a perfect illustration of doing something repetitively that may seem innocuous, but that over time turns into habit, which turns into your impact on the world around you, and then especially turns into *who you become*, for better or for worse.

The more consistently we do something healthy and positive, the more we exercise our brain, the more chance our brain has of storing this activity into memory and feeding it to us subconsciously as needed – and that’s when it becomes natural and automatic, and triggers the compound effect. So even though the brain isn’t technically a muscle, when it comes to habits, it acts like one.



Only 2 % of the brain’s energy is used for conscious activity. The rest is subconscious.

Also the depth and breadth of the pathways lives unknown beneath the surface.

Hence the need to treat your brain like a muscle that requires repetition. If you work out you see results.

THE BOTTOM LINE ABOUT HABITS: anything you do repetitiously over time will have an impact, positive or negative. Repetition turns into habit, habit turn into impact, and impact compounds into who you become.

HOW TO INSTALL AND UNINSTALL HABITS

So, how can you install and uninstall habits? I like to think of this as tracks in the snow.

If you’re standing at the beginning of a trail like the one in the image below, and you want to get to the end, where would you go? If you’re like most of us, you’d use the tracks that are already there. Well, that’s what the brain does

too. The brain likes to use tracks that are already created – that’s the subconscious at work.



If you want to install a new habit, it’s like creating new tracks in the snow. It might be hard the first few go rounds as you create those tracks, but soon enough, they’ll become as deep and wide as the ones in this photo, and then it’ll be smooth sailing through the tracks. The more you repeat behavior the deeper and wider the tracks become.

And if you want to uninstall a habit... what do you think you do? Well, all you’d do is *not* go on those deep wide tracks anymore. Eventually, it’ll snow, the wind will blow gusts of snow onto the old tracks and soon enough, those deep, wide tracks will disappear, while you keep treading through the new ones.

It may not be *easy*, but it’s that *simple*. And it’s full proof. It works. Because that’s the way the brain works. The brain purges what you don’t use. (That’s why you can’t remember any calculus formulas you learned in university!)

Some people asked, well how much time should it take to install or uninstall a habit, and that’s a tough one because there are really no absolutes. Many

people think it takes 21 days, but that's not entirely true. The European Journal of Psychology says that depending on the bigness of the habit and other circumstances, the time could range between 18 to 254 days for people to reach their limit of what they term "automaticity." But for argument's sake, assume that the average is 66 days (different for everyone and depending on the task).

So now it's time for you to think about your habits...

You may for example say, well, high level I want to become a better leader, and I know that I have a tendency to interrupt people. If I listened more, I'd be able to contribute more effectively by responding to people's needs, by making them feel like their opinions matter, and by allowing team members to build creative solutions as a unit, and that would improve my leadership. So what are the habits that I'd like to install to listen more? Perhaps you'd choose to meditate for 3 minutes before meetings, perhaps you'd create a structure to stop yourself when you want to say something and do a silent check in. Or you may create another solution that's right for you.

What takes conscious effort when first learning it can easily over time become habit, so long as we commit to doing it over and over and over again until the act seeps down into our subconscious to become a habit.

Take-Away #2 – COMMIT TO SMALL, INCREMENTAL STEPS

The Compound Effect shows us that we need not set extreme, out-of-reach practices in order to have success. Smaller, incremental efforts add up quickly to become healthy habits. It is more important to commit to smaller and more consistent practices than to set the bar so high that you fall off and never get back up.

Be specific about the habits that will help you reach your goal. Be specific about the habits that hinder you from reaching your goal. Rank them in order of priority, and choose one to focus on until you install it as a new habit or uninstall an old one.

PRINCIPLE #3:

Develop True Grit to Step Outside Your Comfort Zone and Sustain Your Effort



Most of us think, oh pleasure good, pain bad. But nothing happens when you're comfortable. Changing and growing, by virtue of what that is - basically doing things you've never done before - requires you to step outside your comfort zone. There's no other way. This doesn't mean that you should make it so uncomfortable it's not manageable. But that feeling of discomfort itself is an absolute must, and sometimes, it's just not that easy to make the effort. Thing is, if you're feeling comfortable, you know nothing good's going to happen.



There's a wonderful young American Psychologist named Angela Lee Duckworth. She's a Harvard University graduate with a B.A. in Neurobiology,

and a Ph.D. in Psychology. She works at the University of Pennsylvania, performing studies on the predictors of both academic and professional success. Back in April of 2013, she did a ground-breaking [TED talk](#) which garnered over 5 million views. In it, she explains that her studies show that success is not determined by a person's intelligence, and it's not achieved by taking the easy road.

She says that the key predictor for success according to her research shows that grit is the most important factor. She defines grit as passion and perseverance for very long term goals, grit is having stamina, grit is sticking with your future, day in day out, not just for the week, not just for the month, but for years, and working really hard to make that future a reality. Grit is living life like it's a marathon, not a sprint.

Now, we all know that keeping anything up for a long period of time, even things we like, can be very challenging. After all, anything we do a lot of can become boring, tasteless, slow and tedious. And especially if it takes time to see results, it's hard to be patient.

If you're looking to learn a new skill like public speaking for example, or trying to change a behaviour like listening, or committing to working out more, what are your expectations around when you'll start to see results? What kind of benchmarks have you set for yourself, are they reasonable, are they fair? Are you comparing yourself to others? It's important to set reasonable expectations at the outset so that you don't get disappointed or discouraged.

Take-Away #3 – DEVELOP GRIT

There's a misconception about pleasure and pain. Expect and accept that it will feel uncomfortable, and that's actually a good thing. Set realistic expectations and prepare to work hard. It takes stepping into your discomfort zone and true grit to achieve anything of import. It means you're challenging yourself to achieve your full potential!

You see what you're *telling yourself* as you're working toward change on this long term marathon is extremely critical to your success. This leads us to Principle number 4, the conversation in your head...

PRINCIPLE #4

Take Charge of Your Inner Critic - Manage the Conversation in Your Head

An athletic maxim says that sports are 90 per cent mental and 10 per cent physical. That's why the conversation in our head is so critical to success in any endeavour.

There's a sports psychologist named Antonis Hatzigeorgiadis who performed studies with his colleagues and found that Instructional and motivation self-talk in particular give athletes a leg up on the competition.

Instructional self-talk ("Keep your leg straight," "Use your core strength here") helped athletes to improve specific techniques or skills, while *motivational* self-talk ("You know you can do this!") helped them to succeed in strength and endurance-based tasks. That's why language is also so important.

Former Olympic gold medal-winning decathlon runner Bruce Jenner once said, "You have to train your mind like you train your body."

When I work with my clients, a lot of the time we're introducing new behaviours and we talk about just that – what will you say to yourself in the moment where you're just about to react automatically to a situation or individual, but you want to make a different choice – how will you, in that very moment, control your reaction and modify it? That conversation in your head is the key.

What we say to ourselves, even silently, can have a huge impact on how we react and behave, and consequently, on our results.

Hatzigeorgiadis said, “The mind guides action. If we succeed in regulating our thoughts, then this will help our behaviour.”



Tessa Virtue and Scott Moir win Olympic Silver

Take-Away #4 – MANAGE YOUR INNER DIALOGUE

The conversation in your head determines your success. Identify what your inner critic is saying, and then consciously develop a more positive dialogue that will encourage you to persevere. Consider writing a script that includes specific directives and encouragements to help you stay on track, especially during the challenging moments.

PRINCIPLE #5

Manage Your Energy with Proper Self Care

In order to maintain self-discipline and self-control over time, it takes energy. With everything we’ve got going in life - all our priorities, work, kids, family, other responsibilities, how can we manage that energy?

There’s a Professor of Psychology at Florida State University in Tallahassee, Florida named Roy F. Baumeister, who is a highly cited researcher. He is a

social psychologist known for his work on the self, social rejection, self-control, self-esteem, self-defeating behaviors and motivation. He has authored 500



publications and has written, co-written, or edited almost 30 books.

In 2011, he released [research on self-control](#), choice, decision making and willpower. He investigated how people regulate their emotions, resist temptation, break bad habits, and perform up to their potential -- and why they often fail to do so. Related

work shows how stressful and draining it can be to make choices.

What Baumeister found is that we as humans only have a finite amount of willpower to use, and it is used across ALL decisions, not just diet, or just exercise, but even the decision to override one thought and replace it with another.

In other words, just because we didn't have to resist a doughnut today, if we had to make decision after decision all day long, from how to dress in the morning to how to deal with a crisis at work, and everything in between, then at some point, we lose all ability to make decisions or exert self control, or stave off temptation across the board. At the end of the day, we're literally left completely devoid and depleted of the wherewithal to self regulate over anything.

I remember back when I was working for a big corporation where I was so busy seven days a week. The odd time I'd go for dinner with friends, I actually had to ask someone to order for me because I didn't have the capacity to decide for myself... this is no exaggeration! Needless to say, those were some unsatisfying dinners...!

Baumeister coined the term *Ego depletion* to refer to the idea that self-control or willpower draw upon a limited pool of mental resources that can be used up.

Here's what it feels like when you're suffering from ego depletion:

- Often, there's no 'signature feeling'
- Strong behavioural effects
- Some reluctance to tackle difficult things
- Sometimes different than "tired" (but usually not)
- Intensification of all emotions, desire (turns up the volume on life!)

What if we come to the end of the day and we're depleted, but we actually aren't done, we still have a few hours of work or activity left to go? That would mean we'd have to find a way to increase our energy, or more specifically our ego depletion, wouldn't it?

Well, in fact Baumeister's study shows that this is possible. He found that glucose is the physiological basis for willpower. Not sugar, but glucose, as our energy supply. As you exert self control you're using up your glucose in the bloodstream, which then takes time to resupply. How can you supplement your glucose levels? Well, it's something you already know...

How to improve and manage your energy for self-control:

1. Sleep
2. Diet
3. Exercise
4. Meditation
5. Practice



Sleep, diet and exercise feed and replenish your glucose levels.

Studies show that monks, who mediate for long periods of time daily, have brains with a bigger pre-frontal cortex than the average person. The prefrontal cortex is the thinking part of our brain that helps us remain calm, rational and creative. Meditation allows us to reconnect with that centered state.

And finally, with regard to *practice*, as mentioned earlier studies show that the brain is like a muscle. We all have the capacity to exercise and build it. The more we use our brain, the stronger it becomes. So, if we practice using our brain, we build our brain capacity, which increases our glucose and capacity to self-regulate.

In general, what Baumeister found is that the more we take care of our health and our own physiology, the more energy we'll have to maintain self-discipline.

Take-Away #5 – TAKE CARE OF YOUR HEALTH WITH SLEEP, DIET, EXERCISE AND PRACTICES THAT HELP CENTER AND CALM YOU

Taking care of our physical and mental health has far-reaching positive impacts, including providing us the fuel and stamina to achieve our goals. Any small commitment in this area will help you manage your glucose levels, which will support your ability to self-regulate during the day.

PRINCIPLE #6

Create Support Structures to Stay on Track



Support structures can be images, reminders, and processes that can help keep us on track in maintaining self-discipline.

For example, I always find I eat more healthy when I go to the grocery store and fill up my fridge

with healthy, tasty fresh food. If there's nothing in my fridge, guaranteed, I'm heading to the closest fast food joint for a burger. That's just reality for me.

Same thing goes for time management – I have actually turned off my email and cell phone notifications because I don't want to be interrupted when I'm working. I check my emails and calls at different times intermittently, but in the moment, that's a great support for my concentration.

If you want to work out in the mornings, then maybe lay your clothes out at night. Find inspirational songs, quotes and other symbols and post them in strategic areas in your home or office. Set your mobile phone alarm to remind you to leave the office, or create a calendar appointment each week to head to the gym.

Structures are personalized - created by you, for you and customized to the way you work. They're meant to jog your neurons and remind you of what's important to you.

CONTEXT AS STRUCTURE

Another quasi-structure is to consciously control where you go in order to support your goals. It's important to avoid putting yourself into compromising situations, and rather put yourself in supportive environments.

People who have self-control deliberately organize their lives so that they are supporting the achievement of their priorities and goals.

If you're looking to cut down your drinking, don't meet friends in bars, meet them at the gym or in a café, or at your home. Structures can merely be ways to either encourage yourself to do things, or avoid doing certain things.

PEOPLE AS STRUCTURES

Another key support structure is people – people are probably the most powerful supports you can put in place.



You know the expression, *birds of a feather flock together*? Over time, you end up being like who you're surrounded with.

Martin Seligman, Malcolm Gladwell and others have researched this area and found

that a person's character is highly susceptible to the environment. In fact, the influence of people and the environment will trump character every time. For example, a person on a diet goes out for dinner with friends and yet still wants to eat healthy. They may think they're the most strong-willed person in the world. But if the friends order the person's favorite dessert, their mettle may be seriously tested. This is why it's so important to actively seek out people

and environments that are conducive to your goals and to where you want to be.

We may think we're tough, but in fact, we're extremely malleable, and it's better to be on the offense than the defense.

Join talent hubs. Surround yourself with people who inspire and encourage you to grow. Limit the people who don't.

If you want to become a better leader, then surround yourself with others who want the same, find a mentor, get training and socialize with other leaders. If you want to start a business, find a community where you can share as you grow. Being a part of professional associations is a great way to connect with likeminded people who can challenge and support you along the way.

The people you choose to surround yourself with are very powerful in shaping your future.

Take-Away #6 – BUILD IN STRUCTURES THAT SUPPORT YOU IN ACHIEVING YOUR GOAL

Support structures are the anchors that keep you on track on a day to day basis. Support structures can include reminders and motivating sensory cues, the choice of environments we inhabit, and the people with whom we choose to spend our time. Reflect on what structures will facilitate your goal achievement and fold them into your plan.

PRINCIPLE #7

Focus on One Small Step at a Time, Then Move to the Next

Remember when we talked about ego depletion, we saw that the more choices we make that are unimportant, the less capacity we have to make important choices.

The reason why most people struggle to stick to their goals is that they set the bar way too high, they get overwhelmed and discouraged, and then quit before they see any results.

It is absolutely critical, if we want to increase our chances of success, to limit what we focus on. That way, we'll have more energy for the goals we have. Here are some wonderful quotes by leaders...

You've got to be super focused like a laser to get anything worthwhile done. When I did Avatar I was focused for 4 years.

- James Cameron film maker : Avatar, Titanic

You should focus on one important goal and you need to be pretty single-minded about it.

- Larry Page, co founder, Google

When asked about the secret of his success, he said, "*a fanatical focus on doing one thing well* "

- Tom Monaghan, founder of Domino's Pizza

If you want to be a software company you have to be only a software company, you can't dabble in other things.

- Bill Gates, founder of Microsoft

Take-Away #7 – ADOPT A LASER FOCUS

Focus allows us to channel our efforts into a specific direction, which is a more economical way to manage our limited energy. The more we focus the more we increase our chances of achieving success. Focus on one small step, master it, and then take another small step toward your goal.

PRINCIPLE #8

Build a Gradual Plan Over Time



You may be asking, why a photo of a car? Well, I'm assuming that you have at some point either driven a car, or at least, you've ridden in a car. And, you know that when you're getting on the highway,

you start at a low speed and gradually, as you make your way on and merge with the traffic, you slowly increase your speed. You move from the slow lane to the faster lanes. You don't head onto the highway at 100 km an hour!

Well, same holds true when working your way toward your goals. We have less chance of success if we make our goals so ambitious that they're out of reach. We have a better chance of achieving our goals if we start small, gain some small wins and confidence, and slowly work our way.

If you're learning how to be a good public speaker, start by rehearsing in front of a few friends or loved ones you trust. Rehearse in small groups of strangers, practice in front of a mirror. Test things out in low risk environments. Then you

can gradually work your way to a full room, and then larger and larger groups. These small wins will allow you to hone your craft and work up your confidence.

Take-Away #8 – BUILD A STEADY, GRADUAL PLAN

Just like merging onto a highway, building a steady, gradual plan that progressively increases momentum has a greater chance of sustainability and success than abrupt, jerky and impulsive efforts.

PRINCIPLE #9

Don't get Discouraged by Setbacks – Develop a Growth Mindset

A 'growth mindset' is a term coined by Carol Dweck, a renowned professor who taught at Columbia University, Harvard University, and the University of Illinois before joining the Stanford University in 2004. [Her research](#) concurs with Angela Lee Duckworth - intelligence is not a key indicator of success. She believes that success depends on whether or not an individual has a growth mindset.

There are fixed mindsets and growth mindsets. Having a fixed mindset means that a person believes their basic intelligence is a fixed trait – they only have so much, and that's it. This makes a person highly concerned with how much intelligence they have. They therefore base their activities on this limited capacity.

Others understand that their intelligence is something they can develop throughout the course of their life, through passion, studying and education. They understand that their brain is like a muscle and gets stronger with use,

that every time they learn something their brain forms new connections, and over time they can increase their intellectual skill.



No one laughs at babies, thinking how dumb they are for not knowing. We understand that they just haven't learned yet. This is what it means to have a growth mindset.

Studies show that people with a growth mindset are more successful than people with a fixed mindset. The difference between winning and losing is what you do with mistakes – do you have

the resilience to reflect on what you learned, then pick yourself up, dust yourself off and recommit with that new learning, or do you ruminate or just give up.

The premise of a growth mindset is that failure is NOT a permanent condition. People with a growth mindset go around the world wanting to learn, versus going around the world wanting to be smart.

Carol Dweck urges us to maintain a spirit of learning and growth. She emphasizes that it is as important to benefit from our mistakes as it is to benefit from our successes, especially in our current changing world.

Take-Away #9 – CHOOSE A GROWTH MINDSET OVER A FIXED ONE

When we adopt a growth mindset, we look at setbacks as a natural part of our journey toward reaching our full potential. We understand that mistakes are a part of the process, learn from them, and move forward to the next level, with greater clarity and wisdom than before. A growth mindset gives us the resilience we need to reach our most ambitious goals and dreams.

Ask yourself how you can cope when you have a setback. Create a plan that allows you to manage your thinking when this inevitably happens.

With your goal in mind, I hope that these principles have helped you create your own personal plan for building the self-discipline you need to achieve your goals. Below is a summary including questions that you can ask to create your own customized plan.

SUMMARY - HOW TO MASTER THE ART OF SELF-DISCIPLINE

How to develop self-discipline:

- 1. BELIEVE that it IS possible to develop self-discipline and achieve your goal**
- 2. Harness the power of the compound effect by developing healthy habits**
- 3. Develop true grit to step outside your comfort zone and sustain your effort**
- 4. Take charge of your inner critic – manage the conversation in your head**
- 5. Manage your energy with proper self care**
- 6. Create Support Structure to Stay on Track**
- 7. Focus on one small step at a time, then move to the next**
- 8. Develop a gradual plan over time**
- 9. Don't get discouraged by setbacks – develop a growth mindset**

Questions to Create Your Plan:

Define my goal:

- 1. What is the goal that I want to achieve? Be specific and add whatever details will help you gain clarity as to what you're aiming for.**
- 2. Write down what it will take for you to achieve this goal, including the new learning, behaviours and mindset changes.**

Habits that contribute to my goal:

- 1. What are my good habits that will support the achievement of this goal?**
- 2. What are my unproductive habits that could detract?**
- 3. What habits do I want to install that will help me achieve my goal? What habits do I want to lose? (write a list that combines both, in order to priority)**

Grit:

- 1. What are my expectations about the effort it will take to achieve my goals?**
- 2. Are my expectations realistic? What would realistic expectations look like?**
- 3. What might stand in my way?**
- 4. How much grit do I have? How can I develop more grit in service of this goal.**

Conversations in my Head:

- 1. How can I recognize my inner critic (what would it say to stand in my way?)**
- 2. How can I manage the conversations in my head?**
- 3. What are the productive and encouraging statements I'd like to adopt and repeat to myself?**
- 4. Perhaps write a script that can keep me on track in challenging times.**

Self Care and Structures:

- 1. What are the self-care strategies that I can put into place to support me in achieving my goal? Include the three kinds of structures (reminders/motivators, environments, people).**
- 2. How will I manage ego depletion?**
- 3. What structures, both material and personal, do I have in place to keep me on track when I falter?**

Overall Plan:

- 1. What is a reasonable timeline?**
- 2. What is the gradual plan I'm putting into place (schedule, goal specifics, etc.)**
- 3. What are the structures and supports that will keep me on track?**
- 4. What will it take from me to achieve this goal?**
- 5. How will I celebrate when I achieve it?**

I'd love any feedback you have on this e-book, and if you have any questions about self-discipline, please feel free to email them to me at robin@radiatecoaching.com. I'll be happy to respond.

I wish you all the best in achieving your goals, whatever they may be, and in making all your dreams come true!



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