

Willpower and Self Discipline

By Remez Sasson

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One Free Chapter

Introduction

Willpower and self-discipline are two of the most important inner powers in everyone's life, and have always been considered as essential tools for success in all areas of life. However, only few take any steps to develop and strengthen them in a systematic way.

Willpower is inner strength, determination, decisiveness and assertiveness, and also the ability to act and exert oneself despite laziness or discomfort.

Willpower bestows the vigor and endurance to act despite inner resistance or external obstacles, and is an invaluable and important key for being successful in life. It is one of the most important skills everyone should possess, and is an essential requirement for an efficient conduct one's life and affairs.

Self-discipline is the companion of willpower, and appears in various forms, such as perseverance, restraint, endurance, and as the ability to carry out decisions and plans, despite inconvenience, hardships or obstacles. Self-discipline is synonymous with self-control, which is the ability to avoid unhealthy excess of anything that could lead to negative consequences.

One of the main characteristics of self-discipline is the ability to forgo instant and immediate gratification and pleasure, in favor of some greater gain or more lasting and satisfying results, even if this requires effort and time.

True self-discipline is not a punitive or restrictive lifestyle, as some people think, and it has nothing to do with being narrow minded, or living like a fakir. It is a form of inner strength and staying power, which is of vital importance in the affairs of daily life and in the pursuit of goals.

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Most people wish they had more control over their life, could overcome laziness and procrastination, and become more assertive. However, they neither believe they can do so, nor possess the necessary inner strength. They also don't have the required information and guidance for making this change, since methods for developing willpower and self-discipline are not common knowledge. Such methods are not taught in schools, and hardly anywhere else.

You need willpower in order to make decisions and start working toward accomplishing them, and you need self-discipline in order to stick with your decisions and goals until you achieve them. Self-discipline and willpower work together and strengthen each other; strengthening one of them automatically strengthens the other. This is why the same exercises are effective for the development of both willpower and self-discipline.

The good news is that both self-discipline and willpower are skills that can be learned and developed, like any other skill, and this is the purpose of this book.

This book is a practical manual, offering you special techniques and exercises for strengthening your willpower and self-discipline, which can be practiced anywhere and anytime. For most of the exercises, you do not even need to set apart any special time for practice.

In addition to willpower and self-discipline, the exercises will help you gain assertiveness, inner strength, self-reliance and decisiveness, and also the ability to overcome procrastination and laziness.

The methods of this book have always been taught from ancient times, but have rarely been publicized. They have been mostly taught within the circles of those who followed the paths inner development, spirituality and occultism. I have included in this book some techniques and exercises from these sources, as well as many more exercises that I have created, together with all the necessary information and instructions.

Every exercise you practice will increase your reservoir of inner power and strength, and charge the "batteries" your willpower and self-discipline, making them available for use whenever you need them.

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In order to get the full value of this book you need practice the exercises, not just read the book. Reading the book will contribute to your understanding of the subject matter, but only by constant practice you will gain real inner strength.

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Chapter 1 - Definitions and General Information

What is Willpower?

Willpower is a form of inner strength expressed as determination, decisiveness and assertiveness, and also as the ability to act and exert oneself, in spite of laziness or discomfort.

Willpower bestows the vigor and endurance to act in spite of inner resistance or external obstacles, and is an invaluable and important key for being successful in life. It is one of the most important skills everyone should possess, and is an essential requirement for an efficient conduct one's life and affairs.

This ability is important for initiating action, executing plans and following one's goals, as well as avoiding temptations, ignoring distractions and focusing the mind. Its possession enables you to be decisive and to act now, overcome procrastination and assert yourself where necessary.

It is the power that gives you the strength and confidence to say "no" or "yes", to say what you think, to agree or disagree with others, instead of accepting and acting in accordance with what other people say and think.

Sometimes people confuse willpower with aggressiveness and with being obstinate. This is an inappropriate comparison. Aggressiveness is a behavior that uses excessive force, physical or verbal. Being obstinate is characterized by narrow-mindedness. Willpower is none of these. It is inner strength that you use with deliberation and common sense, without aggression or obstinacy.

Willpower is not the privilege of a few people, but is a skill that everyone can develop and strengthen through exercises and practice, just like any other skills.

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What is Self-Discipline?

Self-discipline is the companion of willpower, and is synonymous with self-control, which is the ability to avoid unreasonable excess of anything that could lead to negative consequences. Self-discipline appears in various forms, such as endurance, perseverance and restraint, and as the ability to carry out one's decisions and plans, in spite of inconvenience, hardships or obstacles.

One of the main characteristics of self-discipline is the ability to forgo instinctive and immediate gratification or pleasure, in favor of some greater gain or more satisfying results, even if this requires effort and time.

Self-discipline is a very useful and much needed skill in everyone's life, and though most people acknowledge its importance, yet very few do anything to develop and strengthen it. Lack of enough information and guidance on this subject, laziness and ignorance are few of the reasons for this state of affairs. In addition, the term self-discipline often causes some discomfort and fear, due to the erroneous notion that it is something unpleasant, difficult to attain, and requires a lot of effort and sacrifice.

Self-discipline requires some effort and practice to attain, but it is a skill that everyone can develop to a lesser or greater extent through special training. The same exercises that develop and strengthen willpower also develop and strengthen self-discipline.

True self-discipline is not a punitive or restrictive lifestyle, as some people think, and it has nothing to do with being narrow minded or living like a fakir. It is inner strength and staying power, vital for dealing with the affairs of daily life and for the achieving of goals.

Self-discipline enables you to overcome laziness, procrastination and indecisiveness. It also helps you take the necessary action in every situation, even if it is unpleasant and requires effort.

Self-discipline can help you change and improve your habits, behavior, actions and reactions. It also enables you to exercise moderation in what you

do, become patient, and have the strength to avoid impulsive actions. In addition, this skill enables you to withstand external pressure and influence.

Here are a few examples of self-discipline:

- If you have an appointment at a certain hour, you are there on time.
- If you make a promise to finish some work at a certain hour or date, you finish it by that time.
- If you promise yourself to follow a self-improvement program, study a new subject, or practice meditation, you keep this promise.
- If you decide to slim or eat only healthy food, you abide by your decision, even if you have to give up your favorite tidbits and snacks or change your eating habits.
- Self-disciplined people do not produce excuses. They fulfill the promises that they make to themselves and to others.

A person may be talented, bright and educated, but without self-discipline he or she will not reach far.

You need willpower in order to make decisions and start working toward accomplishing them, and you need self-discipline in order to stick with your decisions and goals until you accomplish them.

The Inner Power Battery

We often spend a lot of energy on useless, and sometimes harmful, thoughts and feelings, and on appeasing all kinds of unimportant desires. If we could conserve this energy, we would be able to use it for more worthy purposes.

Trying to appease every minor and unimportant whim and desire, besides of showing lack of self-discipline, paves the way to weakness and lack of inner strength. On the other hand, being aware of the whims and desires that try to

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pull us here and there, and consciously and intentionally refraining from immediately and automatically appeasing them strengthen our willpower and self-discipline.

The same goes to the habit of harboring useless or negative thoughts and feelings. These too, waste your time and energy, but the development of willpower and self-discipline can assist you in avoiding them.

Every time you refuse to appease an unhealthy or unimportant whim or desire, you save your energy, and charge the battery of your inner strength. Every such act increases the reservoir of the inner strength that is ready and available for your use at any time.

A battery stores electric power. When you use too much of the stored power, little electric current is left when you really need it. It is the same with the battery of your inner strength, which stores the current of your willpower and self-discipline. When you use too much of its stored power on unimportant matters, little current is left when you really need it.

When the battery of your willpower and self-discipline is fully charged, it supplies you with inner power and strength whenever you need them.

You Can Develop Willpower and Self-Discipline

There is a prevalent erroneous idea that willpower and self-discipline are difficult to develop and require practicing various kinds of very tough and pain inflicting activities. This is incorrect. The truth is that the whole process of developing willpower and self-discipline can be turned into a pleasurable and fun experience. It is a gradual process, which consists of practicing simple exercises that you can perform wherever you may be, and at anytime you want. Many of these exercises involve doing simple, common, everyday activities. Let me give you an example before we proceed.

Suppose you feel thirsty and wish to drink something to quench your thirst. Your instinctive desire might be to drink beer, juice, soda water or maybe something else. Instead, as an exercise to train your willpower and self-

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discipline, intentionally, and as an act of will, choose to drink just plain water, despite your desire to drink something else.

In this simple exercise, you act contrary to your desire, and despite subconscious resistance. This act strengthens your willpower and self-discipline, just like lifting barbells strengthens your muscles. In these two instances, you intentionally, and for a definite purpose, act in a certain way. In one case, you act contrary to the instinctive desire of your subconscious mind, and in the second case, you lift the barbells despite the resistance of your muscles.

When the body is thirsty, all it needs is water to quench its thirst, but the mind suggests something more delicious to drink. Your decision to drink plain water, and your abidance by your decision, exercise your power of choice and strengthen you will and discipline.

As you see, it is not difficult at all. You don't need to do anything extraordinary or spend extra time practicing this simple exercise. After practicing the exercise several times, and being able to abide by your decision to drink water, it is enough if you practice it only occasionally, and drink your favorite drink at other times. Such exercises strengthen your willpower and self-discipline, and make them available for your use, whenever you need them and for whatever purpose, not just for drinking water.

You will find in this book many similar exercises to help you develop your inner strength.

My Way to Willpower and Self-Discipline

I was about fifteen years old, when I first started reading books and magazines about the powers of the mind, which I found at home, in my father's library. These books were very fascinating, and read them assiduously, and with great interest.

Some time later, my father introduced me to some other related subjects, and we started having interesting conversations about these topics, which further

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increased my curiosity and interest, as well as my desire to experience what I learned.

Later, I started to read the other books and magazines in my father's library, about the occult, the power of concentration, mind power, visualization, yoga, psychology and philosophy, meditation and spirituality, and also practiced what they taught.

Along the years, my interest has grown and deepened, and I have collected and read many books about these subjects.

In my search for knowledge and understanding I have come across books that were written by Mouni Sadhu, a spiritual and occult writer, who lived in the 20th century. He wrote several very useful books that have especially attracted my attention and interest. In one of his books, he wrote about the importance of willpower, and suggested some useful advice and instructions for training and strengthening the power of the will.

What he wrote was very fascinating, and I enthusiastically started practicing the exercises he offered. They were simple, uncomplicated and practical, and yielded almost immediate results.

At about the same time I was making my first steps in studying and practicing concentration exercises and meditation. I realized that willpower and self-discipline were very important for the development of the power concentration and for practicing meditation. I came to the conclusion that strong willpower and developed self-discipline were also essential for developing perseverance, and for success in self-improvement techniques, spiritual growth and for controlling the mind.

One of the first exercises, which I practiced, was drinking my coffee or tea without sugar. Until then, I used to add two teaspoonfuls of sugar to each cup I drank. I wanted to test my willpower, and to find out whether I could endure the unsweetened beverages for a whole week. At first it was tough and there was inner resistance, because the coffee or the tea, were bitter and not tasty, but after about a week I got used to the bitter taste. This victory made me very happy, increased my inner strength, and motivated me to continue with the exercises.

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After practicing this exercise for some time, I stopped experiencing inner resistance or discomfort, and could practice them rather easily. If I wished, I could have returned to my previous habit of drinking my coffee or tea with sugar, but didn't, because I began to like and enjoy the bitter taste.

Years have passed since then, and I still enjoy drinking coffee or tea without sugar. Sometimes though, I do add half a teaspoon of sugar to the tea only, when it is too strong.

You might think that by practicing this exercise or similar ones, you will have to give up pleasure and comfort, but this is only temporary, and for a good purpose. By denying and rejecting immediate pleasure you gain inner strength, assertiveness and decisiveness.

Acting contrary to a habit, even if this is unpleasant and uncomfortable, strengthens one's willpower, self-discipline and endurance, and this is exactly the role of this exercise.

Just to set your mind at rest, after mastering this or other exercise, you may, if you wish, return to your old habit, if it is not harmful and you still like it.

Training your willpower and self-discipline in this way is similar to training your muscles by lifting heavy weights at the gym. You make some effort, in order to gain strength. You "sacrifice" some pleasure and comfort, in order to gain something better.

I wish to share with you another experience, which I went through at the beginning of my training. I started reading a very thick book, with many pages, but after reading a few pages, I put it aside, finding it too boring. At that very moment, I remembered that doing things that bring up inner resistance, and completing them, strengthen the willpower. This made me decide to read the whole book, no matter how boring it was. I stuck with my decision, and went through each page to the last one.

Though it was a small accomplishment, it was a great victory for me, since I could overcome the opposition of my mind. This incident filled me with strength, and the faith that I can overcome any inner resistance I might encounter. I felt that if I could read a boring book, I would be able to do greater things that need more inner effort and strength.

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Later, I have noticed that this exercise, and similar ones, developed my ability to go through and finish everything I started to do, not just reading books.

Over the years, I have read everything I could find about this intriguing subject, practiced more exercises, and created many more, which you will find in this book.

The Benefits of Willpower and Self-Discipline

Willpower and self-discipline are of great value in all walks of life, and are necessary for almost every you do. They give you more control over your life, and help you achieve greater success. They enable you to have more control over your moods and state of mind, as well as well as your thoughts, words and actions. These skills are indispensable at work and at home, in your private life and in your career.

Willpower and self-discipline resemble two powerful engines that are constantly at your disposal, and, which can supply you the power and drive you need. Without them, other people, circumstances, and passing thoughts can easily direct and control your life.

Here is a list of what you can do when you possess willpower and self-discipline:

- Have more control over your thoughts.
- Be able to ignore noise and distractions while reading or studying.
- Become more assertive.
- Have the courage to say no, when you don't really want to do something.
- Persevere with what you are doing, a diet or a physical training program, meditation, or any other program.

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- Follow a plan to its successful end.
- Use your time more efficiently.
- Overcome laziness.
- Overcome shyness.
- Overcome negative habits.
- Overcome fear.
- Overcome inner resistance.
- Resist temptations.
- Quit smoking.
- Persevere with a diet until you lose weight.
- Control your eating habits.
- Stop procrastinating.
- Stick to your decisions, and follow them through.
- Be courageous to take the first step.
- Act, instead of just daydream.
- Control, change and improve your habits.
- Engage in physical training or sports activity.
- Be able to get up early in the morning.
- Always finish what you start.

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- Avoid anger and other negative feelings.
- Improve concentration.
- Improve the ability to meditate.
- Have the courage to speak up your mind.

Willpower and self-discipline gained through systematic training are always available to the person possessing them, under all times and conditions. They are not something that manifests sporadically and occasionally, but are under the control of the person possessing them.

The Reasons for Lack of Willpower and Self-Discipline

What would you prefer doing, sit in an armchair and watch a romantic soap opera, or clean the house?

Would you prefer to lie down in bed and read a book, while it is raining outside, or pull yourself out of bed and go to the gym to exercise?

Would you prefer to eat a delicious piece of cake rich in calories, or salad?

Most people would choose the first option, though they know that the second option is better for their health.

Laziness is one of the main reasons for lack of inner strength. People prefer comfortable laziness, instead of actions that require effort. Laziness is comfortable, since it is pleasant and effortless, while decisiveness, action and initiative require effort. It is always easier and requires no effort to order junk food, than to prepare a meal, or watch TV, instead of taking a walk. Most people seek immediate gratification, which is more comfortable, even if it might be harmful in the long run.

*Every time you give in to laziness you weaken yourself.
Every time you conquer laziness you strengthen yourself.*

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Fear of failure and negative mental programming hold back decisiveness and taking positive action, cause lack of inner strength, and allow external influences to shape one's life.

Children are often told from an early age:

“You cannot do this!”

“This is not good for you!”

“Avoid this... and beware of that!”

These words repress initiative, self-reliance and creativity, and create fears and lack of self-esteem and inner strength.

Parents and teachers try to teach children self-discipline, but what they actually do, is to enforce their will on the children, instead of offering true guidance for building self-discipline. This attitude is usually not very productive, often causing resistance and clashes. This is one of the reasons why children, and later as adults, show a subconscious dislike of discipline. They regard discipline of any kind as a limitation, and as something unpleasant and frightening.

We all meet different kinds of temptations every day. Sometimes we resist them, but more often we indulge in them. Most of the time they are not really important, but still, we waste our time and energy by following them. If we lack inner strength, temptations usually win, often distracting and diverting us from our plans and decisions.

We encounter temptations everywhere and in many forms. We are exposed to the many ads in newspapers, magazines and on TV, telling us to buy this or that. We see a great number of different products for sale in the supermarkets and in the shopping malls, and we are offered a huge array of entertainment, such as TV programs, movies, restaurants, concerts, sports competitions and many other sorts of entertainment.

It is not easy to resist all these temptations. How can you resist the beautifully arranged and tasty food at the supermarket, or resist watching a TV show, which offers a pleasant escape from daily life? All these temptations distract the attention, weaken the willpower and the concentration, and divert and distract.

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I am preaching for self-denial and asceticism, not at all! I am not telling you to live a life without pleasure! Enjoy life, but you need to be able to decide what is best for you, be strong and decisive, and let not every passing desire, whim or external influence pull you here and there.

It is so easy to be sidetracked and spend too much time, energy and money, when there are so many pleasant and alluring things to do and enjoy that offer immediate gratification. The matter is that if you accept every desire, whim and pleasant temptation you might end up with no inner strength and discipline, being easily affected by what you see and hear, by passing thoughts and desires, and by what people say or do.

Lack of assertiveness and the inability to say “no”, weaken willpower and self-discipline.

Lack of self-esteem is another factor that makes it hard to manifest willpower and self-discipline.

Some people don't believe they can change. They consider change and improvement to be difficult, if not impossible. They accept their character and habits as fixed, and the idea of gaining inner strength and power doesn't even occur to them.

Techniques for developing willpower and self-discipline are not common knowledge, and therefore, neither teachers at schools nor parents teach them.

Very few people know that willpower and self-discipline can be developed and strengthened through proper exercises.

Most people to go through life allowing other people, the environment, and circumstances control their lives and decide for them.

People find it is easier and more convenient to sink into self-pity when they fail or meet obstacles, than to get up and try again.

It is easier and more convenient to listen to people who say that this or that cannot be done, rather than pull yourself together and decide that you are capable and able to succeed.

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Negative habits and thoughts, repressed initiative and creativity, feelings of unworthiness and weakness, laziness and fear, are just a few of the obstacles that stand in the way of expressing willpower and self-discipline. If willpower and self-discipline were taught at school like any other subject, life would have been so much better for many of us.

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