

# Maximize Self-Discipline

Self-discipline isn't about self-denial or self-restrictions. In the context of success it means self-determination. It is perseverance in action. Self-discipline is the very basis of success because it is how you direct your time, energy and resources to manifest your desires. Self-discipline is the one factor common to all self-made, successful people. In a nutshell, self-discipline simply means that you do what you need to do, and you stop doing what doesn't work.

## **1. Examine your behavior and personality; what changes need to be made?**

You have the power and ability to change your personality. Decide what needs to be changed. Then decide if you are really *willing* to change. Are you willing to take responsibility for your behavior? Is your behavior causing you problems? An immediate change in behavior will quickly lead to a change in attitude, which can lead to fulfilling your needs—and further improved behavior. You don't have to change how you feel about something to affect it, if you are willing to change what you are doing.

Your personality is the sum total of all your past programming. It amounts to your **traits, viewpoints** and **habits** and the interaction of those three factors. They are acquired, not inherited, thus they are alterable. They can be changed if you want to change them. Your habits, traits, and viewpoints are your *choices*.

A habit is a simple act you do over and over, such as the way you get dressed in the morning or the route you drive to work. Your traits are a tendency to do things repeatedly in similar ways, such as being known as an immaculate dresser, or always being late. Your viewpoints are the ways you look at things. Reality exists as that which you experience. The way you experience life is based upon the way you *choose* to view what happens to you. Viewpoint is the deciding factor in whether you experience life harmoniously or disharmoniously.

So suggestion number one is to decide what in your personality needs to be changed, and then decide if you are really *willing* to change.

## **2. Build your strength by increasing your willpower and self-esteem.**

Increasing self-discipline is a matter of building the strength not to give up. All too often we say, "To hell with it," because we don't have the strength to struggle with the issue at hand. We might not come right out and say "To hell with it," but sometimes we just can't admit to ourselves on a conscious level that we lack the self-discipline to do what we need to do.

If your lack of self-discipline causes you mental suffering, you are going to be stuck with the pain unless you get stronger. You can build your strength by increasing your willpower and generating high self-esteem. Build your willpower by practicing one-pointedness, focusing only upon what you are doing and do one thing at a time until the task is completed.

Actions influence attitude, and better behavior will increase your self-esteem. Exert the willpower to make immediate changes in your behavior, and it will lead to a change in attitude.

Your level of self-esteem is the result of what you have done in the past. When you do things that make you feel good about yourself, you build your self-esteem. When you do things you don't feel good about, you lower your self-esteem. As a basic rule of life, never do anything that lowers your self-esteem.

### **3. Learn to fulfill your essential needs.**

One of the primary reasons people are not as happy or fulfilled as they desire to be is that they don't choose wisely between harmonious and disharmonious behavior.

If you have problems and are unable to fulfill your essential needs in life, the severity of your symptoms reflects the degree to which you are unable to fulfill your needs. One person becomes stressed, another develops an ulcer, someone else gets depressed, or develops a phobia, or becomes anti-social.

But whatever the symptom, it will disappear when your needs are successfully fulfilled. If you aren't fulfilling your needs, no matter what your symptoms or behavior, you are denying the reality of the world you live in.

All human beings have the same physiological and psychological needs, but we vary in our ability to fulfill them. Psychiatry is concerned with two basic psychological needs: 1) The need to love and be loved, and 2) The need to feel worthwhile to ourselves and to others, which can be summed up as good self-esteem.

For your basic needs to be fulfilled, you must be involved with other people. You must have at least one person who cares about you and whom you care about. Without this essential person you will not be able to fulfill your basic needs.

To feel worthwhile, you must maintain a satisfactory standard of behavior. You must correct yourself when you're wrong, and if your conduct is below your standard, and you don't correct it, you will suffer because you will feel as if you have failed in something. Just as you would suffer if you had no one to love or love you.

Now whatever has happened in the past, no matter how it may have affected you, it won't make any difference once you learn to fulfill your needs. Self-discipline and responsibility play an important part in this because you must fulfill your needs in a way that does not deprive others of the ability to fulfill their needs.

### **4. How are you served by your lack of self-discipline? Explore any secret satisfaction you may receive from not being fully in charge of your life.**

If you need to increase your self-discipline you need to take charge of your life. The first step in taking charge of your life may be to explore any secret satisfaction you receive from not being fully in charge. As an example, if you feel like you are victimized, you're receiving some satisfaction from being a victim. If you are weak, or poor, or feel

inadequate, there is a payoff of some kind in it for you. Negative games are great attention-getters. Another benefit of these games might be that they protect you from blame. The number of games is infinite. There is the “I can’t find the right relationship” game. And the “I can only attain a limited level of success” game. Or, how about the “My relationship is miserable” game?

Life is a game. Some people play it as a game of struggle, or sickness, or poverty, or being right all the time. Others play the game of happiness, success and abundant health. We are each playing a game we set up. And if your game is not bringing you some kind of payoff, *stop playing*.

Often, there are hidden reasons why you procrastinate and end up feeling the need to increase your self-discipline. Explore how you are served by *not doing* what you need to do, *when* you need to do it. Maybe you fear success or fear failure, and by avoiding the issue you don’t have to cope with either. Maybe you experience anxiety about starting or completing a task. Or maybe if you put things off somebody else will do it, or maybe the “avoid” will keep you from being judged, or maybe you think everything will eventually resolve itself. Start with any area where you feel you are lacking in self-discipline, and explore how it serves you to do what you do. Then design a countermeasure, a change in behavior that will eliminate the problem.

As an example, my primary area of procrastination relates to returning phone calls. I used to put them off for days, weeks, or forever. I lacked the self-discipline to return almost all phone calls. Why? Because they take time away from my writing and I dislike the small talk that is usually part of any call. When I’m directly to the point, it often alienates people who require social rapport. Now, in understanding why I lack the self-discipline to return calls I can either build the strength to stop procrastinating or find another way of resolving the problem. In this case I chose to delegate the undesirable task to my office staff. They now return 99 percent of my calls. My friends already know I don’t like to talk on the phone and are willing to communicate with my wife or answering machine.

Discover ways to eliminate the problem; either a change in behavior or a change in attitude can easily do the trick.

## **5. Learn to control your thoughts.**

You create your own reality with your beliefs, which result from your thoughts. Your thoughts and beliefs have created all your experiences. Real power lies in your ability to control your thoughts. A confused mind works in the direction of sickness, lack and limitation, rather than health, abundance and success. If you are not experiencing your life exactly the way you want it to be, you are allowing your unconscious mind to create your reality – and that just doesn’t work. From this moment, start catching yourself when you think a negative thought, or make a judgment, or get upset, or when you’re not self-disciplined. Catch yourself and say these two little words quickly to yourself, “Success Opportunity.” Then imagine the undesirable situation reversed. Quickly imagine a positive outcome. Or, rephrase the negative thought with a positive one. The more you use this technique the more effective it will become.

## **6. Realize that no one is perfect.**

No one is perfect. If you avoid doing what you need to do because you don't think you can do the job perfectly, this sets you up for failure. The more of a perfectionist you are the harder it will be to begin.

You must accept that you and everyone else on the planet is human and everyone of us has our limits. Make it all right with yourself to be less than perfect. Then decide to get going.

## **7. Rise above the fear of success.**

Understand and rise above the fear of success. First, you need to explore why you might be afraid of success. Maybe if you were to really succeed it would change your relationship with your mate, friends, or family. Maybe success would dictate other changes you wouldn't like. Success often increases expectations, demands and pressures. And, success can generate a fear of ultimate failure at some future time. Examine your potential gains and losses realistically, and decide what will and won't work for you.

## **8. Understand and rise above three more fear blocks: the fear of failure, the fear of being overwhelmed and the fear of finishing.**

Begin rising above your fear-blocks by asking yourself, "What is the worst that could happen?" A full awareness of your potential loss will clarify your anxiety. Then, explore how you can reduce the likelihood of this undesirable event from occurring. What could you do to increase your safety? The more you can do, the less fearful you will be. Also, explore this from the perspective of how you can increase your chances of winning in this situation.

Explore what you would do if the worst came to pass. How would you cope? Where could you get help? How would you carry on? Explore your potential for dealing effectively with life. Explore your alternatives. And when you've done that, remind yourself that courage is the *willingness to be afraid and to act anyway*.

## **9. Examine your values and make sure they are compatible with your goals.**

If your values and goals are not compatible, problems with self-discipline are sure to follow because you end up fighting yourself in regard to fulfilling your desires. If your goals and values are not compatible, you will either subconsciously block yourself from achieving your goals or you'll change your values to make them consistent with your goals. A third possibility is that you'll destroy one or the other in the process.

Make a list of your ten most important goals. Then do the same with your values. Any great difference on the list will indicate that you need to rethink one or the other, to resolve or avoid a conflict.

Key value areas to consider are your primary relationship, children, career, friends & associates, spirituality, physical fitness & well-being, finances, creativity, education &

intellectual growth, recreation & leisure activities, home & material possessions, and community or service involvements.

Your goals should consist of your primary short-term career goal, long-term career goal, short and long-term personal goals, and relationship goals.

If your goals consist mainly of financial and career successes and your values are primarily concerned with your spirituality, recreational and leisure activities, you may be fooling yourself.

## **10. Clarify your values and goals.**

Look at the results of your goal/value list and clarify your real goals. At least do this with your general career goal, and your strongest personal goals. If you don't plan a life direction you are making a choice: no choice. If you don't choose, destiny makes your choices for you and that can result in sad consequences. You want goals; you need goals; you must have goals if you desire to take control of your life. Goals define your self-discipline requirements, and reinforce your self-esteem.

## **11. Question yourself about your life desires.**

Determine exactly what you *really* want, not what you think you *should* want. Next, discover what is blocking you from getting what you want. The block will be one of three things: 1) A subconscious fear; 2) A hidden benefit; or 3) It is totally unrealistic.

Next, decide what you are willing to pay to get what you want. The price will be one or more of the following: time, money, effort or sacrifice. Hopefully, what you really want would generate great joy in your life. When you know exactly what you want and what you're willing to do to get it, you'll be aware of how much self-discipline will be required.

## **12. Do only that which you enjoy.**

One of the primary reasons people are not self-disciplined is that they don't enjoy what they are doing. To do what you don't enjoy can be torture, and it can fragment your personality. But there is a very simple way to integrate yourself, and probably generate incredible self-discipline. All you have to do is **do only that which you enjoy**. What would happen if no matter what it was, if you didn't enjoy it, you didn't do it. Think about this.

Now if you're resisting this idea by saying, "Sure, sure ... what a dumb idea," you're limiting your options. If you are doubting it now, you probably limit all your options in life. Instead of doubting this idea, think about how much energy you'd have to do what you enjoy, if you freed yourself from the tasks that you don't enjoy. I'm not talking about ignoring your responsibilities. The idea is to delegate what you don't want to do.

Freely choose what you do. When you feel you *have* to do something, you're playing the victim, rather than a responsible, powerful person. From this moment on, any time you start to feel like you *have* to, use the thought stopping "Success Opportunity" technique and empower yourself by saying, "I freely choose to."

What you want to do is always your best option in life, because it generates joy. I'm talking about the joy, stimulation and exhilaration that make you glad to be alive. This aliveness comes from doing what you want to do. In turn, joy generates inspired energy which if properly channeled, should generate productive behavior. Like a Möbius strip,

one generates the other in a continuous cycle of productivity and joy. You might have to work a little longer at what you enjoy to earn what you need to hire someone else to do what you don't enjoy. But wouldn't it be worth it?

### **13. Divide big jobs into workable steps which you take one step at a time.**

The big picture can often appear daunting once we have procrastinated long enough. It just takes an extra couple of minutes to organize a large task into a series of smaller related tasks. Group together related activities. You can save yourself a great deal of time with a few extra minutes of organizing before the real work begins. Set priorities and do the most important things first. Then once you begin, concentrate on the task at hand. If you allow yourself to get distracted by all that needs to be accomplished, you won't get the job done. Focusing all your energy in one direction is a powerful success force. Begin by examining your task and finding the best place to start. Next divide the task into small, manageable steps which you will handle, one step at a time, until the project is complete.

### **14. Eliminate busy work.**

This is work that doesn't really contribute to your overall success, but you take refuge in doing it, because it's easy. When you do things that aren't worth doing, you delude yourself into thinking you've accomplished something.

### **15. Touch each paper only once.**

If you are going to read the memo or open the letter and read it, or open the telephone bill, or glance at your notes for the proposal, handle it immediately. Don't allow your desk to become a rotation center for paperwork.

### **16. Just begin—one disciplined act leads to another.**

Be aware that when you are self-disciplined and act in the way you desire to act, the act reinforces the motivating belief and viewpoint behind the act. The reverse is also true every time you fail to act. So, one self-disciplined act naturally leads to another and to another to help you free yourself from the beliefs and viewpoints that work against you.

### **17. Use self-hypnosis.**

Daily use of self-hypnosis mind programming will support your goal of maximizing your self-discipline. The final chapter tells you how.

## **Increase Self-Discipline Summary**

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2. Build your strength by increasing your willpower and self-esteem.
3. Learn to fulfill your essential needs.

4. How are you served by your lack of self-discipline? Explore any secret satisfaction you may receive from not being fully in charge of your life.
5. Learn to control your thoughts.
6. Realize that no one is perfect.
7. Rise above the fear of success.
8. Understand and rise above three more fear blocks: the fear of failure, the fear of being overwhelmed and the fear of finishing.
9. Examine your values and make sure they are compatible with your goals.
10. Clarify your values and goals.
11. Question yourself about your life desires.
12. Do only that which you enjoy.
13. Divide big jobs into workable steps which you take one step at a time.
14. Eliminate busy work.
15. Touch each paper only once.
16. Just begin – one disciplined act leads to another.

## • *Affirmations* •

The final chapter explains how to use the following affirmations as self-talk and how to include them in a self-hypnosis format for daily mind programming.

*"I have the self-discipline to accomplish my personal and professional goals."*

*"I direct my time and energy to manifest my desires."*

*"Every day, in every way, I increase my self-discipline."*

*"I do what I need to do and stop doing what doesn't work."*

*"I can control my thoughts, and thus my actions."*

*"I freely choose to do what I do."*

*"I am assertive and feel good about myself."*

*"I am clear on my values and willing to commit to my goals."*

*"I do a job one step at a time until it's done."*

*"I live a directed life."*

*"I only act in ways that build my self-esteem."*

*"I take charge of my life and play the game of happiness, success and abundant health."*

*"'Success Opportunity' is my technique to reverse the energy of my thoughts."*

*"I have the courage to be afraid and act anyway."*

*"I decide exactly what I want in life and I go for it."*

*"I incorporate time management techniques into my life."*

*"I spend my time in ways that support my goals."*

*"I know that who I am is perfect."*