

Discipline

- just a dreaded word or the key to success?

Discipline? Where does one start. To illustrate the construct; many of us are way too familiar with the concept of New Year's resolutions where we every year make sincere pledges to change our lives completely when the clock strikes midnight on 1 January. Much like a reverse Cinderella! Every year we convince ourselves that we will be able to completely change routines and habits overnight – with the underpinning belief that a fresh start will get us there. The same pattern drags throughout the year. When we realise that we won't be able to stick to our New Year's resolution we start with "Next Monday". But as we know.... the right Monday never comes. We hit Monday, fail to follow through, and instead of trying for Tuesday, we say to ourselves "wait and see.... next Monday is the Monday". Then I will start. This goes on until next year again where we will start over. Sounds familiar?

So, before we start it is important to be aware of the true meaning of discipline, in this context self-discipline, which is to accomplish what is seen as desirable by you and not what is seen desirable by others. It comes down to managing yourself - your feelings, emotions and thoughts, and to manoeuvre your behaviour to achieve the goals you set for yourself. By measuring self-discipline like this allows us to predict a variety of positive outcomes. The question is; "how can this be improved and how do we develop our self-discipline?" Firstly, having your focus in the right place is crucial when trying to accomplish your goals, and to start with – make it a priority to avoid distractions that might disrupt your focus. Secondly, focus on the goal you have set for yourself and not the obstacles along the way, otherwise a collision is almost bound to happen. Thirdly, stick to your schedule, routines and the plans you have made for yourself - and in this way practise your self-discipline, while avoiding side-tracks. Thus, it is possible to train yourself to succeed by improving self-discipline.

Regardless, we are all constantly confronted with different choices where we have to make a decision: "should I speak up or keep quiet?", "what are we going to do today?", "should we go in direction x or y?", and for many this is a continuous internal struggle that can be both draining and overwhelming. The secret to success therefore seems to be discipline and actually do what is needed even when not feeling like doing it. One should face challenges heads on, which also can be described as "*The Pain Paradox of decision making*" (Vaden, 2012), which "*is the idea that short-term easy leads to long-term difficulty, while the short-term difficulty leads to long-term easy*" (Vaden, 2012), which is something we all need to do if we would like to get good at something. Do not eat the dessert before dinner but save the best for last by doing the not so desired activities first. Think of developing self-discipline like training a "muscle" - that needs practice and training to improve and grow.

Here are 7 tips on how to strengthen and cultivate your self-discipline.

1. Eliminate temptations.
2. Know your strengths and weaknesses.
3. Watch your nutrition and eat regularly.
4. Do not wait for the moment to be perfect!
5. Make sure to take breaks.
6. Remember to treat yourself and celebrate wins.
7. Do not be too hard on yourself and remember that it is human to make mistakes.
Just put it behind you and move forward.

So, on a final note - practice your self-discipline and make success a habit!

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