

1. Understand Your Why

If you want to lose weight, **why do you want to lose it?** Is it because you want to look **sexier**? Is it because your **doctor told you** that you need to get your weight down? Is it because you want to be able to **chase your kids around** without losing your breath? Do you want to be **grandparent of the year**? Is it that you want to have a **lifetime of good health**? Is it that your girlfriend has a **weight limit for boyfriends**? Figure out what your **why** is -- it must be important enough to you that you will overcome your need for **immediate gratification**.

If you know your why, it will be a **powerful motivator**. If you are just doing it to **look good**, that motivation will quickly dissipate once you haven't lost **10 pounds** in your first week. If you are doing it to have a **lifetime of health**, that is something you can always look to. You can always look to the **improved health** you will receive if you pass on dessert this evening. You can always look to your **kids** and know that you are doing this for them.

Whatever your why is, you must keep it in your mind. You must constantly remind yourself of **why you are doing it**. Make a poster, put it on your bathroom mirror, put it on your computer desktop -- whatever you need to do.

2. Set Clear and Achievable Goals

If you're on a journey to grow your business, lose weight, or become a master in your field, you're probably already taking steps in the right direction. However, if those goals aren't **clearly defined**, it's challenging to stay disciplined. Not only that, but if your goals are **unrealistic**, you may start to feel discouraged and stop trying.

Instead of saying, "I need to lose weight," try saying, "I'm going to go on a **three-month diet** so I can lose **15 pounds** for my high-school reunion." This goal is **specific**, it's **achievable**, and it has a **tangible outcome**. If you need to be more specific, break the goal down into smaller, achievable steps, such as, "I'm going to lose **five pounds** this month by eating fewer carbs."

When you have specific and achievable goals, you're more likely to stay mindful of your actions and be **disciplined** instead of going on autopilot. And after the first month, you can give yourself a **reward** for your achievements, as mentioned in tip one.

3. Develop a Strong Routine

How many **greats** can you name who are known for their strong routine or daily ritual? **Benjamin Franklin, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Tim Ferriss, Tony Robbins**, and even **the Buddha himself** are just a few that come to mind. I'm sure you've heard of many others as well.

Having a solid **daily routine** is crucial to getting things done on a consistent basis. When the routine becomes a **habit**, the action becomes automatic.... and **self-discipline** becomes easy.

Think of your **triggers**. When you wake up in the morning, what is the first thing you do? For me, it's **drinking a glass of water** and **washing my face**. This triggers my routine, which I've set out to do at the same time every day. What other triggers can you create? Have a **morning smoothie**, or **meditate for 10 minutes**.

Do you have a ritual for after you exercise or eat dinner? Create these triggers for yourself. This same routine applies to **work**, as well. Set a starting time for your workday--even on the weekends. Mark it on your calendar. Have a ritual so that you know you're ready to work.

Focus on one task at a time. Create a **“shutdown” time** in the evening, and create a **wind-down ritual**. The key to creating a routine is **consistency**. Do it every day at the same time, in the same way, and soon you will have created a **habit**.

In this way, the action becomes so ingrained in you that it’s automatic. Over time, this builds up tolerance to discomfort and you will be a **master of self-discipline**.

4. Eliminate Distractions

In my experience, this is one of the most important steps to take when you’re focused on developing **self-discipline**. It’s not easy to concentrate on important tasks when you have your **phone next to you**, your **email open**, or a **TV playing** in the background.

You may be able to do a few of these things, but your **effectiveness** and **focus** will suffer. If you want to concentrate on your work, or focus completely on an activity with a high level of **attention**, you need to eliminate distractions.

Website blockers can be helpful if you’re prone to visiting distracting sites on the Internet. Turn off your phone, or consider putting it in another room. Do what you can to clear away **visual clutter** as well.

When you’re ready to study, work, or exercise, you want to concentrate on that one thing. Distractions will hold you back.

a. Identify Time Wasters

What are you doing when you’re not working? What are the biggest distractions in your life, both online and offline? A common mistake people make is to ignore these distractions, but these distractions are costing you time.

In order to be more productive, you must identify your **time wasters** and eliminate them. This is a great time to log your time. Keep a little notebook with you at all times and write down what you do every hour. After a week or two, analyze the log and calculate how much time you spend on various things. You might be surprised.

Time wasters are everywhere, but you’re not going to stop doing them unless you can identify them. A common example of a time waster is **texting**. I’ve talked to countless people who spend more time texting than anything else. I’m not saying texting is bad, but it’s just one example of a time waster.

Other examples are:

- **social media**
- **video games**
- **watching TV**
- **taking long showers**

Again, I’m not saying these things are bad, but if you want to become a **master at self-discipline**, you have to start identifying what your time wasters are.

b. Create a Focused Environment

Create a **positive environment** around yourself to minimize distractions. Here are some ways to do that:

- **Get rid of your phone**, or turn off notifications.
- **Put on headphones** while you work or study.
- **Get rid of clutter** on your desk.

- **Post reminders** around your house to stay focused.
- **Use a visual reminder** to check in with yourself.
- Put notes around your house or workspace with motivational sayings like, "**You Got This!**" or "**Keep at It.**"

When you don't feel like doing something, ask yourself, "What would a **master** do?" Or, "What would my **future self** do?" Or, "Would my future self be proud of this decision?" It can help you to meditate on the question, "Are the distractions I've created in my environment worth more than the **goals** I'm trying to achieve?"

5. Practice Delayed Gratification

Self-discipline is a fancy way of saying, "**delayed gratification.**" And it's a skill that can be learned, just like any other. You don't have to be born with extraordinary self-discipline. You just need to practice it.

When you think about practicing self-discipline, think about one area that you currently struggle with. Do you have a hard time saying **No** to junk food? Do you have a problem with hitting the **snooze button** on your alarm clock? Just focus on one area right now. You can pick the others to work on later.

Try this exercise: Make a list of everything that you want to give a try - new hobbies, new activities, new experiences. Pick one and sign up for a class or order the supplies you need. For example, you could try **painting, knitting, sailing, rock climbing**, or anything else you've always wanted to try.

If you are delayed with your gratification right now, you will be able to enjoy it once you finish your project. You'll feel more proud of your accomplishment and your reward will be that much sweeter for having waited for it.

6. Build Positive Habits

When you have a habit that you want to stop doing, it's hard to just cut it out without some kind of replacement. If you habitually go to **smoking** when you're stressed, just saying "No" to the cigarette won't solve the problem. You have to deal with the **stress**, and the **craving for the cigarette**.

So what other activities will help you deal with stress? With positive habits, you can train yourself to do something else instead of the old bad habits. Here are some examples:

- Instead of having a **glass of wine** in the evening, make a ritual of preparing your **tea** or some other healthy drink.
- Instead of turning to **cigarettes** when you're stressed, go for a **walk** or a **run**.
- Instead of playing **video games**, go for a **walk with your family**.
- Instead of eating **junk food**, eat **healthy food** instead. You'll feel healthier, and be healthier.
- Instead of doing the **easy things** at work, form the habit of diving into the **hard tasks** first.
- Instead of procrastinating, start small and grow your focus **one step at a time**.

These are just a few examples, but you can see how they're replacing something **negative** with something **positive**. Over time, you'll start to form the new positive habits, and the bad ones will fall away. This is a **long-term strategy** -- bad habits took a long time to form, and it will take time to replace them.

a. Start Small and Scale Up

Take it step by step. Set small goals, and once you reach them, set bigger ones. You don't have to start as a **5,000 miles runner**. Start by running just **one mile**. And then increase the dosage as time goes by.

Think of yourself as a **sprinter** when you start - you take short bursts of energy and then rest a while. When you feel like you've mastered **self-discipline** for the first goal, then move to the next goal.

If you are struggling with self-discipline, but you want to take control over your life, start small. Just make a decision to **wake up early tomorrow**. Just make a decision to **run for 10 minutes tomorrow**. Just make a decision to remind yourself of your **goals** and what's **important to you** tomorrow morning, and then let go of the rest.

Do it for a week like this, and see how you do. If you did well, you can gradually increase your goals. If you don't, you can reduce your goals. Whichever way, you're not doing it all at once. You're allowing yourself to master a small step first, and then taking bigger steps as your **confidence increases** and your **self-discipline improves**.

b. Use Habit Tracking

Tracking your habits daily allows you to see whether or not you're following through with the intent of your **resolutions**. When you track your habits and see that you've done well on day four, you're likely to want to do well again on day five. This creates a sense of **accountability** and encourages you to continue to perform well.

To hold yourself accountable, you might also ask a **family member** or **friend** to be your accountability buddy, to whom you report your progress to each week. The greatest thing about habit tracking is that you can focus on one task at a time, and don't have to worry about every task on your list all at once.

You can choose one task to focus on for the day, then another the next day, and so on, helping you get through your list. There are many great habit trackers out there, and some of the best ones are **free**. You can try **Strides**, **Habitica**, **HabitBull**, or **Habit Tracker**.

7. Strengthen Your Willpower

You can develop your **willpower** in the same way that you develop your **muscles**. It gets stronger with time and exercise. For example, let's say you want to stop eating **junk food**. Start with only **one day** of eating healthy. Once you accomplish this, make it **three days**. Then a **week**. Once you've been able to do it for a **month**, you'll feel your willpower getting strong.

When your willpower is strong, you will have an easier time with **self-discipline**. You can also strengthen your willpower with these tips:

- Make a decision that you're not going to do something (ex: **bite your nails**).
- Work on completing that task for a **short time**. The key is to not overdo it. Don't make it an all-day affair. You want to make it an **easier task**.
- **Exercise** - this will really help you with your willpower. You'll be able to take what you learn from exercising and apply it to other areas of your life. For example, exercise requires **discipline**. Once you learn to be disciplined in one area (exercise), you'll be able to use that self-discipline in another area (work or school).
- Take care of your **sleep** - a lack of sleep can have a negative impact on your willpower. When you get adequate sleep, you have more **energy** and you're more **focused**.
- Focus - when you feel the need to cave, stop and think about what you're doing. If you're trying to avoid **sweets**, focus on why you want to avoid them. Focus on how you're going to feel after you achieve your goal, instead of how you feel in the moment.

8. Learn to Say No

A lot of them are the ones that are **bad for us**. Saying yes all the time can lead to us being **spread too thin**, overcommitting ourselves, and giving too little to a lot of people.

It's better to give a lot to a **few**. We can only put so much on our plates. We can only do so much in a day. And even if we could do the impossible and do everything we wanted to do today, we wouldn't have time to enjoy it.

Learn to say **no**. Learn to say, "**I can't, I'm sorry**." Learn to say, "**No, thank you**." This will free up your time to do what's important. It will free up your time to focus on what you need to focus on. It will give you the time to **perfect your craft**. It will give you the time necessary to **master your art**.

Learn to say no to yourself, too. Learn to say no to the things you know aren't that important. **No to a second helping of dessert. No to a third episode on Netflix. No to one last drink** when you're out with friends. **No to a cheap thrill** and **yes to a worthwhile endeavor**.

9. Stay Accountable

After your decisions are made, and your plan is in place, you need to **hold yourself accountable**. If you slip up one day, don't beat yourself up, but rather make sure that you don't slip up again the next day.

If you don't hold yourself accountable for your actions, the **self-discipline** that you've worked so hard to develop will slip away faster than you can imagine. I've said it before, and I'll say it again: the quicker you make something a **habit**, the easier it will be. And if you let the **bad habits** take root, there's no telling how long it will take to break them.

Often, staying accountable means finding an **accountability partner**. Tell a friend of yours that you're trying to quit smoking or lose weight or finally write that novel you've always talked about. Ask that friend to check in with you once a week.

I usually recommend that the person find someone who will check in every day, but that just may be my own **obsessive tendencies**. Either way, being accountable to someone else helps me to stick to my **self-discipline goals**.

a. Find an Accountability Partner

When you are trying to achieve something that requires **self-discipline**, whether it's **fitness goals** or **work goals**, find someone else who's also trying to achieve something similar. And then agree to hold each other accountable.

This is actually a common trick in the military. Instead of being reprimanded for not making your bed, you're congratulated for doing so. Instead of feeling bad about not going to the gym, you feel good about doing so.

Having someone else on your team or in your corner to share your goals with, to be accountable to, to check on when you need checking on, to go to the gym with ... it works wonders. Just make sure that the other person is just as **committed** as you are. Otherwise you're **sabotaging yourself** before you even get started. And if that happens, find someone else.

b. Use Productivity Tools

People have the tendency to see **productivity tools** as distractions and time wasters instead of focusing on their work. This is true. These tools can indeed make you spend an hour of your time playing a flash game, browsing through forums or watching that hilarious cat video.

But the good thing is that there are better productivity tools out there to help you **focus better** and help you **stay on track**. When you are distracted, these tools can help you **block those websites**. When you need to take a break from the computer, there are tools to remind you to take breaks from time to time.

1. Focus Writer
2. Self Control
3. Freedom
4. Chrome Nanny

The best thing about these tools is that they help you **focus on your work**, and not have you wander off to your favorite sites. Once you are able to focus on your work, you will be able to **complete it faster** and with **better quality**.

10. Reflect and Adjust Regularly

Self-discipline is a skill that improves with practice and reflection. After each practice session, task, or day, reflect on **how things went**. What worked well? What didn't? Make adjustments as necessary. This constant process of reflection and adjustment will help you **get better over time**.

In summary, becoming a master at self-discipline doesn't happen overnight. It takes **time, practice**, and a commitment to **self-improvement**. However, by incorporating these strategies into your daily life, you can begin to see improvements in your level of self-discipline.

Remember, the most successful people aren't necessarily the ones who never fail, but those who learn from their failures and keep moving forward. **"What lies in our power to do, lies in our power not to do."**
~Epictetus