
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HABITS AND WILLPOWER

Because....It doesn't have to be difficult

It's hard to keep up willpower for any length of time. Yes, we can stick to a low-fat 1,000 calorie diet and go hungry for a week or two, but eventually our willpower fades. And yes, we can do exercise we hate for a while... until we run out of willpower.



But what about getting up to take the kids to school every morning, brushing our teeth or going to work every day. Those may not be our favorite things to do either, but we do them daily without the risk of running out of willpower. That's because they have become habits. They are so ingrained in what we do and who we are that we do them without even considering skipping a day or a week. We don't have to make a conscious decision each day to shower or drive to work. It's just what we do – a habit.

When you think about it, there is an inverse relationship between habits and will power. When you first want to build a new habit, it takes a lot of willpower to get it done day in and day out. As you start to establish that habit, it becomes easier and easier to do until you don't even have to think about it anymore.

Just being aware of this process helps us stick it out. We know we don't always have to make such a big effort to go work out or skip the donut for breakfast. There is a light at the end of the tunnel. We know eventually it will become habit to go out for a run first thing in the morning and grab some fruit or fix some eggs for breakfast.



While we're in that transition from willpower to habit, we can use tools to make it easier. Use a to-do list or set a reminder to help stay on track. Find an accountability partner so the two of you can motivate each other and help bolster that willpower when it starts to fade after the first enthusiasm wears off. Even something as simple as laying out your running clothes the night before and keeping your sneakers by the door will make it a little easier to go out for that run.

Do what you can to help your willpower along until you have made the new behavior a true habit. After that it'll be easy and automatic and you've created a new lifelong habit.