LIVE WITH DISCIPLINE OR DIE WITH REGRET

The Ultimate 10-Step Blueprint to Mastering Self-Discipline

IGOR STOJADINOVIĆ

Live With Discipline Or Die With Regret

CONTENTS

- Introduction
- What Is Self-Discipline Anyway?
- Challenge Yourself
- Why Did You Fail To Be Self-Disciplined?
- How To Be Self-Disciplined In 10 Steps
- Create Habit-Based Goals
- Clearly Define The Outcome You Desire
- Shift Your Identity
- Check The Level Of Desire
- Make It Easy
- Create Reminders and Practice Environment Design
- Focus On One Thing At A Time
- Slow Down
- Do Not Miss Twice
- Celebrate Your Wins
- Track Your Progress
- Become Accountable
- Progress, Not Perfection
- Learn From Mistakes
- Challenges Revisited
- Ending Thoughts on Self-Discipline

Introduction

Self-discipline is the **key to success** in any area of life. I do not have to tell you that; you already know it, or you wouldn't be here reading this text to learn how to be self- disciplined.

Before I provide you with a *precise step-by-step* plan, it is crucial to grasp why self-discipline has been elusive.

Understanding will change your mindset and empower you to avoid making the same mistakes again.

Without a deep understanding, applying knowledge becomes mere action without insight.

True understanding will empower you to navigate through *challenging times* when motivation wanes.

The principles outlined here have been **tried and tested** in the trenches. They are rooted both in our psychology and biology.

After years of wondering why I had extreme self-discipline in some areas but completely lacked it in others, I finally *cracked the code.*

Just like you, I wrestled with self-discipline, failing time and time again—until I discovered a system that empowered me to succeed where I had always faltered.

If you’re downright **sick and tired** of the same *old routine* – kicking off something with all the enthusiasm, only to watch it fizzle out in a matter of days or failing to stay disciplined in the face of **temptations and distractions**—then buckle up, because this guide is tailor-made for you.

It will *unleash* a toolbox of strategies that’ll arm you to the teeth, ready to conquer and achieve the things you desire with relentless consistency.

It's crafted for swift consumption, devoid of any unnecessary fluff or filler content. With a concise and direct approach, it provides step-by-step instructions.

By the end of this guide, you’ll understand why you’ve struggled with self-discipline and, more importantly, how to attain it once and for all.

What Is Self-Discipline Anyway?

Here's how two renowned dictionaries define it:

> **Cambridge:** *The ability to make yourself do things you know you should do, even when you don't feel like it.*
>
> **Merriam-Webster:** *Correction or regulation of oneself for the sake of improvement.*

In essence, self-discipline is the ability to control your thoughts, emotions, and actions to achieve long-term goals, even when you don't feel like it. It means staying committed, resisting temptations, and pushing through challenges even when motivation fades.

In summary, self-discipline involves:

- **Consistency** – Sticking to habits and routines.
- **Self-control** – Managing impulses and emotions.
- **Delayed gratification** – Choosing long-term rewards over short-term pleasure.
- **Focus** – Avoiding distractions and staying on track.
- **Accountability** – Taking responsibility for your actions.

It is a crucial skill for successfully maintaining long-term plans.

Many people believe that self-discipline is something you're just born with—you either have it or you don’t. This mindset leads them to think that disciplined individuals are simply 'wired differently.'

However, nothing could be further from the truth. **Self-discipline is a skill that can be trained,** just like a muscle. With the right approach, *anyone* can develop and strengthen it over time.

Another common misconception people have is that self-discipline is transferable. They assume that if someone is disciplined in one area of life, they will also be disciplined in others. However, this is completely false.

We all have weaknesses—whether it's the urge to indulge in alcohol, tobacco, junk food, social media, video games, phone, TV or other distractions we use to cope or procrastinate.

These temptations affect us in similar ways. However, we also have strengths—areas where we excel and tasks that come naturally to us. While some activities feel effortless, others seem like burdens we'd rather avoid.

Someone may be disciplined in their workouts at the gym but struggle with procrastination at work. A person might excel in playing an instrument and be highly talented musically but still find it challenging to stop smoking. A programmer can code all day, but if he has to exercise, he’ll avoid it like the plague.

I could easily be disciplined when it comes to any type of physical exercise, but practicing guitar or resisting sweets was always a struggle. I would start and stop multiple times over the years and failed to maintain consistency.

Each weakness you seek to overcome or commitment you try to follow through on requires an individual approach.

While there are general principles to apply, keep in mind tha**t achieving discipline in one area doesn't automatically mean you will become disciplined in all areas.** You must specifically apply these principles to develop discipline in each distinct aspect of your life.

Challenge Yourself

Before we move forward, I want you to experience self-discipline for yourself today! I don't want you to wait until you read the rest of the book to begin your practice.

One of the most effective tools you can incorporate into your self-discipline practice is to challenge yourself regularly.

Challenges are a great way to prove to yourself that you have the power to resist temptation, overcome your weaknesses, and follow through on your commitments.

They also serve as a powerful tool to break the pattern of negative momentum that you may find yourself slipping into.

For example, if you've been indulging in junk food every day for three weeks and can't seem to stop because it feels too tempting and addictive, taking on a challenge can help you regain control.

You've probably set challenges for yourself. Things like: "I won't do this for 30 days" or "I'll avoid that for a month." But here's where most people go wrong:

Too much, too big, too soon.

These time frames are too ambitious, too demanding, too soon.

It's not impossible to complete them—I've done it numerous times. But the problem is, I would quickly revert to my old behaviors once the challenge was over. I was constantly fighting temptations and cravings because I didn't know the principles outlined in this book.

For some things, I didn't even start because the time frames felt too overwhelming —the commitment just seemed too big from the beginning.

If you're deeply determined, you might push through the 30 days or more. However, most people struggle with such long time frames and eventually slip back into old habits.

Worse, if they fail, they feel discouraged, fall into **self-pity**, and engage in harsh **self-criticism**—telling themselves, *I'm a failure. I'll never be able to do this.*

Here's the key: **You don't dive into massive challenges right away**. Instead, you start with **small, manageable micro-challenges.**

These serve as the building blocks that gradually strengthen your self-discipline. As the old saying goes, "A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step"—or, in our case, **a micro step.** You have to master the basics before you can truly soar.

What do I mean by micro steps or micro challenges? Suppose you're addicted to sweet treats and feel compelled to have something sweet after every meal—let's say you eat three times a day.

A micro challenge would be to avoid sweets for just one day and only skip them after one meal. That's it! The next day, you could aim to extend it for another day, and then work towards two consecutive days.

And if you revert back to old behaviors after a few days, that's okay! You completed your challenge, and you can always try again.

The key is to learn from the experience and keep building on your progress. Remember, every step counts, and persistence is what leads to lasting change.

Your First Exercise:

Pick **one small habit (addiction)** today that you feel a compulsion toward. For example:

- Instead of checking your phone first thing in the morning, do something else **for 15 minutes**

- If you frequently check social media, the next time you feel the urge to check, stop and **delay it for 15 minutes.**

These small steps train your self-discipline without overwhelming you. Over time, they add up, making bigger challenges easier to tackle. Start small, stay consistent, and watch your self-discipline grow. Once you've successfully completed these small challenges a few times, you can proceed to the next exercise.

Your Second Exercise:

Pick one thing you're hooked on. And stop—**for only ONE day**. As opposed to the first exercise, here you expand your comfort zone even further while still staying within manageable limits.

Here’s your menu of options:

- **Stay off social media**: No Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, LinkedIn—none of it.
- **No YouTube**: Not even “just one video.”
- **Limit your phone**: Only reply to messages and calls. Ignore everything else.
- **No sweets**: Cravings? Grab fruit instead.
- **Fast for 24 hours**: (Unless you take meds with food. In that case, skip this one.)
- **Do intermittent fasting**: Eat during an 8-hour window. Fast the rest.
- **No TV.**
- **No video games.**
- **Skip the news**: The world can survive without you for a day.
- **Stay offline**: No internet for 24 hours.
- **Avoid your computer:** Unless it’s for work, shut it down.

Now, these two exercises serve specific purposes. They provide insight into the fact that you are in control and that you already possess a certain level of self-discipline.

If you can apply it on a micro scale, you can certainly do it on a macro scale. But you have to train yourself, and one of the best ways to do that is by taking these small steps first.

They are the building blocks of your progress. Soon, you'll learn a more structured framework to make self-discipline your middle name!

Why Did You Fail To Be Self-Disciplined?

When people claim they lack self-discipline, they often mean they struggle to follow through on their commitments.

As mentioned in previous chapters, self-discipline is fundamentally about maintaining consistent behaviors and actions toward achieving goals, even when temptations or challenges arise—or when motivation fades.

In essence, being self-disciplined means being *consistent*!

So, the question is: **how do we become consistent?**

Here is what a typical experience is for most people. They form strong intentions when they are highly motivated and begin performing an activity with passion and enthusiasm for a few days or weeks.

At this point, their motivation is strong, and their **craving** for the end result is high, which helps them overcome any **friction** they experience.

However, after a few days to a few weeks, this initial enthusiasm fades, and motivation gets depleted, so they begin skipping days, saying *"I do not feel like doing it today."*

The new behaviors they've committed to now feel like a chore. It becomes **painful** to continue and what most people do at this point is either **stop** completely or try to prolong it by using their willpower to push through.

Unfortunately, just like motivation, willpower is a limited, **short-lived** resource. It gets depleted during daily life challenges – tackling difficult tasks, making decisions, managing stress and emotions, etc.

Disappointed, they drop what they started and simply proclaim that they "*lost motivation*," "*just can't do it*," "*this is not for me," or that "it just takes too much effort,*" without analyzing why and understanding how motivation truly works.

They wait for a new wave of motivation to come, so they can start again, only to **crash and stop** once the wave is gone.

They end up blaming circumstances, other people, themselves, laziness, lack of discipline, willpower, or character.

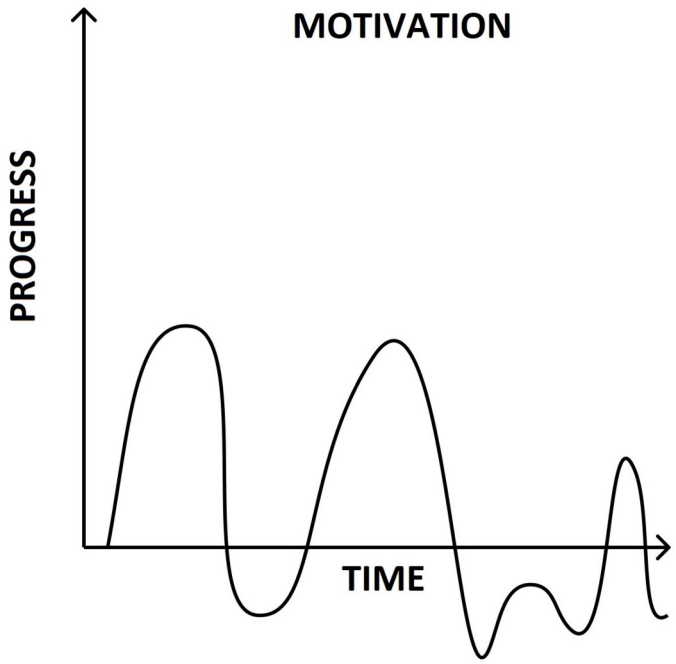
In reality, they lack a *well-designed system.*

Everyone has this version of the story: You get excited and start strong, but as soon as the motivation wave is no longer there to carry you, you stop.

This cycle of starting, stopping, and then starting again is what I call "**the cycle of doom.**"

I had been doing this for years and had always wondered why I had strong motivation and self-discipline in some areas but couldn't apply the same level of discipline in others.

A well-designed system comes from understanding what drives our behavior and the forces working against us.



Here is the thing about motivation: *it comes and goes in waves*, fluctuating day to day and even minute to minute.

It is an **unpredictable** force that can't be relied upon.

If you only do things when you feel like doing them and do not when you are not feeling up to it, you will not make any substantial progress, as the graph above indicates.

A person who operates based on the unpredictable peaks and troughs of motivation, undertaking tasks only when the waves are high, is what I term a "motivational wave rider."

Relying on motivation to achieve your goals and build consistency is like relying on a spark to keep a fire burning.

The initial burst of motivation may ignite the flame, but without the steady fuel, the fire is likely to flicker and fade.

Consistency, much like the sustained supply of fuel, requires a reliable source that goes beyond momentary inspiration.

So, what is the source?

It's a **habit**.

Self-discipline is rooted in habits – they are the *primary fuel*. It is the habit that will carry you through times when you don't feel like doing it.

What is a habit anyway? It is something you repeatedly do.

Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines a habit as:

> *"an acquired mode of behavior that has become nearly or completely involuntary."*

Essentially, it is our brain's mechanism to automate things we repeatedly do in order to save time and energy. It allows it to disengage from decision-making and just go into automatic mode.

All day long, from the moment we wake up, our brain starts processing information from the five senses and producing output in the form of decisions and actions.

It's a non-stop processing machine.

Habits are effortlessly put into action, **streamlining** our daily lives by making it easier to navigate the multitude of choices we face.

Our decision to take control of our actions is based on how easy the task is and how important the outcome might be.

Essentially, when we feel **resistance** in the moment we weigh the effort required against the potential benefits, determining if it's worth deviating from our usual, automatic response.

We simply do not want to exert more **effort** than necessary.

Here's the truth about your current situation: Where you find yourself in life at this moment is the result of the habits you've acquired and practiced up to this point.

Therefore, it is of the utmost importance to recognize that wherever you intend to end up in life will be the result of the habits you choose to adopt right now.

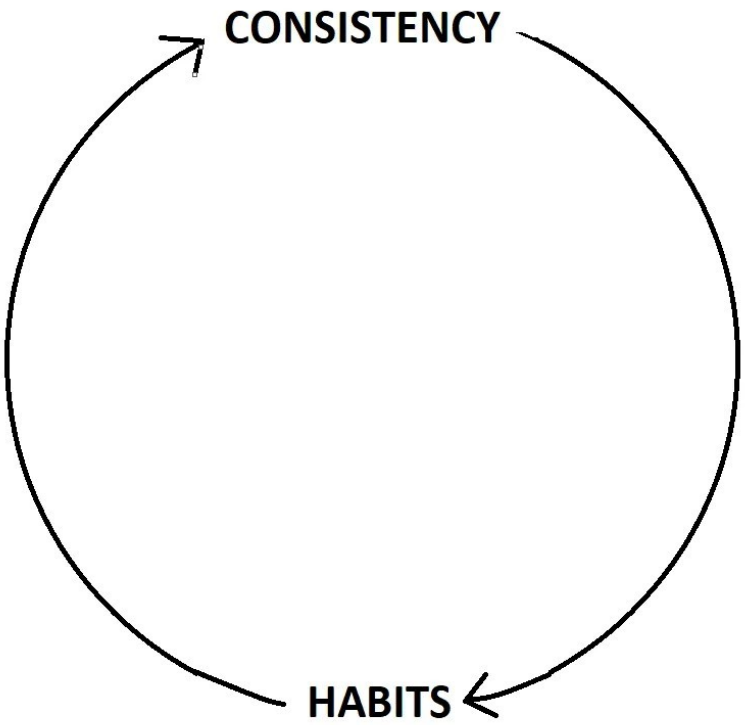
In the beginning, it takes a bit of effort, but once these habits are firmly established, the process becomes significantly easier.

There's no longer a need to exert force to take action; it seamlessly integrates into your routine, becoming a *natural* part of it.

Consequently, you no longer have to **force** yourself to maintain consistency in areas where you seek it.

However, to form a habit, you need to *consistently repeat* the behavior until it becomes a habit. This leads us to this observation:

Consistency is what creates habits but habits are what create consistency.



On the surface, this statement may appear paradoxical, but it isn't.

You might ask, "*If habits are what create consistency, how do I maintain consistency to establish those habits in the first place?*"

The answer is simple: By applying **habit-creation principles**. It is this knowledge that will allow you to maintain consistency long enough until you form a habit.

Failure to maintain initial consistency is essentially a *failure to establish habits, or, more precisely, to apply habit-creation principles*.

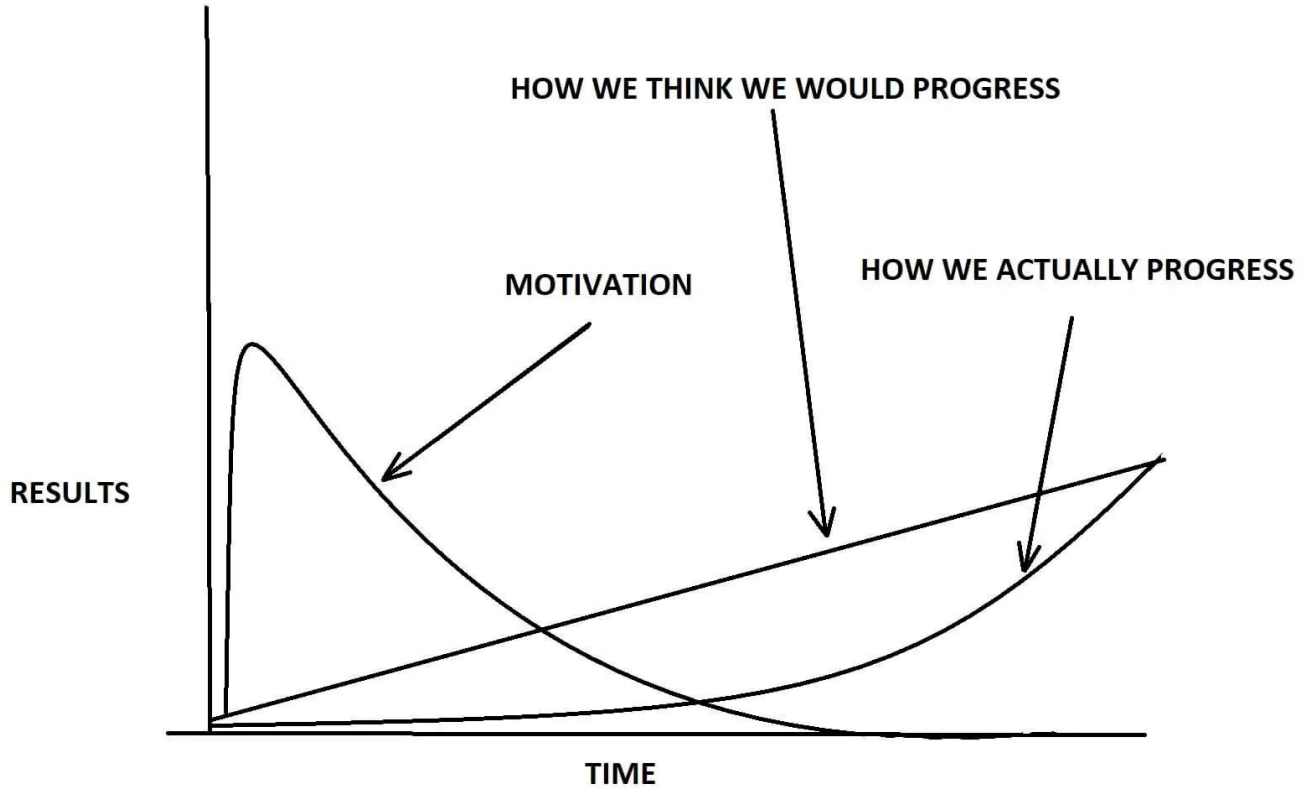
There are a few reasons people fail to form habits. First, as we already discussed, they rely too much on motivation.

When motivation fades, they stop. The second reason is our inherent **need for instant gratification.**

We want it all, and we want it now. If we do not see results quickly, if things do not become easier, *we lose the motivation and stop.*

We expect our progress to follow a linear and straightforward trajectory, expecting constant advancement.

Unfortunately, progress is not linear, and it could take a couple of weeks to months until we see the first significant results of our actions.



How We Think We Progress Vs. How We Actually Progress

There is a period during our practice when we see nothing happening—no visible results, *no improvement*.

You might wonder, “I’ve been exercising for a few weeks. Why don’t I see changes in my body?

Why does the gym still feel like a medieval torture chamber rather than a fun playground?”

“Where are my results?”

In order for it to become easier and more enjoyable, you have to pass a threshold where your brain accepts your new pattern and makes things easier for you.

The duration varies, depending on the complexity of the activity, but on average, it takes around 60-70 days to form a habit.

The phase when it seems like nothing is happening is the most **critical stage** of habit development.

This is where most people **give up**. However, it is crucial to understand that even if we do not see progress, it is happening, quietly accumulating in the background.

The metaphor of the bamboo tree is a good one to illustrate this concept.

Bamboo is known for its rapid growth, but it spends a long period underground developing a strong root system before it starts to grow above ground.

This underground growth phase is not visible, and it may seem like no progress has been made.

However, once the roots are fully developed, it may seem like the bamboo tree pops out of nowhere, *growing several inches per day.*

When people observe and admire someone’s success, they are typically witnessing the outcome of the compounding effect of regular practice.

So whenever you are tempted to give up, remember that your progress is not lost or in vain; it just takes a little more time.

Key Concepts to Remember:

- Motivation comes and goes in waves; it is an unpredictable force that can't be relied upon.
- Self-discipline is rooted in habits.
- Consistency is what creates habits, but habits are what create consistency.
- Knowing and applying habit-creation principles is what initiates consistency in forming a habit.
- Progress is not linear.
- Initially, progress may not be visible, but it is quietly accumulating in the background.
- On average, it takes 60-70 days to form a habit and see the first fruits of your efforts.
- Once the habit takes over, maintaining consistency becomes much easier.

How Habits Are Formed in Your Brain

Picture yourself strolling down the street when the aroma of juicy burgers and freshly fried potatoes wafts through the air.

Almost instantly, you're tempted by the thought of biting into a juicy burger and crispy fries, and a craving begins to take hold.

You go and buy that meal, feeling a rush of satisfaction as you eat it.

What happened there?

What you experienced was your brain running through a **habit loop**—a cycle of cue, craving, response, and reward that governs how habits are formed and reinforced. Here's how it played out:

The Cue: The smell of a freshly grilled burger and hot, salty fries acts as the trigger. It's an external stimulus that grabs your attention and reminds you how good burgers and fries taste.

The Craving: The thought of enjoying a flavorful burger and crispy fries creates a strong desire. Your brain starts anticipating the reward even before you take action.

The Response: Your response to the craving is to buy the burger and fries and take a bite. This is the action—or the habit—that follows the trigger and craving almost automatically.

The Reward: The delicious taste and the feeling of satisfaction you get after eating the burger and fries complete the loop. Your brain registers the reward and strengthens the connection between the smell of burgers and fries (cue), the craving, and buying/eating them (response).

The Power of Psychological Cravings

Although the immediate habit loop ends when you finish your burger and fries, over time, as this cycle repeats, your brain begins to anticipate the reward as soon as the cue appears.

This expectation creates a psychological craving—a deep-seated desire for the reward that feels almost impossible to resist.

Take smokers, for example. What starts as a seemingly harmless habit often evolves into a full-blown addiction.

The craving to smoke every hour or so is primarily fueled by internal triggers, driven by the feeling, “It’s time to light up.” However, it also involves external cues, such as the smell of cigarettes, the sight of a pack, or watching someone else light up.

If the craving isn’t satisfied, it doesn’t simply fade away. Instead, it intensifies, demanding attention like an itch that refuses to be scratched.

This is why unwanted habits can feel so difficult to break. Once established, they’re reinforced not only by physical triggers but also by the psychological cravings they create.

Why Does This Happen?

Your brain is constantly looking for ways to save energy and make life easier.

As already mentioned in the previous chapter, consistent decision-making is mentally draining, so when you repeat an action, your brain simplifies the process by activating **the habit loop**.

Since you've done the same thing in the same or a similar context before, your brain assumes you'll do it again. To save time and effort, it creates a routine.

When a behavior consistently leads to a reward, your brain begins to automate it.

This process is driven by dopamine, a neurotransmitter that plays a crucial role in reinforcing habits and strengthening the connection between actions and rewards.

So, although smoking cigarettes, for example, may not feel good during the first few attempts, the repeated behavior eventually becomes pleasurable and your brain begins to associate it with a reward.

But for activities that feel pleasurable from the start, it doesn't take many repetitions to create a habit loop.

Before the reward: Dopamine spikes when the cue appears, making you crave the routine.

After the reward: Dopamine reinforces the habit, encouraging you to repeat it.

Over time, the habit becomes hardwired into your brain, making the routine feel automatic—even if you're no longer consciously thinking about it.

Each habit starts with a **cue** that triggers our **response**. However, whether we respond or not depends on the amount of friction we feel in the moment in relation to the **reward** we expect to receive.

We can use this knowledge to create new habits by establishing cues that initiate our responses and connecting those cues to rewards. Soon, you'll learn precisely how to do it.

How to Be Self-Disciplined in 10 Steps:

Now that we've explored some of the major reasons that may have **hindered** your consistency, and how habits are formed in your brain, it's time to unveil a simple 10-step blueprint.

These principles can be applied to any aspect of your life where you aim to be disciplined.

1. Create Habit-Based Goals

We all have goals, big or small. It usually starts with some vague concept, like wanting to lose weight, be healthy, or save money, which then evolves into more specific goals, such as losing 30 pounds (13kg) in 60 days, saving $2000 by the end of the year, exercising three times a week.

Goals are a great way to **prioritize** behavior and form a structured framework to follow.

The common advice you often hear on how to build consistency is to set clear goals and outline steps to achieve them.

However, the problem is, everyone has goals, but not everyone achieves them.

One of the common reasons for this is that people become too attached to the results and end up *being impatient*. They love the idea of the outcome more than the experience of the process.

Another issue with goals is that they often provide only momentary change.

Achieving a goal, while a significant accomplishment, does not guarantee you'll have **long-term** consistency beyond the initial objective.

For example, someone has a goal to run a marathon. Once they reach their outcome, they might stop running.

They have reached their objective. Why should they continue?

Because outcome-based goals have endpoints, many people revert to their old ways after achieving them.

One of my friends took up kickboxing with the goal of participating in a match to *prove* to himself that he could **accomplish** it.

However, once the match concluded, he never returned to the kickboxing gym.

Another friend set a goal to lose 33 pounds (15 kg), **successfully** achieving it, but gradually abandoned the healthy behaviors and reverted to his previous body shape and lifestyle.

Both of them were too focused on the outcome.

Setting an **outcome-based** goal might give you the consistency needed to reach that particular objective, which is fine if that is what you want.

However, if you want to be consistent in the long term beyond a specific outcome, you need to focus on creating **habit-based** goals.

In this paradigm, outcome-based goals serve as *milestones* rather than final destinations.

> *Achieving a goal is temporary while forming a habit is for life.*

Habit-based goals are when you make specific habits the main focus. By turning these habits into primary goals, you can use them as tools to achieve **larger** or specific outcomes.

For example, rather than setting a goal to lose 33 pounds (15 kg), a habit-based goal might be to exercise for 20 minutes every day or to eat a serving of vegetables with every meal. To be consistent in the long run, change **your mindset** and your objective:

1. Treat goals as milestones, not the endpoints.

2. Focus on the process, not the outcome.

3. Make habit formation your primary goal.

In this paradigm shift, setting up goals remains valuable to determine necessary steps and behaviors. However, the emphasis is now on the process itself.

2. Clearly Define the Outcome You Desire

Clearly defining what you strive to achieve determines the best approach to identifying which habits to form and which actions to execute.

Otherwise, you might be disappointed due to a **lack of results**, and this disappointment often arises from inadequately defined outcomes.

Not all habits are equal; some are simpler, consisting of one or a few components, while others are more complex with multiple components.

For instance, if your goal is to wake up at 5 am, a straightforward approach would involve setting an alarm clock and consistently waking up each day until it becomes a *routine*.

But is that clearly the outcome that you want?

I presume most people do not just want to wake up at the same time, but to wake up **rejuvenated** from a deep, *refreshing sleep*, ready to tackle the day.

Well, this is a different outcome that requires a different approach.

It involves the creation of multiple habits, such as disengaging from screens (phone, TV, and computer) an hour before bedtime, avoiding eating three hours before bedtime, and going to bed at the same time each night, etc.

By establishing these habits, you address various components that contribute to a *restful* night's sleep, aligning with the broader objective of waking up feeling revitalized and prepared for the day ahead.

Take the time to clearly define your desired outcome.

3. Shift Your Identity

You may have heard the quote, “We become what we repeatedly do.” This statement encapsulates a fundamental truth: our habits shape our self-image and identity.

Whether we like it or not, when we repeat something long enough, good or bad, it becomes who we are.

I am bad with directions. I am a smoker. I am an athlete. I am a writer. What do these have in common? They are all identity statements.

The extent to which a habit becomes context-independent and whether we **maintain** consistency in the long term are closely tied to whether it has become deeply **ingrained** in our identity.

For instance, individuals who *identify* as blood donors consistently donate blood, and avid readers always find time to read.

Those who enjoy exercising will always find a way to exercise even if the gym or extra equipment is not readily available. Musicians persistently practice their instruments.

When a habit becomes an integral part of *who you are*, it transcends external circumstances and becomes independent of the context.

Even if your habit is disrupted due to illness, vacation, injury, or any unexpected life event, you will return to it as soon as circumstances allow.

The painter won't stop considering himself a painter if his art tools and studio are burned down in a fire.

Right now, you identify as a person who is not disciplined.

Why?

Because of the numerous times you started and **failed** at something you wanted to achieve, you gave yourself *evidence* that you are that person.

You are someone who is not consistent or a person who does not finish what they started.

So, in order to begin to identify with a person who is consistent and disciplined, you need to give yourself **proof** that you are that person.

How?

By deciding who you want to become in relation to your goal(s), determining the behaviors you need to adopt to achieve them, and repeating those behaviors long enough until they become habits, which will ultimately shape your identity.

For instance, if your goal is to lose 33 pounds (15 kg), ask yourself who you want to become in relation to that goal. Most likely, you aspire to be a fit person.

Similarly, if you aim to run a marathon, consider who you need to become to achieve this goal – a dedicated runner who enjoys the journey.

The mindset shifts from "**what I want to achieve**" to "**who I need to become in order to achieve the desired results.**"

Taking it a step further, you can also delineate the beliefs, values, and actions of that person with the desired identity.

This shift in identity may seem like a play of words, but it is not. It is the cornerstone of achieving long-term consistency.

It aligns your behaviors with the person you aim to become, ensuring that your habits endure beyond short-lived goals.

4. Check The Level Of Desire

Every action stems from a desire, acting as the **driving force** behind our motivation.

However, we do not desire things equally; they vary in their intensity. We desire some things more than others.

Some we want urgently, some we leave for later. Priority is different for each desire based on what we **value** the most and our current life situation.

You may be familiar with the expression “you don’t want it badly enough,” often used to highlight that achieving a goal requires a deep and unwavering desire or commitment.

It suggests that if you want something but aren’t prepared to put in the effort to get it, then you don’t “want it bad enough.”

On the other hand, if you’re prepared to do what it takes to achieve the outcome, then you do “want it bad enough.”

If there isn’t a **fire** beneath your desire propelling you toward your goal, you may not even start or be able to overcome obstacles when they arise.

So, how do you make yourself want something bad enough?

Well, it’s not that you don’t want something bad enough, but you have not discovered a reason *compelling enough* to propel you toward your desired destination.

Everything you do in life will have a reason behind it.

Ask yourself why you want the things you desire. What is the reason behind it? What is the result you aim for? Why do you want that outcome?

Uncovering your WHY involves discovering a compelling reason, which is most often rooted in the mental pain you experience or the need to gain pleasure.

Pain is usually a stronger motivator than pleasure, so take the time to reflect.

If your why is **strong enough**, you will be determined to stay consistent despite everything and will be more likely to stick with it, as opposed to when you do something out of momentary motivation or superficial reasons.

However, finding a compelling reason is not always possible. So, do not get discouraged if you can’t find one.

The next principle is a foolproof method that will allow you to be consistent even if your desire is not that strong.

5. Make It Easy

Our brains and bodies are designed to conserve energy. It is an evolutionary survival mechanism from times when food was scarce.

Every action we take expends energy, and our ancestors, facing limited resources, had to conserve energy for survival.

Consequently, we tend to avoid spending more effort than necessary.

The problem is that even in today's world of abundance, this evolutionary mechanism hasn't changed.

Your brain and body still think they live in a time where they have to play hide and seek with a saber-toothed tiger.

So, whenever we make decisions to do something, we weigh the effort against the benefits we get.

If the perceived effort outweighs the benefits, we are not going to do it. We simply do not want to exert more effort than we need to.

Why go against our biology then?

The resistance you feel when you want to do something is the friction between you and your desired objective. Identifying sources of friction and removing them makes the path towards habits smoother.

The goal is to follow the principle of least resistance, or what I call "the frictionless way" and make the formation of new habits easy.

This way, we can trick our brains into not giving us resistance.

How?

By starting small.

If you declare you're going to exercise for 1 hour each day, 5 times a week, you're simply asking your brain to expend too much effort and energy.

In contrast, stating "I am going to exercise for 5 minutes each day, 5 times a week" places a much lighter energy demand on your brain.



Importance of Small Steps

Once your brain becomes familiar with the activity and automates it, you can gradually increase the time or repetitions.

Smaller steps are believable and, therefore, achievable in the early stages of behavior change.

I call these small, low-effort actions micro-commitments. Because that is essentially what you do—commit yourself to the smallest version of a larger behavior until it becomes a habit.

For example, if you've recognized that waking up early would significantly impact your life and you aim to wake up at 5 am (currently waking up at 10 am), you can employ micro-commitments to accomplish this goal.

Begin by setting your alarm for 9:50 am, then gradually adjust the time in small increments over an extended period until you reach your desired waking time.

Micro-commitments offer a gentle and gradual approach as opposed to the brute force method of setting the alarm clock straight to 5 am.

This abrupt change could result in days of insufficient sleep and heightened stress.

The gradual adjustment allows for a smoother adaptation, making the process more manageable and sustainable in the long run.

Always remember that a habit needs to be **established** before it can be **expanded**. So, starting small is a foolproof way to achieve it.

On days when you feel motivated, you can do more if you want to, but set a minimum baseline and stick to it.

Do not make *excuses* that you can't make significant progress or achieve your desired outcome with these small commitments.

The point is not to practice something for 5 minutes but to master the smallest version of a larger behavior first, and then expand.

An additional strategy to make habits easier to adopt is to **lower the distance and the number of steps** required. Conversely, make it harder to engage in habits you want to eliminate by creating distance and increasing the number of steps involved.

For example, if you want to read more often, place your book near your bed or chair—wherever you spend most of your time. Instead of keeping it on a bookshelf, have it nearby so that you don't have to get up, go to the shelf, pick it up, and return. By placing the book within easy reach, you reduce the necessary steps to start reading.

On the other hand, if you want to stop checking your phone first thing in the morning, increase the distance and the number of steps involved.

You could put your phone in airplane mode and store it in a drawer in another room before you go to sleep. This way, you make it harder to reach for your phone as soon as you wake up.

Time, distance, and the number of steps required are three major sources of friction people encounter when trying to adopt new habits or shed old ones.

By utilizing these principles, you can make it easier for yourself to develop positive habits and eliminate those that are unwanted.

6. Create Reminders and Practice Environment Design

Each habit starts with a **cue** that triggers our **response**. However, whether we respond or not depends on the amount of friction we feel in the moment in relation to the **reward** we expect to receive. In the previous chapter, we discussed some major sources of friction that may hinder our responses.

To engage in these behaviors in the first place, we need **cues that will remind us** to **follow through with our habits**.

Just like an alarm clock reminds us to wake up in the morning or to take medication on time, we cannot rely on vague intentions to carry out our habits.

We need to create specific cues that will prompt us. Conversely, if we want to eliminate our bad habits, the first thing we need to do is remove the cues associated with them.

Vision is the primary sense through which we perceive the world, so visual reminders are the most effective.

For example, if you want to exercise, place your workout clothes in a visible location where you will see them, serving as a reminder to get moving.

If you want to play guitar more often, put your guitar in the center of the room where it's easily noticeable.

If you want to eat healthier foods, keep them in prominent locations, like placing fruits and vegetables on the kitchen counter and in the refrigerator so they are the first things you see when you open the fridge.

Conversely, if you want to reduce unhealthy eating, remove junk food from your sight and eliminate it from your home altogether.

This way, you do not have to resist temptation anymore because there are no temptations to resist. By removing cues associated with unwanted habits, many of those behaviors will naturally fade away.

In essence, by placing cues in your environment that remind you to engage in positive habits and by reducing distance and unnecessary steps that may block you from doing them, you are practicing environment design aimed at supporting your good habits. Conversely, by removing cues for unwanted habits and adding friction (more steps, increasing the distance), you strengthen this supportive environment.

7. Focus on One Thing at a Time

When people try to change their lives, they usually start tackling too many things simultaneously, often with an intense, *all-or-nothing* mentality.

They create plans that involve **radical changes**, such as committing to an hour of daily exercise, eliminating all traces of junk food, dedicating an hour to learning a new language, reading 10 books a month, and picking up a musical instrument, among other ambitious pursuits.

They begin a complete overhaul of their lives.

This “Go Big Or Go Home” approach, fueled by initial enthusiasm, almost always leads to burnout, disappointment, and **dropping** all the changes they’ve been trying to make.

Trying to change too many things is akin to trying to *run before learning to crawl.*

Heroic efforts usually end up with heroic failures, trapping people in the **cycle of doom**. They are simply unsustainable.

Every commitment you make but do not follow through with takes a toll on your self-discipline and self-belief in your ability to maintain consistency.

For that reason, avoid making too many commitments. A good rule of thumb is to stick to **one to three** simple habits at most in the beginning.

Once you establish those, only then expand to more habits. This way, by keeping your habits light and easy, you will be more likely to stay consistent with them.

This will reinforce your belief that you can do it and give you a boost to continue and make more changes.

How to choose which habits to focus on? Ask yourself some of these questions:

- What holds the highest importance for you at this moment?
- Among all the possible actions, which one promises the most significant benefits?
- Of all your aspirations, which habit would improve your life the most?
- Which one holds the potential for the greatest impact?

Once you've determined the habit(s) that will yield the highest impact, as previously mentioned, focus on one to three at a time in the beginning.

There are a million things competing for your time and attention. Since both are limited, you need to learn how to prioritize them.

Apart from selecting habits that could have the greatest impact, you can also start with the simplest ones such as drinking water first thing in the morning.

The goal is to **experience success** fast.

Simple habits can provide early victories, giving you proof that you can be consistent and thus setting a positive tone for being consistent with the other habits as well.

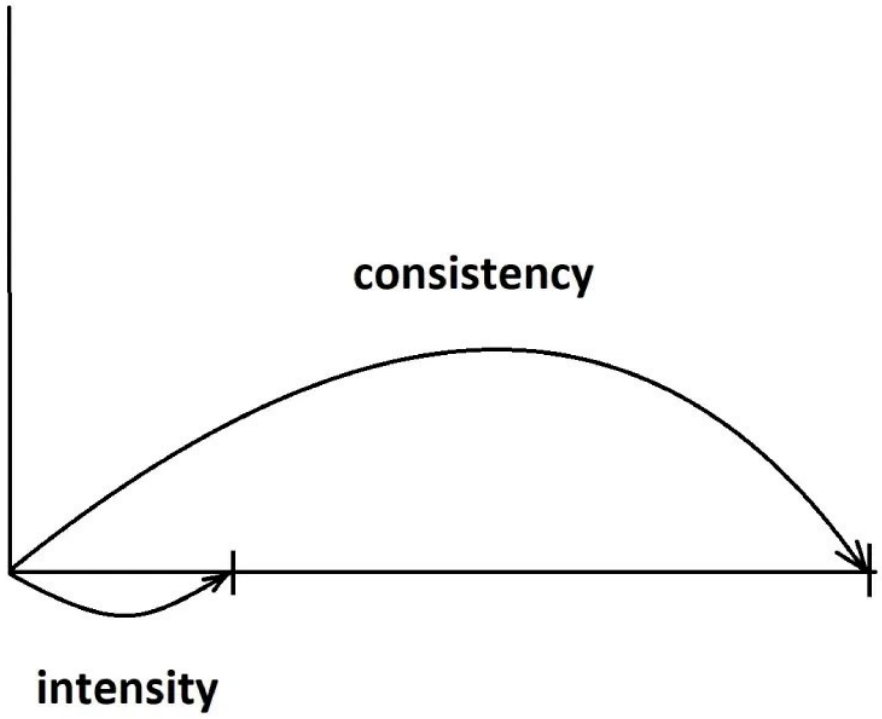
8. Slow Down

Another common reason people fail to establish consistency is impatience.

Not only do they commit to too many things simultaneously, but they also do so with high **intensity**, believing that increasing their efforts will achieve their goals faster.

If they commit to exercise, they will do it for one hour each day. If they decide to boost their productivity, they will work uninterrupted for hours, etc.

They already imagine having a six-pack body, playing an instrument with Mozart's finesse, and speaking French as if they were born in Paris in mere weeks.



While it is true that high intensity can yield faster results, it works only if you have already established a habit or if you have **a strong reason** for pursuing it.

For the most part, it's important to realize that reaching the desired outcome takes time; it simply cannot happen overnight.

You have probably heard the timeless fable of "The Tortoise and the Hare." The hare, known for its speed, challenges the tortoise to a race.

However, the hare's overconfidence leads it to take a nap during the race, assuming it can easily catch up.

Meanwhile, the tortoise moves slowly but steadily and consistently, eventually winning the race.

The moral of the story is clear: "*Slow and steady wins the race*." Similarly, in our pursuit of personal change, it's essential to adopt a steady and sustainable pace. Slow down and lower your intensity.

Success is a marathon, not a sprint. Change your mindset and start thinking long-term.

Conditioning yourself to a **new reality** is a gradual process. The brain needs time to rewire its pathways.

So, slow down, relax, and enjoy the process. You'll eventually get there.

9. Do Not Miss Twice

Our brain loves routines; they allow it to **disengage** from *decision-making* and go into autopilot.

If you have committed to a new habit, it can take a while for it to become a routine in your brain.

The key is to do it regularly and avoid missing your new behavior twice in a row.

By the third day, you risk creating negative momentum away from your new habits and toward your old ways.

Repetition creates **mastery**. A routine is created when we repeat the same things daily.

However, life can be unpredictable. No matter how diligently you stick to something, you cannot always be consistent.

We're all bound to slip up here and there; it's just part of the deal. Missing a day or two isn't the end of the world; it won't affect the progress you made.

The important thing is to **bounce back** to your new habit as soon as possible. Treat setbacks as bumps on the road, and be kind to yourself.

This balanced approach makes it way more likely you'll smoothly integrate that new habit into your routine for the long haul.

Embracing the 2-day rule reinforces your commitment, ensuring that an occasional deviation doesn’t become a detour off the path to consistency.

10. Celebrate Your Wins

If something feels good, you are more likely to repeat it; conversely, if something feels bad, you tend to avoid it.

This is precisely what happens when you start a new activity with high enthusiasm, and after a few days or weeks when the initial burst of motivation wanes, it becomes mentally painful to continue.

It transforms from a pleasurable activity to a burdensome task, and it's no wonder you stop doing it.

No one wants to feel discomfort, especially when dissatisfied with the lack of results.

If repetition is the key to forming habits, the **feeling of pleasure** will wire it faster. So, each time you finish an activity, *be proud of yourself* because you did it.

It doesn't matter how small or insignificant you may perceive it to be. Feel good about it.

While the activity itself may not be pleasurable initially, as it transforms into a habit, it will gradually become more enjoyable.

Until that happens, what you can do is consciously *bask in the satisfaction* of having done it.

Think about the times when you didn’t feel like doing something, but you did it anyway.

Most likely you experienced a sense of satisfaction because you did it despite resistance.

The same principle applies here. As soon as you finish your habit, allow yourself to **feel good** about the accomplishment.

Furthermore, every milestone you achieve is cause for celebration.

For example, if your goal was to establish a habit of not engaging with your phone first thing in the morning and you succeeded for two weeks, take a moment to celebrate and acknowledge your accomplishment.

Start approving yourself. Say it aloud with satisfaction: “I did it.”

Additionally, consider rewarding yourself with external treats for staying committed, such as treating yourself to new sneakers after three weeks of running or enjoying a fancy meal when you hit certain diet goals.

Additional Insights on How to Stay Consistent

Track Your Progress

Monitoring your progress can instill a sense of **satisfaction** and give you the motivation and confidence to continue because the visible evidence of your advancements becomes apparent.

However, it's important to note that tracking your habits is optional—some individuals find it **satisfying**, while others may not.

A common reason why people opt out of tracking is that they feel it adds another layer of responsibility for them since habit tracking is a habit itself.

However, it is an easy one that can be established fast. So, don't let it be an excuse.

Try it. If you find it valuable, continue. If not, feel free to stop anytime.

A conventional habit tracker typically takes the form of a list. You compile the habits you wish to monitor and simply check them off each time you complete them.

It looks like this:

Month_____ Year_____

Habit	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
1 push up	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
2 min. Spanish	√	√	√	√	√		√	√		√	√	√		√	√			√	√	√		√	√		√	√	√			√
5 min stretching	√	√		√	√	√	√	√	√		√	√	√		√		√	√	√		√	√	√		√	√	√		√	√
1 min. meditation	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√		√	√		√		√	√	√	√		√	√	√	√		√	√		√	√	
No Instagram	√		√		√		√	√		√	√	√	√		√			√	√		√	√	√		√	√	√	√		√
No alcohol	√	√	√	√	√		√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√		√	√	√	√	√		√	√		√	√	√	√	√
No phone for 10 minutes upon waking up	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Skipped 1 coffee	√	√	√	√	√	√	√		√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√		√	√	√		√	√	√	√		√

Download and print this habit tracker template.

This method provides a bird's-eye view of the *progress you're making*, offering a tangible and encouraging overview of your achievements.

However, it has its downsides. You can't measure the quality of practice and effectively instruct your subconscious mind with this kind of habit tracker.

For that reason, I've crafted a more **advanced** version. If you're interested in learning more about this advanced tracker, you can find it in my book, "The Frictionless Way – Path of Least Resistance"

Become Accountable

This step is also optional. While some people find it much easier to stay on track with their goals if they have someone to hold them accountable, others do not.

But just like with habit tracking, anybody can **benefit** from some form of accountability.

Accountability is the act of being responsible for our actions and providing a satisfactory reason for them.

The challenge arises because we are often the worst judges of our own behavior, prone to quickly and easily *making excuses* for our inaction.

Therefore, the most effective approach is to outsource accountability to individuals whom we respect, trust, and value.

These may include our spouses, friends, relatives, colleagues, coaches, mentors, and others who uphold high standards and won't readily accept our excuses.

Suppose you decide to use micro-commitments to establish a habit of exercising for 5 minutes, 5 times a week.

Each time, you are required to report your progress to your accountability partner. If you did not do your exercise that day, you have to explain why you didn't do it.

If you can offer tangible proof of your progress, it's even better, as it eliminates any possibility of dishonesty.

This process effectively strips away all your excuses.

When you're compelled to justify your procrastination to someone else, you're far more likely to ensure it doesn't recur.

When there are no **consequences**, it's easy to rationalize and justify your behavior.

However, when you have to explain yourself to someone else, you realize how flimsy those excuses are.

Confessing a lack of action to others adds a layer of *psychological pain*, and you're far more likely to ensure it doesn't happen again.

Why is this approach so effective? In our evolutionary past, survival hinged on our social environment, often within small tribes where expulsion meant death.

As social creatures, we inherently care about our social standing. And while we no longer live in small tribes, our brain programming has not changed.

While the danger is no longer physical, it has shifted to a more psychological realm.

We care more about showing others that we are consistent and reliable than we care about showing this to ourselves.

Fundamentally, we strive to protect our social status.

Adding another layer of consequences can make this approach even more effective.

For example, give money to your accountability partner, and if you do not follow through, they will donate it to someone you dislike or can't stand, like a certain political figure.

The mere thought of parting with your money can be a powerful motivator, let alone donating to someone you dislike. This will ensure you stay committed.

Progress, Not Perfection

Your mission is to **take action**, not to execute it flawlessly. If you find yourself unsure of where to begin or grumbling because things aren't perfect, or you didn't do them perfectly, understand that perfection isn't the goal; **progress is**.

Every imperfection will correct itself along the way.

Your commitment is to consistency, not perfection. Embrace the journey, learn from the hiccups, and keep moving forward.

Learn From Mistakes

There will be times when, despite your best efforts, mistakes are inevitable – especially when navigating the intricate terrain of forming new habits.

Whether it's missing a workout or slipping up on a dietary commitment, hiccups happen.

Don't let them discourage you. Above all, resist the urge to judge yourself. Instead, view them as opportunities for *reflection and learning*.

Embracing mistakes as valuable lessons allows for personal growth and resilience, turning setbacks into stepping stones toward future success.

Challenges Revisited

In the opening chapters, I talked about challenges and provided you with two exercises. Challenges are one of the best ways to practice self-discipline; they are extremely effective when you find yourself in negative momentum, engaging in unwanted behaviors that you can't seem to stop.

For example, instead of focusing on the project you need to complete, you might find yourself watching YouTube or scrolling through your phone. Or perhaps you grab a snack when you're not even hungry, distracting yourself from your tasks. When you notice yourself starting to do this, take on a challenge.

Challenges work hand in hand with the habits you want to build. So, every time you catch yourself slipping into those old patterns, use a challenge to refocus your energy and reinforce the positive habits you want to develop.

Ending Thoughts on Self-Discipline

Ditch the magic pill mentality. Overnight **success** is a myth.

Success is a marathon, not a sprint. It's the result of weeks and months of consistent action.

Small actions, repeated regularly, compound over time and lead to greater success.

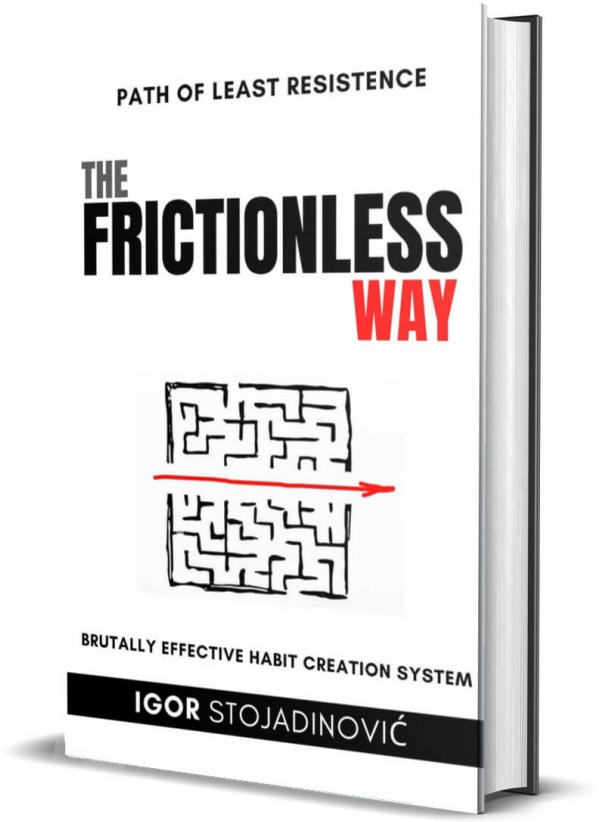
Don't wait for the perfect day to start.

Discard all **excuses** and begin making changes **today**!

Building self-discipline takes time, but the journey will ultimately be **highly rewarding.**

By now, you have probably realized the huge importance habits play—not only in building self-discipline but in life in general. In this guide, I have outlined the core concepts of habit formation and self-discipline. If you want to delve deeper into the world of habits, I have just the thing to help you reach your goals faster.

Introducing my exclusive, groundbreaking book: The Frictionless Way: Path of Least Resistance. Brutally Effective Habit Creation System
https://thefrictionlessway.com/book/



Discover the complete framework I've used to build lasting habits that stick like **superglue** and pave the way for your continued development.

Get the book today: https://thefrictionlessway.com/book