

10 Ways to Keep Your Willpower Intact So You Can Succeed

Prepared by:
Nicole Lipkin, Psy.D., M.B.A.
Equilibria Leadership Consulting & Equilibria PCS



INTRODUCING

Lorman's New Approach to Continuing Education

ALL-ACCESS PASS

The All-Access Pass grants you **UNLIMITED** access to Lorman's ever-growing library of training resources:

- ✓ Unlimited Live Webinars - 120 live webinars added every month
- ✓ Unlimited OnDemand and MP3 Downloads - Over 1,500 courses available
- ✓ Videos - More than 1300 available
- ✓ Slide Decks - More than 2300 available
- ✓ White Papers
- ✓ Reports
- ✓ Articles
- ✓ ... and much more!

Join the thousands of other pass-holders that have already trusted us for their professional development by choosing the All-Access Pass.



Get Your All-Access Pass Today!

SAVE 20%

Learn more: www.lorman.com/pass/?s=special20

Use Discount Code Q7014393 and Priority Code 18536 to receive the 20% AAP discount.

*Discount cannot be combined with any other discounts.

10 Ways to Keep Your Willpower Intact So You Can Succeed

Written by Nicole Lipkin, Psy.D., M.B.A. – 12/13/16

If you're like me you power through your workday without distraction.

You don't take no for an answer.

You tackle one project after the next.

You feel refreshed at every turn.

You ignore Facebook and texts.

You don't need snacks or coffee.

You never restrain your words and behavior.

You are so self-confident you never try to impress anyone.

You don't have fear.

You always keep your eye on the prize.

RIGHT?!?!?

Not really.

That's the life I strive for, where all of my willpower is intact. In reality, I – and presumably you too – are hit with all sorts of emotional, mental, and biological impulses throughout the day.

Vacations feel so good because we stop exercising willpower. We don't work, we eat what we want, we drink what we want, we stay up late, we sleep late, we express ourselves, we are free! We keep nothing at bay.

Life often feels like one big test of willpower. Even when you love what you do for a living, to stay competitive in the workforce is exhausting, and most of the required behavior to stay on track depletes our willpower.

We can't avoid every behavior that depletes willpower but we can at least strive to stay aware of the behaviors in order to improve our productivity.

Here are some behaviors – some avoidable, some not – which we know deplete willpower:

1. Filtering Distractions.

Email, Facebook, Twitter; your office doesn't believe in doors; your friends keep texting you. Every time you try to ignore or deal with a distraction, your willpower suffers.

Tip: Turn off your technology, close the door (if you have one), buy some noise canceling headphones, alert family/friends/colleagues of your availability. These rituals organize your mind and win your focus.

2. Resisting Temptation and Impulses.

When's lunch? Is it time for another coffee? Should I organize all of my folders into other folders before I start work? Your brain often wants to do so many things other than the task at hand. Though necessary and healthy, resisting the urges taps your willpower.

Tip: Chunk your day by scheduling tasks/projects that require the most concentration in the morning and those that don't later in the day. Give yourself a scheduled impulse indulgence chunk of time to let loose and give in.

Sidebar: Given that the average person checks their email up to 74x/day and Facebook every two minutes this is becoming imperative in our modern day lives. They will lose their hold on you once you stop checking.

3. Suppressing Emotion.

This isn't to say you should cry in a business meeting, but if you generally have trouble expressing your emotions you may not have the necessary willpower to complete a task when you sit down to do it.

Tip: When appropriate, let it out! Learn to express yourself; the self-confidence you will gain is critical for all areas of growth. Seek professional help if need be.

4. Restraining Aggression.

Restraining aggression is part of living on earth, but it does deplete you. If you find that you are restraining aggression left and right try to pinpoint the triggers. Maybe they can be avoided, removed, or resolved.

Tip: Exercise, hit a punching bag, build a soundproof scream room, keep a stress ball on your desk.

5. Trying to Impress Others.

This will wear you out. It's essentially acting in a play nobody paid to see. Any time your natural personality is stifled you are exercising self-discipline, which taps willpower.

Tip: "Be yourself, everybody else is taken" – Oscar Wilde

6. Coping with fear.

We are all familiar with the energy-sap that fear creates. If you are afraid of someone or *something* at work your productivity will suffer.

Tip: Seek professional help if need be. Fear is a lifetime battle but it dissipates when you confront it.

7. Doing Something You Don't Enjoy.

If you have committed to a job or lifestyle that you don't enjoy you will forever feel depleted. Doing something you don't enjoy goes against the natural grain of human existence, which is to seek pleasure and avoid pain.

Tip: If the unenjoyable *somethings* are small tasks that are part of your workday save them for the morning when your willpower reserve is greatest. If it's a larger issue, muster the courage to reevaluate your situation. Seek help if need be. You don't need to live a depleted life.

8. Selecting long-term over short-term rewards.

Here we have the *pleasure principle* (seek pleasure & avoid pain) at play. You could watch TV right now or you could work on that business plan that could lead to professional and financial freedom

down the line. Yes, long-term awards deplete your willpower but they're well worth it.

Tip: Write down the accomplishments / gains you earned when you selected long-term over short-term. Keep them somewhere as a constant reminder. Or – dare I say it – a vision board that shows the rewards you will reap if you stay on the long-term path.

9. People Pleasing.

People who feel compelled to exert self-control deplete more than those driven by their own internal goals and desires. Speak up for yourself, express your emotions when appropriate, and believe in who you are. It literally makes you mentally stronger.

As the American Psychological Association put it:

"When it comes to willpower, those who are in touch with themselves may be better off than their people-pleasing counterparts."

Tip: Seek professional help if need be. If you find yourself people pleasing, try to evaluate where you can change your behavior and then take small incremental steps towards that goal.

10. Thinking about Willpower as a Depletable Resource.

A recent study led by Carol Dweck suggests that the most effective way to keep your willpower intact is to simply *believe* that willpower is not depletable.

Dweck's study tested the longstanding theory that glucose levels and willpower are linked.

The theory states that when you tap your willpower the glucose level in your body goes down; thus, if you were to raise the level of glucose in your body, then your willpower reserve should go up as well.

The study was composed of two groups, both given demanding tasks to complete. Before being given the task, however, Group 1 was led to believe that willpower is not a depletable resource while Group 2 was led to believe that willpower *is* a depletable resource.

The participants who were led to believe that willpower was *not* a depletable resource showed no change in their glucose level when faced with the task at hand. Even a boost to their glucose level did not enhance their performance.

But the glucose levels for participants that believed willpower *is* a depletable resource did drop when faced with the same tasks.

This would indicate that believing willpower is not depletable is sufficient for keeping it in tact. Easier said than done.

Try sitting through a day of meetings in your office believing that willpower is not depletable and then writing a proposal afterwards. Thus, the fact remains that willpower depletion is a reality for us all until we've mastered the art of believing it's not.

There have been other studies that concluded that if you are exhausted and have performed exhausting tasks, it won't matter if you believe willpower is depletable or not, it'll be depleted.

All new behaviors deplete willpower, but they also pave the way for a healthier lifestyle. Each new healthy behavior eventually becomes routine, paving the way for the next healthy installment.

It's exhausting but you have to start somewhere or you risk getting mired in your old ways.

We all need to be on the lookout for the factors that thwart us. Our lives depend on it!

The material appearing in this website is for informational purposes only and is not legal advice. Transmission of this information is not intended to create, and receipt does not constitute, an attorney-client relationship. The information provided herein is intended only as general information which may or may not reflect the most current developments. Although these materials may be prepared by professionals, they should not be used as a substitute for professional services. If legal or other professional advice is required, the services of a professional should be sought.

The opinions or viewpoints expressed herein do not necessarily reflect those of Lorman Education Services. All materials and content were prepared by persons and/or entities other than Lorman Education Services, and said other persons and/or entities are solely responsible for their content.

Any links to other websites are not intended to be referrals or endorsements of these sites. The links provided are maintained by the respective organizations, and they are solely responsible for the content of their own sites.