

REAL LIFE SOLUTIONS

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Boosting Your Willpower

Sometimes willpower is a lot like the television remote control – hard to find just when you want it most. Whether you’re trying to lose weight, stop smoking, get to the gym regularly, win a promotion or pay off some debts, developing your sense of willpower is an important part of changing any behavior.

We all know that breaking a bad habit or establishing a new, healthy one can be difficult, but persistence pays off. Researchers at the University of Washington found that 63 percent of those who made New Year’s resolutions were still keeping their resolution two months later. It’s not going to be easy, but there are ways to increase your willpower, stay resolved and achieve your goals.

First things first

Don’t try to restructure your finances, win a promotion and lose weight all on the same day. Establish one clear,

specific goal and formulate a realistic strategy for achieving it. Extra willpower sometimes requires extra energy, so don’t stretch yourself too thin. Focus on one goal at a time.

Start slowly

Momentum builds gradually and whatever your goal, don’t expect to achieve it overnight. Real success takes time. If you’re trying to kick a caffeine habit, start by replacing your morning cup of coffee with a glass of water, instead of vowing never to drink coffee again. Congratulate yourself on the small achievements that will pave the way towards a larger one. These successes help your willpower grow.

Support network

Bolster your willpower by tapping into a support network. Ask friends, family or colleagues for assistance and tell them exactly how they can help. For instance, if your credit card bills have skyrocketed let friends know that you’re cutting back on expenses. Suggest having a pot-luck dinner instead of meeting at an expensive restaurant. Find a support group or organization related to your goal and attend their meetings. You can get valuable advice, understanding and information, all of which increase commitment and willpower.

Changing your environment

If possible, alter your environment to reduce temptation or encourage positive behavior. Want to get in shape? Keep an extra set of work-out clothes at work as a reminder to stop by the gym on the way home.

More than willpower

Sometimes changing your behavior requires more than willpower. If you are struggling with an addiction or want to make a significant lifestyle change, seek the guidance and support of a professional. An expert may be able to provide intensive support and follow-up or prescribe medication to reduce physical symptoms. For example, without help only five percent of smokers can quit but that number rises to 24 percent to 33 percent when people seek both drug therapy and counseling.

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