

"Researchers were surprised to find that people with strong self-control spent less time resisting desires than other people did. . . . people with good self-control mainly use it not for rescue in emergencies but rather to develop effective habits and routines in school and at work."

~ Roy Baumeister

"A small daily task, if it be really daily, will beat the labours of a spasmodic Hercules."

~ Anthony Trollope

Excelsator Jump Start

Excelsated willpower – becoming highly self-regulated – is one step in creating your **Excelsated** life, a life of well-being, meaning, and purpose.

This **EXCELERATOR JUMP START** provides quick actions you can take *right now* to **JUMP START** your **Excelsated** life, to begin increasing your willpower and to become highly self-regulated.

Why Use Jump Start?

Whatever your goal is, there is a key ingredient you're going to need . . . willpower. Martin Seligman and Chris Peterson, who developed the 24 Character Strengths and Virtues, called self-regulation (or willpower) one of the most important strengths to develop. [Miller 91] Indeed, developing the other strengths often depends on having the ability to practice them when we don't really want to -- in other words, using willpower.

Roy Baumeister has been studying willpower for years. He has devised and conducted many experiments to test willpower – turning down cookies, tuning out distractions, holding back anger, sticking your arm in ice water – and in every case, no matter what the task, people's self-control deteriorated. And the interesting thing is this: a concentration task didn't just weaken attention, it depleted physical strength; controlling emotions didn't just lead to emotional outbursts, it caused people to be more willing to spend money on something they didn't need; resisting tempting sweets didn't result only in a craving for chocolate, it made people prone to procrastination. Each act of willpower draws from the same pool, leaving us

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EXCELERATOR JUMP START: BECOMING HIGHLY SELF-REGULATED

"We cannot always control our thoughts, but we can control our words, and repetition impresses the subconscious, and we are then master of the situation."
~ Jane Fonda

weaker overall with each successive act of self-control. Baumeister's hypothesis: self-control is like a muscle, it gets tired with use. Willpower is a limited resource – trying to control your temper, stick to a budget, or refuse seconds all tap into the same source of strength. Any time you have to fight an impulse, filter out distractions, weigh competing goals, make yourself do something you don't want to do, even make trivial decisions, you use a little more of your willpower strength.

However, the brain is remarkably responsive to experience. Do math and your brain gets better at math. Worry & your brain gets better at worrying. Practice concentrating and your brain gets better at concentrating. There is growing scientific evidence that you can train your brain to get better at self-regulation. "There are two ways to increase your wealth," said Ben Franklin. "Increase your means or decrease your wants. The best is to do both at the same time." A similar thing can be said about self-regulation. You can build up your willpower "muscle" or you can reduce the number of drains on your willpower throughout the day. And the best thing is to do both. By taking controlled measures to use it when you don't want to and to exercise it regularly, you can make this important strength even stronger. These **JUMP START** suggestions help you do that.

When To Use Jump Start?

Use this **EXCELERATOR JUMP START** for a quick boost to get yourself started on the path of creating your **Excelerated** life or to get yourself back on track when you feel you have gotten off course. Whenever you find yourself languishing, with your willpower flagging, **JUMP START** your ability and your resolve to increase *and* preserve your willpower as you pursue your **Excelerated** life.

"My fault, my failure, is not in the passions I have, but in my lack of control of them."
~ Jack Kerouac

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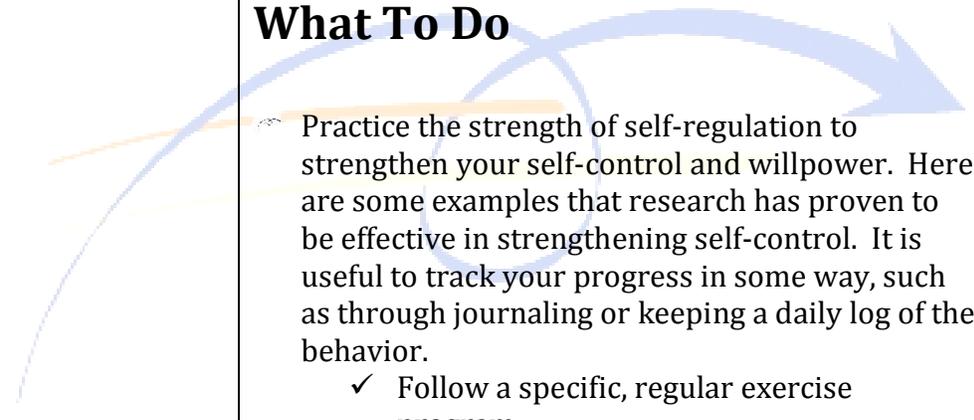
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“What we do upon some great occasion will probably depend on what we already are; and what we are will be the result of previous years of self-discipline.”
~ H.P. Liddon

How To Use Jump Start?

Here are steps you can take *right now* to begin building your willpower “muscle” and to reduce the drains on your willpower and improve your self-regulation “stamina”. These are short, quick actions intended to give you a **JUMP START** for this step in creating your *Excelsior* life. Read through the list and choose one or two action steps that stand out for you and that you are attracted to. Then do them today – right now if possible or schedule them in your calendar to do as soon as you can. If you need more of a boost, continue with more of the activities.

What To Do



Practice the strength of self-regulation to strengthen your self-control and willpower. Here are some examples that research has proven to be effective in strengthening self-control. It is useful to track your progress in some way, such as through journaling or keeping a daily log of the behavior.

- ✓ Follow a specific, regular exercise program.
- ✓ Self-monitor and maintain your finances
- ✓ Self-monitor and maintain your daily food intake
- ✓ Self-monitor and correct your posture

Anything that uses willpower depletes your store. Don't depend on your abilities of self-regulation to remain strong all day. By learning the mechanics of how willpower works, you can conserve it so that it's available for emergencies and important decisions. Here are some examples to get your own ideas flowing.

“Strength does not come from physical capacity. It comes from an indomitable will.”
~ Mahatma Gandhi

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"The more things you do, the more you can do."
~ Lucille Ball

- ✓ Don't schedule endless back-to-back meetings.
- ✓ Avoid temptations -- don't keep a dish of candy on your desk or visit the all-you-can-eat buffets.
- ✓ Establish habits that eliminate the need to make the same choices over and over.
- ✓ Automate as many small, daily decisions as you can.

Bright lines are clear, unambiguous rules we put in place for ourselves that help us to resist temptation. The purpose of a bright-line rule is to produce predictable and consistent results in its application. You'll know right away if you break your rule. In order to continue with a desired behavior (or to give up an undesired behavior), your current self needs to know that your future self will practice the same behavior. [Baumeister 161] In order to resist the undesirable behavior today, you must be confident that you will resist it tomorrow, too. Bright line rules can help. They won't work in every situation, but once you commit to following a bright line rule, you remove the need to go through the decision making process each time you face the situation. By deciding in advance, you actually strengthen your willpower. Bright lines also can help you gain a longer time perspective - a trait that has been shown to predict greater self-regulation.

Where could a bright line help you? If there is a behavior you are struggling with, a temptation you find irresistible, set a bright-line rule for yourself. "I don't ____." Or turn it into a positive: "I always ____."

Two practices have been shown to help replenish willpower: laughter and sugar. Making yourself smile by watching a funny video, reading a joke, or hearing a funny story gives your willpower a boost. And, as Baumeister discovered, will power

"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law."
~ Galatians 5:22 (the Bible)

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"If a [person] will understand how intimately, yea, how inseparably, self-control and happiness are associated, he has but to look into his own heart, and upon the world around... Looking upon the lives of men and women, he will perceive how the hasty word, the bitter retort, the act of deception, the blind prejudice and foolish resentment bring wretchedness and even ruin in their train."
~ James Allen

"I generally avoid temptation unless I can't resist it"
~ Mae West

is powered by glucose, so drinking a glass of lemonade or sweet tea (with real sugar) has been shown to completely replenish willpower.

- ☞ Learn to recognize what does and does not use up willpower.

These situations cause you to deplete your store of self-control:

- You suppress normal urges, like saying or doing inappropriate things, such as laughing at a funeral.
- You make a lot of decisions, especially those that take a lot of mental energy.
- You try not to think about something in order to concentrate on something else.
- You have two conflicting conscious goals.
- You constantly attempt to hide something about yourself that would harm your social standing.

These situations do not cause you to use up your self-control:

- You do something difficult or mentally challenging.
- You are mentally fatigued.
- You have low self-esteem.

- ☞ Self-control has 3 components:

- Willpower: doing what you need to do even if you don't want to do it or don't feel like doing it.
- Won't power: saying no to temptations
- Want power: to say "no" when you need to say no and "yes" when you need to say yes – the ability to remember what you really want.

Consider your willpower challenge. Which is harder – the will power or the won't power? Something you need to do or something you need to refrain from doing? What makes it so difficult? How do you feel when you think about doing it?

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"Trophies should go to the winners. Self-esteem does not lead to success in life. Self-discipline and self-control do . . ."
~ Roy Baumeister

What does your impulsive side want to do? What does your Wise Self want?

There is growing scientific evidence that you can train your brain to get better at self-control. Neuroscientists have discovered that when you ask the brain to meditate it gets better not only at meditation but at a range of other self-control skills as well: attention, focus, stress management & impulse control.

A Meditation Exercise

1. Sit still and stay put.
2. Turn your attention to your breath. Say "inhale" as you breathe in and "exhale" as you breathe out. When you notice your mind wandering – as it always will – gently return your attention to the breath.
3. Notice how it feels to breathe. Drop the "inhale / exhale" labels and notice how your body feels as you breathe in and as you breathe out. Feel the air moving through your nose or mouth. Feel your chest and belly rise and fall with each breath.
4. Notice how the mind wanders. Without the labeling, your mind might wander a little more. When you notice yourself thinking about something else, gently return your focus back to the breath. If you need help, use the "inhale" and "exhale" labels a few times.

Start with 5 minutes a day. When that becomes a habit, increase to 10 or 15 minutes per day. If that becomes too much and you find you aren't doing the exercise, fall back to 5 minutes. A short practice every day is better than a long practice you keep putting off till tomorrow. It is the practice of coming back to the breath again and again – catching yourself moving away from a goal and then pointing yourself back toward the goal -- that is beneficial to increasing self-control.

"Do the difficult things while they are easy and do the great things while they are small."
~ LAO Tzu

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*"Good and evil both increase at compound interest. That is why the little decisions you and I make every day are of such infinite importance. The smallest good act today is the capture of a strategic point from which, a few months later, you may be able to go on to victories you never dreamed of. An apparently trivial indulgence in lust or anger today is the loss of a ridge or railway line or bridgehead from which the enemy may launch an attack otherwise impossible."
~ C.S. Lewis*

*"I am, indeed, a king, because I know how to rule myself."
~ Pietro Aretino*

☞ When you want to change a behavior, aim to reduce the variability in the behavior, not the behavior itself. View every choice as a commitment to all future choices. Example: smokers who are asked to smoke the same number of cigarettes every day gradually reduce their overall smoking.

Ask yourself: Do I want the consequences of doing this behavior every day?

☞ Our brain's reward system did not evolve to respond to future rewards. To delay gratification, the pre-frontal cortex has to cool off the promise of reward. It's possible but not easy. If you can delay for 10 minutes, that is often all you need to resist the temptation. When you are tempted, institute a mandatory 10 minute wait period. After 10 minutes, if you still want it, go for it – but during the waiting period, remind yourself of the long-term reward you'll receive if you resist the temptation.

If, on the other hand, you need "I will" power, then reverse the process. Instead of putting off the desired action, do it for 10 minutes. After that time, you are free to stop if you want to, but generally, once you start, you'll keep going.

☞ Most of us are loss averse – meaning we don't like to lose what we already have. Losing \$50 makes people more unhappy than gaining \$50 makes them happy. How can you use this to help your willpower? When you are tempted to act against your long-term interests, frame the choice as giving up the best possible long-term reward for the immediate gratification reward. Imagine the long-term reward as already yours. Imagine yourself enjoying the fruits of your self-control. Ask yourself: are you willing to give that up for the fleeting pleasure that is tempting you now?

☞ Delay Discounting says the longer you have to wait for a reward, the less it is worth to you. It drives our tendency to choose immediate gratification over

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What is an *Excelsator*?

Excelsator is a combination of two words:

excel - to shine, to be outstanding, be first rate and exceptional

and

accelerate - to move forward at an increasing pace.

Excelsators are ideas, concepts, and programs that help you move forward in creating the life you want while increasing your ability to be outstanding, first rate, and exceptional.

future happiness. When you face a willpower challenge, ask yourself: What is the immediate payoff for giving in? What is the long term cost? Is the trade-off worth it?

Exercising self-control in one area spills over into all areas. In study after study, experiments point toward the benefits of exercising willpower. Without realizing it, people gained a wide array of benefits in areas of their lives that had nothing to do with the specific exercises they were performing. And their willpower grew stronger with practice, so it was less easily depleted. The more you practice these exercises in strengthening your own willpower, won't power, and want power, the more you will enjoy the benefits of self-regulation.

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