

**In this book,
you will learn:**

- ✓ How to change disbelief in your abilities into beliefs which support your dreams.
- ✓ How you limit yourself . . . and how to break the chains that hold you back.
- ✓ How pain, the enemy of self-discipline, can be changed into pleasure.
- ✓ How to build wealth using self-discipline
- ✓ How to develop self-disciplined kids.
- ✓ How to use self-discipline in your spiritual walk with God.

**Praise for WILLPOWER:
The Secrets Of Self-Discipline**

Willpower is written not by someone who just studies self-discipline, but someone who lives the principles he writes about. Read this book and you will find keys to help you reach your perfect 10 in life.

PETER VIDMAR

Olympic Gold Medal Gymnastics Champion
and Author of *Risk, Originality, Virtuosity,
the Keys to a Perfect 10.*

Willpower provides compelling insights about the single factor that separates winners from the also-rans. It is a personal road map toward mastering self-discipline.

ROGER DOW

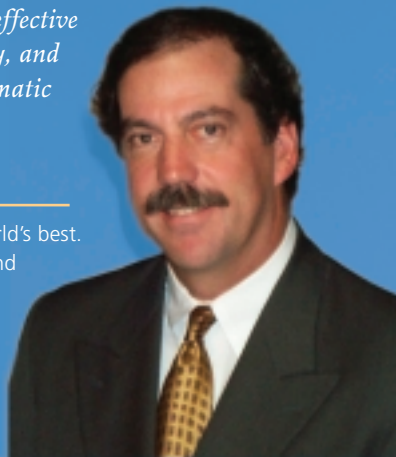
Senior Vice President,
Marriott International

These are just some of the lessons you will learn from WILLPOWER: The Secrets of Self-Discipline. By artfully blending proven-effective techniques adopted from behavior therapy, cognitive psychology, and NLP, you will be able to devise a program that will bring automatic self-discipline into your life.

KERRY JOHNSON, MBA, Ph.D.

As a pro tennis player in the mid 1970's, Kerry competed against the world's best. Today he brings his experience in professional sports, university research and bottom line business to help you achieve your goals. Kerry's presentations are consistently rated by attendees as among the best they have ever heard.

He is the author of 6 books including, *Mastering the Game* (Louis and Ford), *Peak Performance: How To Increase Your Business By 70% In 6 Weeks* (Prentice Hall), and *Sales Magic* (Morrow).



In working with the top tennis players in the world, I have noticed the ones with the most self-discipline achieve at levels even greater than their talents will carry them. I recommend *Willpower* because it will help you achieve your lofty goals as well.

ROBERT VAN'T HOF

Coach of Lindsay Davenport,
#1 Ranked Women's Pro Tennis Champion

Louis & Ford Publishing
Tustin, California

ISBN 0-9618535-2-2



9 780961 853525

WILLPOWER

**The Secrets
of Self-Discipline**

JOHNSON

LOUIS & FORD
PUBLISHING

WILLPOWER



**The Secrets
of Self-Discipline**

KERRY L. JOHNSON, MBA, Ph.D.

AUTHOR OF MASTERING THE GAME AND PEAK PERFORMANCE

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>Acknowledgments</i>	ix
<i>Introduction</i>	1
SECRET ONE: The Psychology of Self-Discipline	9
SECRET TWO: Achieving Self-Discipline by Assessing Your Values, Setting Goals, and Concentrating on Outcomes	29
SECRET THREE: Achieving Self-Discipline through Visualization and Recasting	47
SECRET FOUR: Achieving Self-Discipline by Modeling and Using Mentors	71
SECRET FIVE: Achieving Self-Discipline by Changing Your Beliefs	91
SECRET SIX: Achieving Self-Discipline by Using Contracts	111
SECRET SEVEN: Achieving Self-Discipline by Using Meta Patterns	129
SECRET EIGHT: Achieving Self-Discipline by Coping with Stress	149
SECRET NINE: Using Self-Discipline to Build Wealth	177
SECRET TEN: Building Self-Discipline in Your Kids	195
SECRET ELEVEN: Self-Discipline and Your Spiritual Walk with God	223

INTRODUCTION

All human beings have goals. Maybe one of yours is to lose weight. Maybe it's to develop patience with your children or your spouse. Perhaps it's to pay your bills on time. Maybe you want to increase your productivity at work. Or maybe you want to spend less and save more, or make more so you can retire early and travel the world over.

We all have goals. If striving to better ourselves is part of the human condition, goals are how we get there. The catch is, in order to achieve our goals, we need self-discipline.

You probably have heard of people who get fabulous results by sheer willpower—another word for self-discipline—alone. You can learn to use self-discipline that effectively too. The purpose of *Willpower: The Secrets of Self-Discipline* is to teach you how to commit yourself to your goals through easy-to-apply yet advanced techniques from some of the newest and most exciting research in applied psychology.

The teaching part is necessary because, as essential as self-discipline is, it rarely comes naturally. The surprising thing is that with self-discipline, almost nothing stops us. Without self-discipline, nothing helps us.

When we have self-discipline, we're in good company. All peak performers, whether in sales, management, athletics, or any other career, have a high degree of self-discipline. This is especially apparent among those old-timers who survive in big league sports long after their less disciplined opponents are forced to quit. Sports is a zero sum game. Simply put, in order for you to win, the

*All peak performers,
have a high degree of
self-discipline.*

other team must lose. The major success factor that helps older athletes is their amazing degree of self-discipline.

For example, at age forty-four, Nolan Ryan was one of the best pitchers in major-league baseball history. His retirement was due in 1991 when he was scheduled to face the best team in baseball, the Oakland A's. Not only did he complete the game, he pitched a no-hitter! His achievement was the first by a man of his age in baseball history and it was probably the biggest no-hitter among the six in his career.

Was Ryan's ability to practice keen self-discipline due to an innate power that few others possess? Hardly. Ryan himself was quick to admit that without developing and honing his self-discipline, he would have gone quickly from "Who's Who" to "Who's he?" Thus, his training regimen included vigorous weight training that left younger players huffing and puffing, a stationary bike, and a water-jogging program. This kind of discipline gave him the ability to throw one-hundred-mile-per-hour fast balls.

Younger athletes who reach the heights of their game rely on self-discipline, too. Before the 2000 British Open, golfer Tiger Woods arrived at the driving range at the Bayhill Country Club in Orlando, Florida, at 5:00 A.M., waiting for daylight and armed with only one club. The local pro, Mark Brooks, walked in at 7:00 A.M., wondering how long Tiger had been there. At lunch, the pro noticed Tiger still hitting his nine iron. Late in the afternoon, the same pro was astounded to see that Tiger was still there, as he would be until the sun went down. Finally, too curious to keep quiet any longer, he asked Tiger why he was practicing only with his nine iron and why for so long?

Tiger quietly replied that he was preparing for the British Open. He was so long off the tee that all he needed on most holes on his second shot was his 9 iron. He wanted to make sure he could hit the greens consistently with it.

Tiger went on to win the 2000 British Open and the rest is history.

Sure, Tiger is talented. He wouldn't have been able to compete unless he were. But Tiger was also known for being the hardest working golfer on the tour. He not only was intense on the course, he also spent long hours on the practice range. For Tiger and the rest of us, whatever our game, if talent is the reason we're in it, discipline is the reason we win.

I am a speaker and author, but I was trained as a research psychologist. This means that the kinds of ideas I like to study are based on research, peppered with useful, tangible ideas that work instead of someone's

*If talent is the reason
we're in it, discipline is
the reason we win.*

opinions. Consequently, this is the type of book I like to write. Many books are available on self-discipline, but without exception they've left me wanting more. At best, these books whet the appetite. At worst, they become boring. Most of them are either too simplistic or are unrealistic, advising readers to change in ways that don't make common sense. My goal in writing *Willpower: The Secrets of Self-Discipline* is to provide ideas that can be used immediately as well as over the long haul.

Back in the 1980s when I was working on my Ph.D., my life consisted of reading and research with precious little time for a movie or a date. I was twenty-four years old and had few responsibilities, so I could handle such pressure relatively easily. When I started my MBA mid-career, not only did I have to run a company with twenty employees, I also had to spend enough time at home to keep my wife happy and attend to two beautiful daughters. That tight rope was not an easy one to walk. Juggling many responsibilities is tough. I mention this because I live with the same problems and concerns as you.

I have studied until 3:00 A.M. because I didn't have time during the day. I have traveled three thousand miles to give a speech when I should have been in bed with the flu. I

have met payrolls when I had to borrow the funds. I have consumed protein powder drink in lieu of chewable food because I wanted to lose six inches around the middle. I have had to periodically quit drinking coffee because it created anxiety attacks. Like you, I have to make self-discipline work in my life every day.

I recently had lunch in Traverse City, Michigan, with my friend and editor Rebecca Chown. Impulsively, I asked our server what she would like to read in a self-discipline book. She replied that she worked two jobs to make ends meet and had three kids to provide for, as well as a mortgage and a car payment to meet. In short, she had precious little time to read, though any advice I could give her to add more hours in the day would be nice.

I couldn't help but wonder whether, if she had more hours, she would be more self-disciplined or would find her additional time used up without having accomplished more? I ask this because studies show that most adults watch four hours of television per day. In addition, the average adult spends forty-five minutes commuting to and from work each day.

Contrast this with the average four minutes per day we spend communicating with our spouses or our kids. "Communication" is defined as spending time talking instead of engaging in superficial conversation like giving instructions or commands. We are all pressed for free time, but if we had the free time we desire, what would we do with it?

I've just completed my MBA. It was hard to find time to work on assignments while I traveled, so I tried to catch pockets of time like studying in ticket lines or while waiting to board aircraft or while waiting for luggage. I arrived in Dallas once for a speech and was in the back of a taxi working on an assignment when the taxi driver started to complain about how long he had to wait at the airport for a fare. He said he spent three hours in the taxi holding areas every day with nothing to do. I told him I wished I had

three hours to work on my MBA every day. He then started to complain about his low pay and long hours in the cab. I asked him if he had a college degree. He said no. I told him that college grads make on average forty thousand dollars per year more than high school grads and that he could do all his coursework waiting for fares. He laughed and said he had better things to do with his time.

The point is, do we need more time or do we need to be more disciplined with the time we have? Since there are only twenty-four hours in a day, the answer is obvious. We need self-discipline, and we need to use it like we would a tool. This tool needs to be as dependable as a good car yet as comfortable as a great pair of shoes. But be warned: Like every pair of new shoes, self-discipline may not feel so good in the beginning.

In spite of that irritating fact, if we work through the discomfort and consciously build self-discipline much as we would a muscle, it will

be ready when we need it. If we only think about self-discipline when we are in jeopardy of missing a deadline or at some other time that tests us, we will be largely unsuccessful. If we can make self-discipline a part of our daily lives, it will become effortless, a part of who we are.

Oprah Winfrey is arguably the most talented entertainer in America. She is also the wealthiest female celebrity. Talented, yes. Self-disciplined also, to a degree. But she has been unable to maintain the level of self-discipline in her personal life that she maintains in her professional life. Once able to lose seventy pounds, she displayed her new body in a nationally televised show hauling along a kid's wagon full of fat. She even unsuccessfully tried to pick up that heavy bag during one of her shows. Yet, months later, she gained much of her weight back. She is smart, talented, and motivated, but even a well known

*Do we need more time
or do we need to be
more disciplined with
the time we have?*

and beloved celebrity is in need of techniques to maintain self-discipline.

Willpower: The Secrets of Self-Discipline explains these techniques thoroughly but concisely. It also contains two extra chapters, the first on how to teach self-discipline to children. The greatest gifts to our youth do not lie in a trust fund or a new car for graduation. They lie in education and a level of self-discipline sufficient to enjoy the benefits of that education.

If our children can learn the lessons of self-discipline, they will do better in school and will avoid making the same

*Kids who are controlled,
focused, and guided keep
those lessons in their hearts
and minds forever.*

mistakes less self-controlled kids tend to make. In addition, kids who are controlled, focused, and guided keep those lessons in their hearts and minds forever.

The final chapter of the book explores how to use self-discipline in our spiritual lives. Eighty-five percent of Americans who believe in a higher power claim they are Christian, ten percent Jewish, and the rest a mixture of Buddhist, Moslem, and Taoist. But what is it that supports our faith? The answer lies in the level of self-discipline we bring to it.

What part of your spiritual walk do you need to strengthen? Your prayer time? Your commitment to raising your kids in a godly household? Your faith? Your connection to the natural world?

When we really get down to who we are, it's all about character, values, and morality. I once heard character defined as what we do when nobody is watching. You would not likely steal from a department store, but would you return a wallet you found on the street? You certainly wouldn't allow your kids to lie to you, but would you tell them to lie about their ages to get a discount? The rubber meets the road when adolescents are tempted to have sex

or consume alcohol or other drugs. Will they have the self-discipline or strength of character to abstain? Truly, character in great part is a result of self-discipline.

This book is easy to use. You can read the chapters in the order they are presented or you can skip around and read the chapters that most appeal to you first. All of the techniques work, and I encourage you to try them all. You may be surprised at how effective these ideas can be no matter what the application.

Each chapter ends with a section called “Assignments: Putting Self-Discipline to Work” which does just that—it gives brief assignments that will aid you in developing the good habits you need in order to develop self-discipline in your life.

There is an adage in the sales business that nothing is accomplished until something is sold. There should be a similar saying about life, along the lines of, “Nothing worth having ever came easy; nothing is accomplished without self-discipline.” If you apply the following techniques, you will never again be a victim to your lack of willpower. You will be a victor over your own temptations, appetites, and vices and will learn how to live life more abundantly.

Learning the secrets of self-discipline *can* change your life. Why not get started today?

The Psychology of Self-Discipline

*Pain is the difference between what is
and what you want it to be.*

Spencer Johnson

John Harrison was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer at age forty-six and given six months to live. When his doctors in Chicago told him to go home and get his affairs in order, he refused.

He did some research, found the best clinic in the country for treating his cancer, and found a team of doctors who wouldn't give up on him.

Today, fourteen years later, he's going strong. Is he cancer free? No. The pancreas has been partially removed but the cancer is now in his liver. With numerous rounds of chemotherapy and radiation under his belt, he's had plenty of days when he felt sick

enough to die, but he's going strong. He looks good, mostly feels good, works hard, and plays harder.

Always a man who gave back to the community and to his family, John has refused to let his cancer beat him. That means he won't allow it to harden him, make him cynical, make him selfish. A charismatic orthodontist who often straightens teeth to the beat of Rod Stewart, he gives boatloads of money away, quietly and inconspicuously lending a hand whenever someone in his small town is downtrodden.

What's more, his amazing optimism and joy in life remain unequalled. This has always been a man who loved to make himself sweat, who loved to push himself higher and harder. He still does. He laughs more than anyone else, probably cries more too, but he simply won't let his cancer get in the way of his being the best human being he can be. He wants to be at the top of the mountain every day—and he wants to get there under his own steam.

The fear gets him sometimes, but he somehow pushes it away. He's always had self-discipline—he's an athlete for heaven's sake, a top amateur tennis player—but the kind of self-discipline he needs to keep his fear under control is truly phenomenal.

As always, he continues to set the standard for the rest of us.

ANONYMOUS

Self-discipline. Either you have it or you don't, right?

Wrong. Everyone can be taught the skills and techniques to bring self-discipline into their lives. It begins by understanding the psychology of self-discipline. One of its main components is mental toughness.

Mental Toughness

Former Dallas Cowboys defensive back Bill Bates was told his first year in pro football that he was too slow, too small, and had no talent. But as a seven-year veteran of the National Football League, he refused to listen to his critics. Today, Bates believes his success is due to his mental toughness. This “steeling of the mind” is what gave him the self-discipline to achieve his goals.

Self-Talk

Each of us can increase our own “mental toughness” by monitoring how we talk to ourselves. Sports hypno-therapist Pete Siegel writes that we tend to remember everything we tell ourselves. Unfortunately, he also mentions that roughly seventy-five percent of what we tell ourselves is negative and thus works against us.

Shad Helmstetter writes much the same in his book, *What Do You Say When You Talk to Yourself?* According to Helmstetter, we humans rationalize losing our motivation to meet our goals.

Imagine this scenario: Say you go on a diet and make good progress for about one day, then hunger creeps in and you decide that the pain of not eating isn't worth the pleasure of fitting into that size eight skirt. After all, you can always start dieting next week, and this week really isn't a good time with all the work you have to do.

Soon enough, your dream of a svelte 130-pound frame that draws attention from across the street is only a pipe dream.

No wonder. A litany of “It hurts,” “It's not worth it,” and “This isn't a good time” would send anyone off their diet and into the cupboard to grab six Twinkies and a bottle of pop.

Compare this damaging self-talk to the more effective internal communication that can get you through the extra effort you need to meet your goal: "This exercise is painful, but it's only ten more minutes and I am on my way to losing fifteen pounds." Or, "I really crave pasta right now. This diet shake doesn't taste good. But I can just see what I will look like in two weeks. It's only two weeks out of my life. I can deal with that."

This is the kind of self-talk that keeps you on track instead of breaking down your will. Motivational consultant Dave Grant, when asked how he keeps from thinking negative thoughts, said thinking positively doesn't mean omitting negatives from your mind. Rather, Grant believes it is acceptable to allow yourself to think such thoughts but then you must replace them. When something negative comes to mind, he recommends flooding your brain with positive thoughts such as, "I'm bright, I like to be around people, I'm good looking, and I can solve any problem, any time." Negative thoughts, Grant says, will simply go away if not reinforced.

To put it another way, as Yogi Berra once said, "Half this game is ninety percent mental."

Attitude

Closely related to self-talk is attitude. My brother Kevin has an amazingly positive attitude and often asks me questions on the golf course such as, "Do you think I can hit the ball with this three wood 230 yards from behind a tree and have it land on the green?" He succeeds surprisingly often, in great part because he sets himself up for success beforehand with positive self-talk.

Pattern Interrupt

A technique that can help you interrupt your pattern of negative self-talk is called pattern interrupt. Put a rubber band

around your wrist and every time you become self-critical, snap it. For instance, if you miss a deadline at work, your tendency might be to berate yourself. Snap the rubber band—it will interrupt your pattern of self-punishment. Then replace the negative talk by saying, “I know I can turn things in promptly and will the next time. I have the ability. I know I can do better.” Regardless of what your goal is, use positive self-talk to help increase your mental toughness and thus your self-discipline.

Jason Wood, upon his drafting to the Dallas Mavericks, said, “We’re going to turn this team around 360 degrees.” Now that’s the kind of attitude that gets things done.

Pleasure and Pain

The second main component of the psychology of self-discipline is understanding the pleasure/pain principle. In a nutshell, our ability to be self-disciplined depends on the pleasure or pain we associate with certain activities. Indeed, our tendency to avoid punishment and seek rewards is the prime psychological motivation for everything we do. We work for rewards that include such things as money, recognition, or status. We’re polite to people because we want them to like us. Often, and this can be tough to take, our children phone us from college because they need money and not because they especially want to talk to us.

When my daughter Stacey was a freshman at James Madison University, majoring in business and communications, she would call once or twice a week and I began suspecting her of only calling when she needed money. Once she called when I was in a rush. As soon as I heard her voice, I said, “How much do you want?” She became indignant that I thought she only called when she needed money. I apologized and listened to her talk about her week and how much reading she had to do. After about twenty minutes, I

told her I had to go to a meeting and she sprang to the real point of the conversation: "Dad, I really need two hundred dollars for a new dress!"

I once mentioned to an audience the notion that we are primarily motivated to earn rewards and avoid punishment and a woman raised her hand and said, "That's not true. I am a United Way volunteer." I replied that she was a United Way volunteer because she found it personally rewarding.

Determining how we personally cope with the pleasure and pain of life is the first step toward using pleasure to our advantage and keeping our fear of pain under control so that we can implement self-discipline in our lives.

Take the short quiz below to determine whether you're pleasure focused or avoidance-of-pain focused:

YOUR FOCUS: PLEASURE OR PAIN?

1. If you are in the middle of a project, will you spontaneously take time off for a friend (pleasure focused) or do you feel compelled to stay and complete the project because you perceive some kind of punishment will occur if you don't (avoidance-of-pain focused)?
2. Do you eat only the foods you like best on your plate at dinner (pleasure focused) or do you eat at least some of all the foods because you fear that if you don't, you will suffer in some way (avoidance-of-pain focused)?
3. Do you work on projects only at the last minute when you are in a panic to get them done (pleasure focused) or do you begin projects early so that there's no way you'll miss a deadline and get in trouble (avoidance-of-pain focused)?
4. When you awaken in the morning, do you get up only when you hear a chiding voice inside your head telling you to (pleasure focused) or do you typically arrive at

work at 7:00 A.M., even though you're not a morning person, so you will be able to complete your work even if unexpected problems arise (avoidance-of-pain focused)?

5. Do you tend to do a mediocre job on things you don't like so that you can get to the "fun" projects or aspects of projects more quickly (pleasure focused) or do you typically do a conscientious job on all projects or aspects of projects, even those you don't particularly care for, in order to avoid "getting caught" (avoidance-of-pain focused)?

It doesn't take much to learn if you are pleasure or pain focused. If you answered "yes" to the pleasure focus questions more often than the avoidance-of-pain focused ones, you may be someone who is more attracted to pleasure. If your answers yield an attraction more to the avoidance of pain, it may take more than rich rewards to get you to achieve your goals; it may in fact take a perceived threat or loss to make you get moving.

Procrastination

Whether you're pleasure focused or avoidance-of-pain focused, like most individuals in the world, you probably procrastinate from time to time. Why? Simply put, when we perceive that something is going to cause us pain, we procrastinate.

Have you ever put off finishing an assignment for someone and, when it came due, told a white lie about it in an effort to gain more time to complete it? Have you ever shuffled paper around your desk instead of making an important phone call, watched a sitcom instead of reading to the kids, or spent time in the middle of your business day opening mail, even when you knew it would be more efficient and effective to read it in the late afternoon or during lunch?

Usually we feel guilty about procrastinating, but procrastination is not only an unfortunate behavior, it can also cost us business. Being late, for example, is a form of procrastination. Seventeen years ago as an aspiring consultant, I was

When we perceive that something is going to cause us pain, we procrastinate.

twenty minutes late to an appointment with a customer. As this was before the days of car phones, I couldn't call ahead and warn him so I just showed up late. My customer entered the waiting room and told me that if I didn't have the courtesy of arriving on time, he wouldn't extend me the courtesy of seeing me. I learned my lesson on the spot, but it cost me thousands of dollars in revenue.

There are many reasons for procrastination. The most salient are avoiding discomfort, a feeling of insecurity that you don't have the information or skill to do the task, and the illusion that the task is simplistic enough that there is no rush to start now.

A few years ago, I was assigned a deadline for writing a book. When the publisher asked me if I could keep to the schedule, I said, "Sure." After all, I had about four months to do the outline and another month to actually come up with a rough draft. But as you might have guessed, I waited until the week before the outline deadline to even start the project. I then waited until three weeks before the rough draft deadline to put pen to paper. The project was completed, but to this day I wonder what would have happened if I had given myself time to do the best job that I could. As I procrastinated beginning the project, I felt terrible. I knew I was capable of doing a great job, but I didn't give myself enough time to do it. I allowed myself to be fooled into thinking that as soon as I had done the research, I could start writing. Problem was, I even procrastinated doing the research.

Sometimes people engage in avoidance behaviors because of aversive conditioning. For example, if you've

ever been thrown from a horse, you may have been conditioned by this experience to never ride again. Likewise, if you've ever been on a diet and failed, you may have been aversely conditioned to never diet again.

Whatever its origins, procrastination often keeps us from doing what we need—and frequently want—to do. Since procrastination is really a result of focusing on the pain of a task instead of on its benefits, why not simply restructure how we perceive the pain and the benefits?

Here are three simple steps that can literally restructure your associations, moving a given activity from pain to pleasure. It follows that eventually the activity itself will become less painful if you remember to follow these steps.

THREE STEPS TO RESTRUCTURE YOUR PLEASURE/PAIN ASSOCIATIONS

1. **Make a picture, sound, or feeling representation of your goal and try to experience the result of the task at hand before you even start it.** For example, try to visualize a clean garage instead of how much effort it will take to get it that way. Focus on how much easier it will be to find the things you need, park the car, or just have the ability to move in the garage without being hit in the head by unidentified falling objects.
2. **Intensify your perception of the good experience until the prospect of completion brings a smile to your face.** Continue to intensify what you see, hear, and feel. Make the garage you've been putting off cleaning so bright it is blindingly clean. That should make you smile, especially if you haven't touched it in years.
3. **Drop everything and start the activity immediately.** You don't have to complete it; just do enough to change your emotions. Straighten up one corner of the

garage, then congratulate yourself. Write a cover letter or an opening statement for a report and then stop, or make one of those phone calls you've been putting off.

One other extremely effective technique for overcoming procrastination is to use the four basic steps of planning, learning, observing, and engaging.

Planning, Learning, Observing, Engaging

1. **Planning.** One of the most common ways you can sabotage yourself is by failing to begin a project. You have likely heard in the past that "Inch by inch, anything's a cinch." The hardest part is the first inch. You can make that first inch easier if you sit down and make a game plan of the project you wish to complete. Suppose you have a speech to give two weeks from today. You wouldn't wait until the last day to start preparing, or would you?

In the most desirable of situations, you'd first plan the major portion of your talk. You'd think about the purpose and whom you'd be speaking to. Then you'd plug in the points that illustrated each idea. Next you might put in some humorous stories to illuminate your concepts. You'd probably jot some notes about where you might need to look for additional information. You'd also schedule practice time in order to give your presentation a dry run.

Planning is easy in the context of a speech, but it helps to combat self-doubt and procrastination in other areas, too. Once you start the process by engaging in an activity as simple as making a plan, you'll find it much easier to complete what you've been putting off.

2. **Learning.** Second, write down what you will have to do or learn in order to complete the project. We often feel paralyzed and procrastinate because we don't know what to do first. Recently I was assigned the task of writing a series

of articles for a major magazine. I wasn't as familiar with the topic as I would have liked, so as I planned out the project I put a checkmark next to the areas that needed more research. During the next few weeks, I found myself talking to many people about the topic and even thinking about it on my way to work in the morning. I spent time researching the issues I was confused about and noticed that most of my initial confusion simply evaporated.

This is a side benefit of planning early. On the flip side, if you wait to start any part of your project until the day it is due, you will not be able to let your mind automatically solve problems for you. It is said that Thomas Edison encountered many problems during his research on creating the light bulb. Often when stuck, he would leave his lab and take a short nap. When he awoke, he frequently had a solution to the problem.

3. Observing. What is it that keeps you from arriving on time to appointments and causes you to avoid easy chores like balancing your checkbook? Take out a sheet of paper and list the emotional benefits you receive from procrastinating. If this sounds like a silly exercise, think again. I tried this to help solve my problem of tardiness and was surprised to learn that I have an intense loathing towards having to wait. The thought of sitting in someone's office reading a useless magazine until the customer wrangles enough time to see me causes me acute anxiety. As a result, I typically only give myself the exact time I think it will take me to travel. Unfortunately, I rarely estimate real drive time and traffic delays well so I frequently am late. All this, thanks to my fear of waiting.

4. Engaging. The last step in overcoming procrastination is to engage yourself in your goal. This simply means that you're attempting to start it. As mentioned above, simply taking the first step works amazingly well to get you moving

in the right direction. I have completed many major projects with the initial plan of doing only a few minutes of work. In every case, I've ended up completing the job.

The most productive achievers work a little each day on important projects, even if only to open a folder and review what they have done so far. If you engage yourself in doing something with a high degree of frequency, there is absolutely no way you will be able to put it off for long.

Fears

A second aspect of the pleasure/pain principle that is irrevocably intertwined with the expectation of pain involves the fears we humans experience, from the fear of rejection to the fear of looking foolish to the fear of failure or even the fear of success. Whatever the source of our fears, they destroy self-discipline. While we've spent a lifetime learning such fears, they're irrational.

Fear of Failure

Take the fear of failure. Living a self-disciplined life does not mean living without failure. Even the most disciplined people alive face challenges and pitfalls, but they know how to triumph over them or at least to rise above them.

Often, misfortune can be a great teacher. When you fail, you learn volumes about what you do well and what you need to work on. Your strengths and abilities as well as your weaknesses are put in proper perspective. Interestingly enough, some researchers believe that those who don't fail enough are actually sleeping their way through life, taking too few risks, while those who fail and learn from their losses are usually the individuals most likely to succeed later.

As mentioned above, Thomas Edison struggled to find a filament for his light-burning device. None would last more

than a couple of seconds before it was consumed. When one doubter told him he had failed, he responded that, on the contrary, he had found ten thousand methods that didn't work.

To use a more modern example, a salesperson I knew feared she would be unable to complete an advanced sales course. The program would have helped her increase her ability to sell to prospects in more affluent markets, but she felt that if she failed to complete the course successfully, she wouldn't be able to handle the rejection from her associates. She already doubted her abilities and wasn't willing to risk her self-confidence further if she didn't complete the course.

*Those who fail and learn
from their losses are usually
the individuals most likely
to succeed later.*

Predictably, her avoidance behavior prevented her from advancing her sales ability and production. She admitted later that if she'd done the training, she would have increased her income by \$100,000 per year.

Another entrepreneur who was contacting people to introduce his services confessed that he frequently told his potential customer's *assistant* about his service, thinking this individual would help him get in the door. Of course, his closing rate was low because he was essentially depending on the assistant to sell for him. I asked him why and discovered that he didn't want to be rejected by the decision-maker. It was less painful if the assistant rejected him.

The problem, in sales anyway, is that most new business comes from those who have rejected you before. Most salespeople will stop after the first no and rarely will they risk being told no three times, but those who make the real money are magnets for rejection. They consequently are paid well for it.

I experienced irrational fear when I began my speaking career. After finishing graduate school, I wanted to stay in

applied psychology in some way yet the academic teaching competition was stiff and fellowships were few and far between. I also didn't relish working in academia any longer.

Most new business comes from those who have rejected you before.

So I started to speak to associations and professional groups as a way of advertising my consulting skills. Unfortunately, I was too young to be taken credibly and I was rarely asked to consult. But I was flooded with speaking requests. I guess they thought I could do less damage speaking than through extensive consulting engagements.

The problem was, I was so terrified of speaking in front of groups that I was unable to sleep a wink before a speech for two years. To this day, I feel my biggest achievement has been overcoming that fear.

Progressive Collapse

A great way to deal with the fear of failure is to use a technique called progressive collapse in which you imagine yourself going through the steps of a total and complete collapse. For example, if you are overweight and finally enroll in a diet therapy program yet also decide it would be difficult to risk failure, you'd think of all the bad things that could happen. You would first say to yourself, "If I don't lose the weight, I'll feel upset."

You'd then hear a voice inside your head say, "What then?"

"Well, then I'll be depressed," you'd answer.

The voice would ask, "What then?"

"Then I'll probably be irritated with myself," you'd respond.

"What then?"

"I'll probably eat more," you'd answer.

"What then?"

"I guess I'll eventually try another weight loss program."

By carrying this to an extreme, you're suddenly faced with the reality that the worst that can happen isn't all that

bad. In fact, it's not as frightening as you thought. Progressive collapse forces you to take a realistic look at the worst that could happen rather than to indulge in a nightmarish illusion that becomes real because it's never challenged.

Eliminate "Failure" from Your Vocabulary

In addition to using the technique of progressive collapse, try the technique of putting failure in perspective by deleting it from your vocabulary altogether. Don't say the word, think it, or listen to others who say it. See only results from what you do, some of them positive, some of them negative, all of them educational. And remember that top business people don't use the word "failure." Instead they use words like "setback," "correction," or "modification."

Force Yourself to Fail

You might also consider the novel idea of *forcing* yourself to fail to help you realize once and for all that it's not fatal. Some colleges actually offer courses in failure, assigning projects that are guaranteed to go wrong so that people can learn to desensitize themselves from emotional paralysis when failure happens in the real world.

Fear of Success

While many self-sabotaging fears exist, one of the most insidious and confusing is the fear of success. We'd all do well to remember Oscar Wilde's famous quote regarding success: "There are only two tragedies in life: One is not getting what one wants, and the other is getting it."

To use a benign example, say you're on the tee of the eighteenth hole, the last one to drive. If you can just maintain your lead, you'll have bragging rights until the next outing. You position yourself over the ball, lining up your

head and feet perfectly, draw your club back, and follow through staring down the fairway. But instead of seeing your ball in flight, you hear the laughter of your friends behind your back because you've totally missed the ball.

Whoops. Fear of success strikes again.

Identify how the fear is represented in your mind, then change it.

Other examples aren't so harmless. A salesman recently told me that he seemed to be limiting himself to making about \$40,000 a year. When I asked why he wasn't growing in his career, he mentioned that his father was a teacher with a master's degree who only made \$25,000 a year. This salesperson had only a high school graduation certificate. He felt so guilty about making more money than his father that he put off building his career and sabotaged his income.

Diminished Intensity

A technique called diminished intensity works well to decrease the power of irrational fears, including the fear of success. To use it, identify how the fear is represented in your mind, then change it. For example, a salesman recently told me that he doesn't like face-to-face prospecting with professional business people because of the intense fear of rejection he feels. It's so debilitating for him that he totally freezes up when he's in front of high-income prospects.

I taught him to picture himself seated alone in a movie theater. I told him to see himself on the screen in a movie acting out the troubling experience. After he watched the experience unfold, he played it backwards as if he were rewinding a video player. Then he played it forwards, but this time he put his favorite music to it and increased the speed of the movie. When he got to the end, he again played it backwards, making it appear to be a comical

slapstick routine. The experience worked to desensitize him to the panic he normally felt.

Interrupt Your Fear

Simply interrupting your fear while you're in the middle of it can be effective, too. For example, think of the last time you felt rejected by someone. It could have been a pretty woman you wanted to ask out, or maybe your boss turned down your request for a raise, or maybe your husband failed to compliment the new bathing suit you spent three hours picking out. Remember the anxiety you felt. Now immediately stand up and walk around for a moment.

Anxiety takes a lot of concentration to maintain. If you can't be attentive, your fear goes away. The obvious suggestion is that if you feel one of your fear patterns is interfering with the discipline you need to control your emotions, do something to interrupt it.

My wife Merita became a flight attendant even though she had a fear of heights. When a job with AirCal (which became American Airlines through a merger) came up, she saw the way out of her dead-end bank job. Instead of focusing on the panic she knew she would feel for the first few flights, she concentrated on the glamour of traveling to far-off places she might never have had the chance to otherwise see.

While controlling anxiety can be difficult, psychological researcher Rollo May believes that some anxiety can actually be good. The problem is, there is a very thin line between anxiety that paralyzes and the breed of stress that helps you win.

Golfer Payne Stewart won the U.S. Open in 1999 with a twenty-foot putt on the last hole. Phil Michelson, his closest

*There is a very thin line
between anxiety that
paralyzes and the breed of
stress that helps you win.*

competitor, had been making amazing putts the whole day except on the seventeenth hole, where he missed an easy five-footer. If not for that missed putt, Phil could have forced a play-off with Stewart and possibly won his first major tournament.

A reporter asked Michelson if he felt the pressure on the last few holes. He said yes. When asked the same question, Stewart said that he felt anxiety but that he was able to control it.

Controlling it. Maintaining self-discipline. That's what it's all about.

Staying Self-Disciplined—the Final Word

A manager recently told me that if he could just motivate his salespeople, profits would skyrocket.

We have to realize that everyone is motivated, whether it's to sit at home in the evenings watching sitcoms or to shop every day of the week or to work on a myriad of other projects or objectives. Being motivated is not the issue.

The answer to losing weight lies in self-discipline and learning to change the way we perceive the pain and pleasure of dieting.

Restructuring objectives and understanding how we handle our perceptions of pleasure and pain are what motivation—or self-discipline—is all about.

Nutritionists say that the average overweight person goes on 1.5 diets annually and tries more than fifteen times to lose weight, all between the ages of twenty-one and fifty. Predictably, most diets fail.

Stanford researchers also report that most overweight people do not seek professional help, and those who do often drop out of their weight loss regimen without losing much weight. The reason is simple: They are unable to

continue the dieting program because of the pain involved in trying to stay on a plan, especially if the plan has previously failed for them.

These same researchers have added a new twist to an already sad story: Surveying a ten-year period of medical treatment for obesity, they calculated the percentage of patients who lost significant amounts of weight and found that no more than twenty-five percent lost as much as twenty pounds and no more than five percent lost as much as forty pounds. They also said that those who lost the weight often gained most of it back within a short period of time.

The reason, again, is the pain of staying committed. Losing weight is tough for most people, but it does not have to be. The answer to losing weight lies in self-discipline and learning to change the way we perceive the pain and pleasure of dieting, or any other challenge we accept.

Truly, the answer to all such dilemmas lies in understanding the power of mental toughness and the pleasure/pain principle or, in other words, the psychology of self-discipline.

A S S I G N M E N T S

Putting Self-Discipline to Work

1. Think about how you respond to stressful situations. What is your attitude? In short, do you have mental toughness? Use the technique of pattern interrupt to help yourself use positive self-talk.
2. To begin confronting your natural tendency to avoid pain, change the order in which you deal with life's demands. For example, try eating the food you like least first at breakfast, lunch, and dinner. When you get

to work tomorrow morning, try doing the most distasteful job you face first. This should be an activity like filing that you've been postponing because it's uncomfortable or just plain isn't fun.

3. Take a few moments and write down three things you know you should do but haven't. This could be anything from pruning trees to doing a performance review to challenging your habit of swearing. Next to these items, write down the expectation of discomfort and pain that's contributing to your procrastination.

Now jot down the pleasure you'll receive as a result of completing these tasks. This could be a financial reward, praise, or even a sense of pride from having done something you are proud of.

Then use the three-step process to restructure the pleasure/pain you associate with these tasks. Also use the technique of planning, learning, observing, and engaging to overcome the procrastination you normally employ as related to these activities.

4. Make a list of the irrational fears you have and use the techniques explained in this chapter to deal with them. Try the technique of progressive collapse to deal with the fear of failure. Delete the word "failure" from your vocabulary and see what happens. Use the technique of diminished intensity on another fear, as well as the technique of interrupting your fear to see what happens. Depending on how advanced your fears are, you may even want to consider the benefits of forcing yourself to fail.