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6 Small Things You Can Do When You Lack Discipline

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One of the biggest problems people face is the lack of discipline — they have goals or habits they want to achieve, but lack that discipline needed to stick with it.

Then we beat ourselves up about it. We feel crappy because we can't stick with it.

And that leads to more failure, because we're forming a mindset that we don't have the necessary discipline.

Here's what to do when you face a situation like this:

1. Forgive yourself. You aren't perfect. No one is. Realize that beating yourself up will only make things worse. Take a few slow, deep breaths and let it go. Forgive yourself. And move on.

2. Realize that discipline is an illusion. While discipline is a common concept, it doesn't actually exist. It's not a thing you can actually do. Think about it: people say discipline is pushing yourself to do something you don't want to do. But how do you do that? What skill is required? There isn't a skill — it's just forcing yourself to do something you don't want to do. And that requires ... *some kind of motivation*. Without motivation, you won't be able to force yourself to do anything. So motivation is the key concept — and this is something that's real, that you can actually learn how to do.

3. Focus on motivation. What's your motivation for pursuing the goal or habit? How will you sustain the motivation when you struggle? Have very strong motivations for doing something, and write them down. Commit publicly. When things get tough, remind yourself of your motivation. Focus on it. It'll pull you along — that's more powerful than trying to focus on the push of discipline.

4. Make it easy. Discipline is tough because whatever the task or habit you're trying to do is tough. Instead, make it easy. Remove barriers. Having a hard time exercising? Make it ridiculously easy, by only exercising for 5 minutes. What use is exercising for 5 minutes? You're creating the habit, not getting yourself into shape overnight. The 5 minutes of exercise will have only a tiny impact on your health, but it makes exercise

super easy. If you can do that 30 days in a row, you now have an exercise habit. Hate waking up early to go to the gym? Do it at home. Do it during lunch or after work.

5. Focus on enjoyment. It's hard to push yourself — to have discipline — when you hate doing something. So find something enjoyable about the activity. If you don't look forward to exercise, find some good music, or a workout partner who you can have a nice conversation with, or a peaceful setting in nature that is just beautiful. And focus on that enjoyable aspect. Hate doing your paperwork? Find a peaceful sanctuary where you can do the paperwork and enjoy yourself. Maybe have a nice cup of tea or coffee, play some nice music. And focus on the enjoyment.

6. Repeat. You'll almost inevitably slip up sometime, no matter how good you are. Unfortunately, people often take this to mean they don't have discipline, and they just beat themselves up and give up. Well, it's just a bump in the road. Get up, dust yourself off, and get going again. Start from Step 1 and start all over.