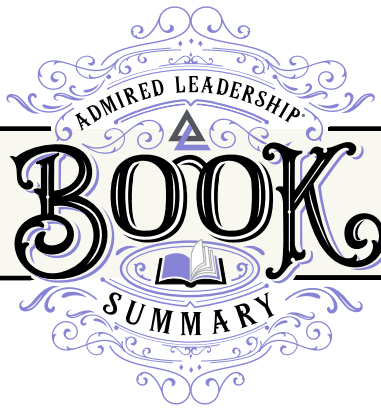




Eight Minutes, Not Eight Hours



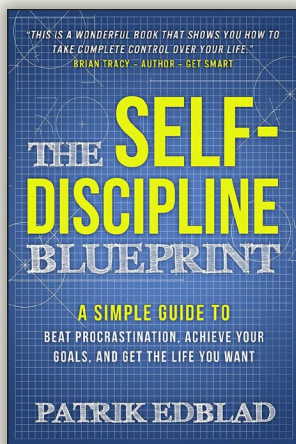
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The Self-Discipline Blueprint

A Simple Guide to Beat Procrastination, Achieve Your Goals, and Get the Life You Want

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Successful people do what it takes to get the results they want. Oftentimes, this means taking action even when they don't feel like it. Patrik Edblad uses a practical application of psychology to explain how to imbed self-discipline into daily routines. He outlines the mental tricks that successful people use to boost their endurance and continuously strive for achievement.

When a self-discipline system is in place, pursuing goals becomes second nature. Achieving success isn't about daily excellence; it is a commitment to show up, a willingness to re-draft plans, and a refusal to quit. Sustainable improvements are rooted in a foundation of healthy habits. When practiced consistently, good habits give us an upward spiral that enables positive results in other areas.

Key Quote

"We often assume that we do what we do because of who we are. But the truth is, a lot of what we do is a result of where we are" (p. 127).

Four Foundational Habits of Self-Discipline

Great athletes master the fundamentals of the game. Similarly, to reach peak performance in life we must master four fundamental habits: sleep, nutrition, movement, and mindfulness. To begin, select the habit that is most likely to create the most positive ripple effect on other elements of your life. This is called a "keystone habit" (p. 19).

Habit #1: Sleep. "Recent studies of the neurological, chemical, and electrical activity of the sleeping brain...show that even minimal sleep loss can have profound detrimental effects on mood, cognition, performance, productivity, communication skills, accident rates, and general health" (p. 21).

Determine your personal sleep quotient by setting a bedtime that will allow for eight hours of sleep. Adjust your bedtime in fifteen-minute increments until you can wake up without an alarm and feel refreshed. After you've established how much sleep your body needs to perform optimally, stick to a schedule, and develop a nightly pre-sleep routine (p. 25).

Habit #2: Nutrition. Ease into better nutritional habits by making small changes incrementally and creating an environment that makes healthy eating more convenient. "Each time you visit the grocery store, you have the opportunity to choose foods that promote health, well-being, and excellent performance" (p. 29).

Habit #3 Movement. "Every single thing our bodies do needs movement to work optimally. Functions like immunity, reproduction, and digestion all require us to move. If we don't, it doesn't matter if we sleep sufficiently and eat a healthy diet. Without the loads created by physical activity, these efforts will be thwarted at a cellular level, and we won't function optimally" (p. 35). It is important to note that habitual movement extends beyond the traditional definition of exercise. Your body will still suffer if you work out each week but spend the majority of your time sedentary. Design your environment in a way that requires more movement. Create triggers throughout your day that will remind you to make micro, mini, and macro movements.

Habit #4 Mindfulness. "Similar to the way physical exercise creates changes in your muscles, mindfulness creates changes in your brain. And those changes promote a huge number of benefits, including decreased stress, better sleep, happier relationships, less anxiety, and sharper concentration" (p. 47).

Use Strategies to Create a Self-Discipline System


Mastering self-discipline is not a function of feeling motivated and inspired, it is a consequence of consistency. Edblad recommends creating a system using the fifteen self-discipline strategies to prevent stagnation.

Self-Awareness and Introspective Understanding: Strategies 1 - 4


Strategy 1: Develop a Growth Mindset. The brain is continuously developing. It creates new neural pathways and modifies existing ones. A person's mindset has a powerful influence on the propensity to realize their full potential. "There are two types of mindsets:

1. The fixed mindset. The person believes that his or her basic qualities (like intelligence or talent) are fixed traits.

2. The growth mindset. The person believes his or her basic qualities can be developed through dedication and hard work" (p. 60). To change from a fixed mindset to a growth mindset, you must increase awareness of negative thoughts and practice reframing them with empowering ideas and positive self-talk. **The growth mindset is a prerequisite for all other strategies outlined in the book.**



"Recent studies of the neurological, chemical, and electrical activity of the sleeping brain... show that even minimal sleep loss can have profound detrimental effects on mood, cognition, performance, productivity, communication skills, accident rates, and general health."



Strategy 2: Find Your Mission. Increase your chances of success by focusing your efforts, energy, and resources on one thing. The notion of extreme focus, called the Hedgehog Concept, stems from an ancient Greek parable. In the story, a cunning fox deploys multiple tactics in attempts to catch the hedgehog, but the hedgehog always wins because it is an expert at one thing: defending itself (p. 65). **“Notice what lies at the intersection of your interests, skills, and what the world needs. That is your Hedgehog Concept”** (p. 71).

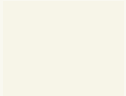

Strategy 3: Know Your Why. Connecting what you do to a bigger purpose increases our capacity to complete daily actions that are difficult, demanding, or mundane. Focusing on the “why” behind accomplishing each task shifts the perspective away from the action itself and on to the meaningful result you will gain. The Golden Circle is made up of your what, how, and why. “The what is your job title, function, the products you sell, or the services you offer. The how is the actions that you take that set you apart from others. The why is the purpose, cause, or belief that inspires you” (p. 76). “Very few people care about what you do. And very few are genuinely interested in how you do it. So, once you have a clear understanding of your why, you can create a much more powerful connection with others. You can give them a belief to adopt” (p. 74).

Strategy 4: Define Your Circle of Competence.



“Each of us has built up useful knowledge on certain areas throughout our lives. Some things are understood by most people, while others require a lot more specialty to evaluate” (p. 79). Defining the boundaries of your circle of competence is more important than exploring the breadth of your knowledge. Leverage the aptitudes within your existing proficiencies and avoid competing outside of the boundaries of your circle. This allows you to define your individual fundamentals – the areas that you should focus on to optimize your time and effort.

Strategies 5 - 9: Mastering Minimum Daily Targets

Strategy 5: Measure Your Progress. “What gets measured gets improved. The simple act of paying attention to something will help you make connections you never did before. You’ll spot recurring obstacles and come up with solutions” (p. 86). Track daily habits on a chart by writing each habit at the top of the grid and listing the days of the month in the far-left column. Each day that you complete a habit, write an “x” in the correlating box. A minimum daily target is the least amount of effort you must exert each day in order to earn an “x” for a particular habit.




“What gets measured gets improved. The simple act of paying attention to something will help you make connections you never did before. You’ll spot recurring obstacles and come up with solutions.”




Strategy 6: Create a Winner Effect. “Success changes the chemistry of the brain. Each time you win, there’s an increase of testosterone and dopamine in your body. And those chemicals make you more confident, more aggressive, more focused, and smarter. Your mind and body essentially reshape to give you a biological advantage in the future” (p. 92). Increase your exposure to winning by using your minimum daily targets to set achievable everyday goals. These simple goals, or “tomato cans,” are easy to set up and the victorious feeling of accomplishment is nearly guaranteed (p. 93). By continuously cultivating the winning sensation, you develop momentum and increase the likelihood of future success with bigger goals.

Strategy 7: Reward Yourself. “Whenever we do something well, we usually don’t reward ourselves. Instead, we tell ourselves it wasn’t a big deal and that it isn’t worth boasting about. And that’s a big problem. Not only because we end up experiencing more negative feelings than positive ones but also because it ruins our chances to build confidence, motivation, and momentum” (p. 98). Create a self-reward program by designing a token economy with your minimum daily targets. Establish a list of gifts or prizes that support healthy habits. Reward good behavior by giving yourself a token every time you achieve your minimum daily target. Once you’ve collected enough tokens, you can trade them in for an item on your prize list.

Strategy 8: Use Commitment Devices. “If you’re struggling to stick to your goals, you’re not alone. It’s a problem people have had throughout recorded history. In fact, philosophers all the way back to Plato and Aristotle even created their own word for it. They called it “akrasia,” and it encompasses procrastination, lack of self-control, lack of follow-through, and any kind of addictive behavior” (p. 104). Commitment devices remove distractions by eliminating accessibility to temptations. A screen time limit that locks you out of social media apps is an example of a commitment device. Examine your list of minimum daily targets and apply commitment devices to avoid akrasia.



“Supercompensation – “The idea is that, since the human body is an adjustable organism, it will not only recover from the exercise – it will adapt to the new strain placed on it and get a little bit stronger than it was before.”



Strategy 9: Make Marginal Gains. Supercompensation – “The idea is that, since the human body is an adjustable organism, it will not only recover from the exercise – it will adapt to the new strain placed on it and get a little bit stronger than it was before” (p. 109). Supercompensation is only achieved when you increase your effort to a higher level than you are used to. When applied to building better habits, this concept means that consistently put in the same amount of effort into your habits and goals every day is not enough. Instead, you need to make marginal improvements by either adding small new habits or increasing the effort dedicated to existing habits. “These minimum daily targets are great tomato cans. They help you get started, build momentum, and quickly establish new habits.” (p. 111)

Strategies 10 -15: Managing Your Momentum, Surroundings, and Attitudes

Strategy 10: Manage Your Energy. Avoid decision fatigue by routinizing your day to decrease the number of unimportant decisions you have to make. Challenging activities should be scheduled when your energy is the highest. “Ask yourself when your energy tends to be at its highest and lowest. Then rearrange your daily activities accordingly” (p. 119).

Strategy 11: Protect your time. Time is your most precious resource, and you can’t afford to give it away absentmindedly. “Once you’ve determined what is important to you – your mission, your why, and your fundamentals – you need to ruthlessly cut out the distractions that are getting in their way. Instead of trying to get more done in less time, focus on only getting the right things done” (p. 122).

Strategy 12: Shape Your Environment. Self-discipline becomes easier when you create an atmosphere that makes desired habits easier to do and unwanted habits more difficult to accomplish. “We often assume that we do what we do because of who we are. But the truth is, a lot of what we do is a result of where we are” (p. 127).

Strategy 13: Surround Yourself with the Right People. We have a need for belonging that can influence our judgment and behavior. “Humans have a strong tendency to adopt the same goals and even the same feelings as those around them” (p. 134). “The people around you will inevitably ‘infect’ you with their beliefs, emotions, and goals. You can’t immunize yourself to it – but you can choose who you allow to infect you” (p. 135).

Strategy 14: Play Poorly Well. “What separates remarkably successful people is their ability to show up and do the work even when they’re uninspired, everything is going against them, and they keep getting stuck” (p. 140). Momentum is more important than results. If you need a jumpstart, focusing on your minimum daily targets will give you an easy win to propel you forward.

Strategy 15: Be Kind to Yourself. Practice self-compassion by creating a mantra that acknowledges the moment, attributes it to common humanity, and ends in a statement of self-kindness. “Whenever you feel the impulse to be self-critical, remember that stacking shame and guilt on top of what you consider a poor performance only makes it harder to bounce back. Being hard on yourself is neither healthy nor productive” (p. 143).

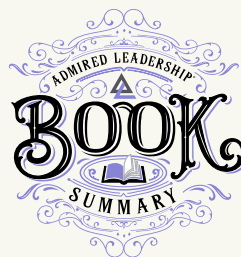
An Iterative Approach to Improving Habits and Applying Strategies

When things don’t go according to plan, it is easy to lose momentum, get discouraged, or even quit. “If you can relate to this frustrating cycle, the problem is not that you’re lazy or lack self-discipline. The problem is that you rely too much on the first version of your plan. You overestimate your ability to predict every obstacle that will show up in your way. As a result, each time you run into a setback, you’ll perceive it as a failure and get discouraged” (p. 149).

“Instead of thinking of your first plan as your definitive strategy, it becomes your first draft. You’ll assume that it’s going to have holes” (p. 149).

“Continuously refine your plan by revisiting and tweaking the habits and strategies in this book until they work for you. The only way to fail is to quit. So, refuse to do that” (p. 150).

Housel, M. (2023). **Same as Ever: A Guide to What Never Changes.** New York: Portfolio/Penguin.



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