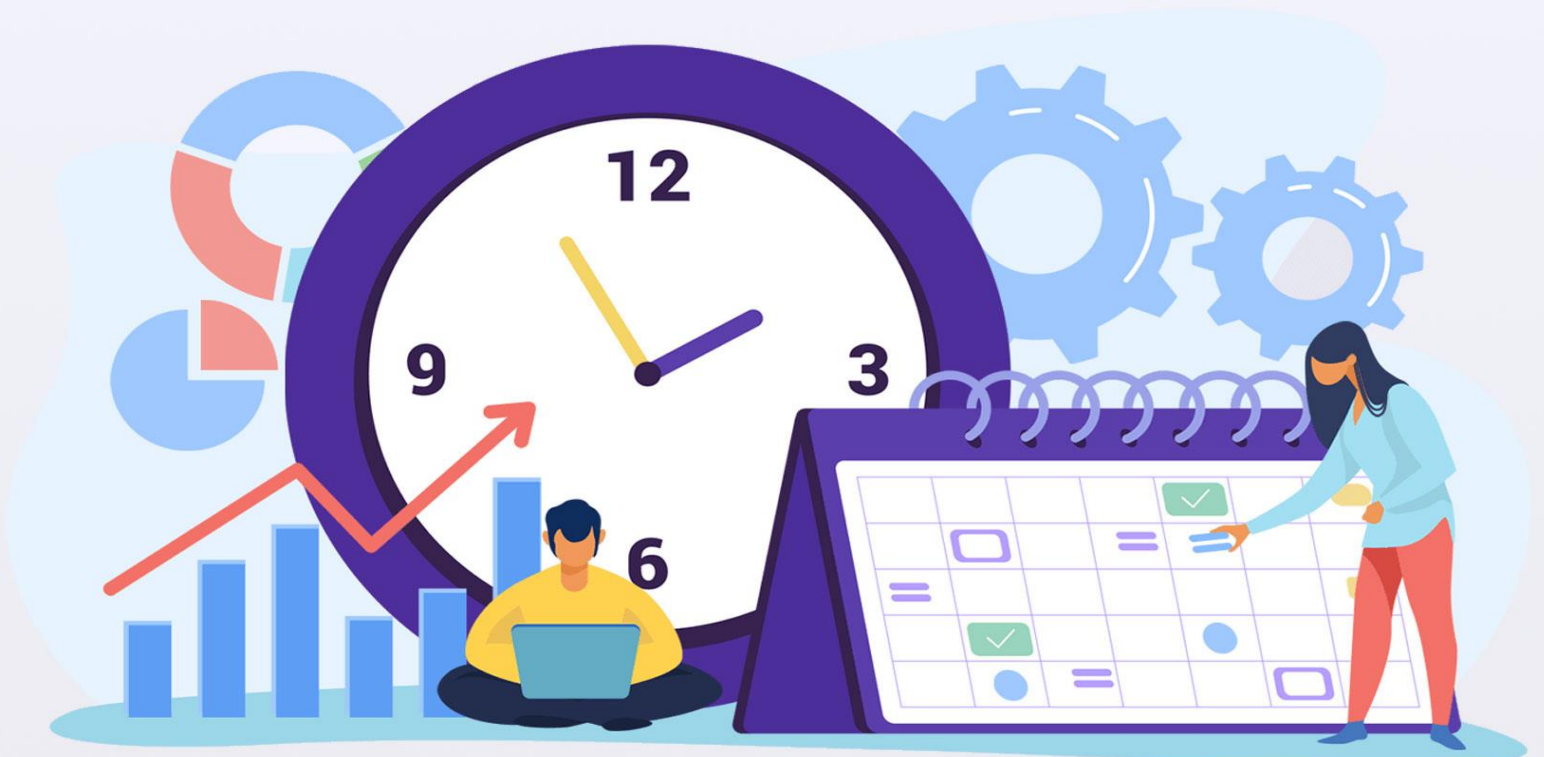


DISCIPLINE FROM DREAM TO REALITY

REWARD YOURSELF FOR GOOD DISCIPLINE



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I was helping my nephew with his Math homework one day when I noticed an interesting pattern in my behavior. I taught him the necessary concepts and then allowed him to work out some problems by himself. Now on assessing his answers, I found that I quickly skipped those he did well with no comment but stopped to comment on each of the ones he didn't. Even if he got eight out of ten problems correct, all I did was ask him why he got the two wrong. "Why didn't you just do the same thing you did on the eight?" I would enquire. This realization changed everything, it dawned on me how natural it is to focus on mistakes and make a big deal about them even when they are far outweighed by the items well done.

On that day I changed approach. I deliberately started to praise him for every correct answer and that with an enthusiastic tone and instantly noticed how he would light up when I did this. His performance also changed for better, he seemed to believe in himself better and the overall mood throughout the exercise became a pleasant one. He became happier, I was happier and the learning experience became more effective just by that shift in the way I commented on his work.

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Whether you are my nine-year-old nephew, a twenty-year-old college student, a thirty-five-year-old father, or a professional in your fifties; this rule applies. We all thrive from positive affirmation and shrivel up when negatively attacked. On a larger scale, I began to observe and notice that people are generally more interested in negative news than they are in the positive, this is why news channels are full of disasters and the very rare occurrences of bad luck and unfortunate events. If not careful the news can become a source of depression in your life. You can be made to totally distrust human beings and expect worse case scenarios to happen in your life because you keep seeing reports about them every day.

A strange case about a teenage brother who abused his sisters until one of them committed suicide was the word on the street for a long time in my city and people kept replaying the painful emotions around it. So much anxiety arose because of it and caused people to rethink the trust they had for their loved ones. A rare story about a young girl making an outstanding invention is talked about by only a handful of people interested in technological advancements. We are somehow wired that way and so it takes consciously teaching the mind to focus on the good and not always the bad for you to become a better person.

Even on the job, most feedback is negative. Some people have never been reinforced for doing exceptional work but are ever been scolded for the errors they make. This can have the disastrous effect of causing them to give up on trying to be better. Relationships collapse because of this same problem; when partners complain of not being appreciated it usually is because they are negatively criticized all the time they miss it but rarely praised for doing well.

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As a result of all this negativity, you may find that even in your efforts to become a better person you sometimes stress yourself out by focusing always on your shortcomings instead of your successes. After deciding that you want to keep fit, you become disappointed with yourself for skipping one gym session and forget the ten successful ones you attended. Maybe it's because on the good ten days you didn't celebrate yourself. You told yourself that it was nothing out of the ordinary and by saying this, you killed your zeal for the habit. In the same manner that you sulk all day about your disturbed routine, you should have smiled all day long when you did well.

Celebrate your wins and watch as your energy levels rise to cause you to win some more. Maybe you realized that you watch too much television and wanted to discipline yourself by channeling all that time into some fruitful activity. It may help you to set daily targets and once you reach them, reward yourself with thirty minutes or an hour of relaxation while you watch your favorite show. Most people don't do it this way, they take extreme measures of totally banning themselves from watching the TV. They succeed for a few days, falter one day, and are greatly disappointed in themselves. The whole process starts again on a later day.

It is good to have strong fitness and health goals, cut down on fats, and too much junk foods but life can get very gloomy if this is taken to extreme levels. If however there is a nice treat to look forward to at the end of the week (should you stick to your healthy diet of choice throughout the week) you would be encouraged to carry on day after day.

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By all means, pursue self-discipline but see to it that you come from a positive stand. Make sure you are able to measure your success so that you can reward yourself accordingly. Affirm and reaffirm yourself, smile, and clap hands for yourself and maintain a joyous atmosphere through it all.