

7-day impulse control and self-discipline method OP 10 minutes ago No.44873326

Don't skip and read this shit if you're interested in impulse control:

So, recently I experienced a very drastic transformation, going from a lazy guy who couldn't start lifting, wouldn't eat right, couldn't concentrate when I studied, had no impulse control and procrastinated everything to a very disciplined person that is currently working on improving myself in all areas, with a degree of self-control that I could have never imagined.

Because I'm not a person of influence and I have nowhere to share the method I used, I'll just make a somewhat lengthy post about it here, because I know many on /fit/ struggle with those things, and then I'll move on. If it helps someone liked it helped me, good.

Let's start.

>the principles and theory of it

I'm not going to post a bunch of scientific articles here, because none of you cunts read them when I do, and I don't want this post to be tl;dr shit. All you have to know is that, in simplistic terms, every habit you have is related to the reward system of your brain, a system that releases neurotransmitters according to the cues you give it. The process is complex, not entirely clear and way beyond my grasp, but I do enjoy reading studies related to this, because, well, that's the sort of thing you do when you're a procrastinator like I was.

For our purposes here, all we have to know is that countless different studies have linked the reward circuitry of the brain to virtually every impulse you can imagine: fear, anxiety, laziness, food addiction, social necessities, social detachment, sadness, intrusive thoughts, etc. Your inability to control any type of impulsive has its roots in the neurochemistry of this wide and complex system.

To give you an example, studies have shown that both obese people and drug addicts have DA D2 receptors in certain brain areas different to those of regular people, and that similar areas receive activation when your brain receives the feedback of drug cues or food cues.

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Another example, people who experienced something called "Social Defeat", particularly in formative years, have shown changes in these same receptors and higher neurological response to social stress.

Reading these studies, even as a layman, made me realise the obvious: your brain is wired to create patterns and loops, and it physiologically modifies itself to adapt to these patterns, allocating neurotransmitters to those ends. When people (or rats in the experiment, I forgot) experienced social defeat and exclusion repeatedly, their reward system were wired in a way that they did not receive a positive impulse for social stimulus like normal people did, and it was wired to perceive people as a threat. Hence why the bullied kid grew up to become the quiet guy who is terrified of people. It's not just psychological conditioning, it's neurochemistry.

I saw studies making similar conclusions with fucking EVERYTHING. Food, music, people, traumas, videogame, porn, everything. Once your brain is wired to respond to certain cues a certain way, it's over, it becomes design. This is why it's hard to quit bad things and start good ones, and why people go their entire lives planning to change habits and never doing it. Our neurochemistry is limited and already allocated, and striving for consistency.

But what studies focused on overcoming addiction, in rehabilitation and in re-socialization show again and again is that once your brain no longer receives a certain cue, it will stop allocating those neurotransmitters for that end. And that once your brain picks up on a different stimulus from an old cue (like positive experience from a source that was deemed negative), it is completely modified to now have different responses. For example, even the mice that went through "social defeat" lost most of the symptoms once they were re-introduced to a new house with friendly mice. The reason for that was the reward system re-shaping itself according to new stimuli.

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Being the non-scientist that I am, I stretched this into a conclusion that now probably seems somewhat obvious: Your brain has been wired a certain way given the feedback and cues it received throughout your entire life, and that's where impulses and "old habits" come from, but it can be reseted. The purpose of this method is to understand the value of this reset, and to achieve it.

>the practice

And here's how we do it. Your brain has been conditioned to respond to certain cues, so you'll deprive it from them. You'll no longer give it the feedback it gets from "anything" you enjoy, like a good videogame, good music, from going online, from tasty foods, and even from the nice people you love. You're wasting precious and limited neurotransmitters here, creating an addictive pattern towards wasteful ends. And even if the activity itself is not particularly damaging and it's something you'd like to continue doing later, such as music, you should cut it with the rest for now, because we're trying to get rid of everything that feels pleasant. The purpose is to send your brain into a "adapt or perish" mode, as if you were suddenly deprived of all the means to give it the cues it is waiting for, and that it has to look for new sources. You'll pull the plug off so it can be re-connected to new things.

Make no mistake: The reason it has learned to respond positively to such cues is a flaw in itself, a legacy of our primitive state. We respond positively to food that is crap and makes us fat because our brains evolved in a context of scarcity, so it learned to think that accumulating fat is a good strategy for survival. Other strategies include the desire to mate, to be part of a group, to improve ourselves in supposedly vital tasks through repetition, to accumulate.

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But it can't tell context apart or a good source from a bad one, so it now thinks that the endless cycle of porn, junk food, media consumption, internet boards, idleness, videogames and online stalking that some of us are in fit the purpose of evolutionary needs. Your brain only cares about abundance, and in civilized society the bad (and often illusory) source is always easier to find.

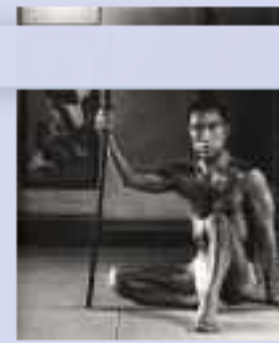
So you're going to send the signal that these sources have been depleted and we must adapt. You'll cut those pleasant hobbies, stock many books, make a strict meal plan for the next days that consists of healthy shit (more details later), you'll empty your room of most things that make it feel "yours" like posters, computers, personal objects, anything that is aesthetically pleasing to you (this post will get way too long if I get into this, but trust me, this is super fucking important). You will not use a phone, no internet, no masturbation, no regular contact with people you like, no music you enjoy (more important than you think), no TV, no watching the news. Spend most of the day on your bed. If you have to go to work or school, leave your house late and get home early. If you have any reading to do buy it, print it, send it to an e-reader (not a tablet), it will be your main activity.

Your only hobbies will be lifting and reading, maybe meditating, and trust me you'll love doing them even if you hate it now. You're going to keep this up for 7 days.

Also very important: avoid idleness, walking around doing nothing, daydreaming, avoid having imaginary conversations, avoid thinking about the past or people you know. Don't lose yourself in thought, maladaptive daydreaming show that those things can become the "bad, abundant source" on their own.

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The only thing I can tell is you is that I did this for 7 days, and I chose this number because it kept popping up in the studies. Often when a study tried to get a poor rat who had flawed dopaminergic reward circuits for whatever reason into a new set of circumstances, the time before re-adaptation became evident was around a week. Maybe it's just coincidence, sure, but anyway I think a week seems like enough time to turn you into an empty blank without hindering your life. If you think your case is severe, I recommend a longer period, like 2 or 3 weeks.

>what do I eat?

In some studies, dietary protein led to an increase in striatal dopamine levels, while dietary fats had the opposite effect. One study had rats on a low-protein, high carb diet, which led to decrease in density of D2 dopamine receptor in the striatum and the mesolimbic regions. This seems to be a trend, and we want to keep that reward system sharp for its comeback, so I'd recommend a diet high in protein. My cut was 45% protein, 30% carb, 25% fats, and I made sure most of the fats were coming from nuts and coconut oil. Again, this doesn't have to be a great diet because you'll only keep it for a week. Avoid junk food completely. Also, due to scarcity of good studies linking diet with dopaminergic circuitry, I chose to take some supplements like multivitamins and omega 3, and that I had a good amount of veggies in my diet.

>what do I do after that?

Keep a notebook and a pen around in those days. Use it as a diary if you want, but most importantly, use it to sort out your priorities, write what habits and projects you want to have after, and what habits you want to avoid. Once you're done with the 7 days, re-introduce the positive habits first. Don't try to do it before the 7 days period, even if it's something positive.

Anonymous

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If your first days after this de-programming period is something like your "ideal" day, your brain will learn to take those actions as cues for its reward system. Eat well, exercise, talk to people, be productive, read, organize your space. You will feel no impulse at all to do any of the bad habits, so you're free to choose now: you can cut them forever, wait a few days to re-introduce them with less intensity. If you still feel urges too strong, add a few more days of abstentionism.

And that's it.

I know this post was long and might as well die with no replies, but I had to write it, because I felt somewhat guilty not sharing this method that has improved my life so bad. The principle is simple and the science that lead me to it is well-known, but for some reason few people have discussed a drastic proposal like that. Well I, at least, haven't seen any. I spent so many years trying different things and nothing worked, that to have it all gone away in a week seemed surreal at first. I avoided people my whole life, now I'm driven towards them. I avoided healthy food and workout, now that's what I crave after a while. I couldn't focus on anything, now I can sit and study for hours and hours with complete focus. I wasted time improving online personas and gaming avatars, now I've channeled this drive towards myself. As someone who was always depressed and unmotivated, this feels like a superpower. Good luck if you try it.