

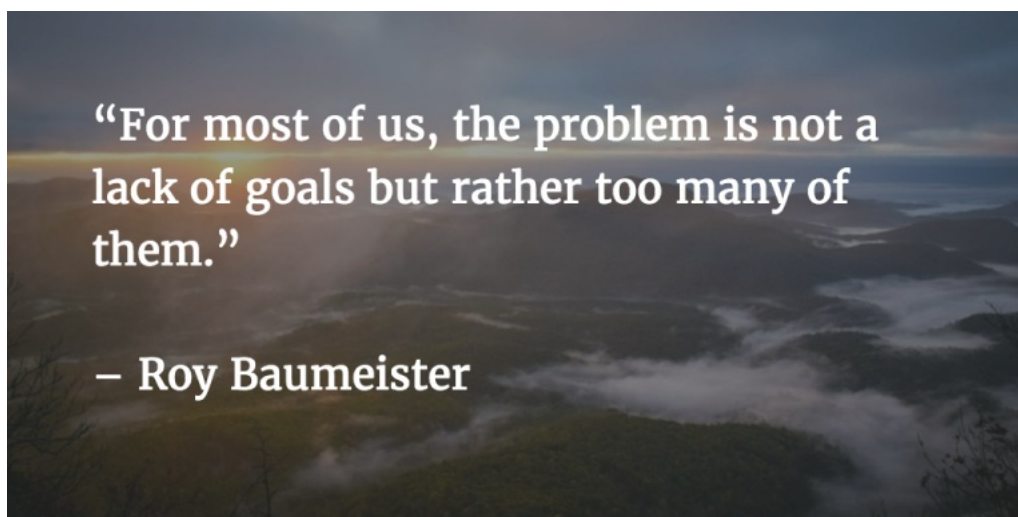
Willpower Summary

 fourminutebooks.com/willpower-summary

1-Sentence-Summary: *Willpower is a blend of practical tips and the latest scientific research on self-control, explaining how willpower works, what you can do to improve it, how to optimize it and which steps to take when it fails you.*

Read in: 4 minutes

Favorite quote from the author:



Roy Baumeister is the Michael Jordan of *Willpower* research. He's the man who coined the term ego depletion, which most willpower researchers draw on today, when they talk about a lack of it.

Over the past decades, he built a massive catalogue of studies and research on willpower, following the original Marshmallow experiment by Walter Mischel. The results are compiled in this book.

After having turned his ideas into a framework for building willpower every single day, I'm proud to give Blinkist's summary a go.

Here are 3 crucial lessons about willpower to get you started on improving it:

1. Your willpower works like a muscle – if you exercise it too much, it gets worn out.
2. Willpower begets willpower, so you can train it by using it.
3. Set compatible and clear goals, but leave leeway for your willpower.

Ready to build that self-control? Here we go!

Lesson 1: Your willpower works like a muscle – if you exercise it too much, it gets worn out.

My friend Colin told me that this is one of the most important lessons about willpower, so it gets the spotlight here, after falling a little behind when I did *The Willpower Instinct*.

If you've ever run a long distance and your legs felt wobbly, so all you wanted to do was sit down, you know how willpower works.

The more you exercise it without taking breaks, the less you'll have for your next decision.

Your daily willpower supply is limited and once you've used all of your good decisions, you're done for the day.

Baumeister tested this with a study, where all participants were exposed to the tempting smell of freshly baked chocolate cookies, some of which got to actually eat them, while others had to eat radishes (talk about a disappointment).

In the subsequent exercises, where they had to solve geometry puzzles, **radish eaters quit 12 minutes earlier on average.**

They had spent so much willpower fighting against that cookie smell, that they just couldn't exercise as much self-control later on.

The fact that willpower and decision-making are intertwined can often be seen when politician's or historically important people make poor choices in their personal lives, succumbing to sexual escapades and making suspicious deals with lobbyists.

Lesson 2: The more willpower you develop, the faster you'll build it, so train it by using it.

So what can you do to not pull a Lewinsky when you make the office?

Build some self-control first of course!

The way you do it is simple: use it.

Using willpower to make positive changes in your life and exert self-control on a consistent basis in small ways will help you strengthen it through all areas of your life.

That's because the speed with which your available willpower for the day declines decreases as you exercise it more.

For example, in a study where participants stuck to a two week exercise program, they noticed that after the two weeks they were also less likely to make bad food choices or postpone chores at home.

The lab test results confirmed it: their willpower had increased.

That's great, because it means sticking to a budget that you give yourself might help you quit smoking, as it builds the self-control you need to resist cigarettes!

Lesson 3: Set compatible and clear goals, but leave some flexibility for willpower fatigue.

How do you start making self-control a regularly exercised habit?

Roy Baumeister suggests you **set goals, which are compatible**.

For example having more business meetings over lunch and losing weight might not be a good fit, one makes the other harder to pull off.

But setting a budget to quit drinking would work well, because not buying alcohol saves you money and helps you reach your other goal as well.

Conflicting goals cause you stress and unhappiness, and thus make it less likely for you to reach them, because you spend more time worrying about how you can make them work, instead of working to get them.

Similarly, **your goals should be clear, but not overly specific**.

When students were forced to meticulously plan their day, their grades ended up being less good than when they set weekly and monthly goals, and they gave up planning altogether earlier than their peers.

Planning your day down to the last minute makes you feel forced into a structure that, when it inevitably breaks (because it's inflexible), you feel depressed and demoralized.

Weekly and monthly planning allows more room for adjustments and is thus more effective.

Willpower Review

If you want to start learning about the habit or what Baumeister calls the biggest human strength, *Willpower* is the book to read. The *Willpower Instinct* is a great follow-up.

This covers the basics of what willpower is, how it works and of course what you can do to improve and how to handle yourself when it fails you (which it will).

100% research-backed but doesn't feel like a drag, as New York Times writer John Tierney backs up Baumeister in this project.

The summary is structured well and reads like a breeze, with plenty of willpower tips you can apply today, plus one from me!

If you're looking for an actionable guide to implement all of this, see my post about willpower here.

[Read full summary on Blinkist](#)

[Get the book on Amazon](#)

[Learn more about the author](#)

What else can you learn from the blinks?

- What happens when you pay attention to your posture for two weeks
- Which nutritional element fills up your willpower
- How to prep your environment to take fewer willpower hits
- Why posting your weight loss results on Facebook will make you more likely to hit your target weight
- How religion is similar to peer pressure
- What parents should do instead of boosting their kids' self-esteem
- The things even willpower cannot solve

Who would I recommend the Willpower summary to?

The 23 year old, who struggles with weight loss, and hasn't gotten the reward-first model to work for herself yet, the 38 year old decision maker, who's faced with tough calls to make every day, and anyone who ever planned too many things for the day .