# Chapter 2: Staying Hungry

What drives you to follow through and finish what you start? How can you remain motivated?

Let’s consider a woman named Sally. Sally is an idealist so she started a charity to benefit impoverished people. What she did not anticipate was the influx of challenges that came along with her endeavor. She did not realize that working in a nonprofit setting still counts as business and that her work would involve far more business than just helping people.

Whenever she encountered a challenge in procuring funding, competing with other charities for donations and grants, and creating marketing to incite interest in her cause, she felt overwhelmed. “Why is it so hard to get people to care about other people!?” she asked herself.

Pretty soon, Sally became completely disinterested in her work—it just carried with it too many negative feelings and associations. She hated writing grant letters and attending charity events. It took only a few months for her to give up on a cause that she cared deeply about. Other people wondered why she stopped working for something that meant so much to her.

A key to Sally’s failure was her inability to anticipate and plan for negative aspects of her foundation. She imagined doing more to help people and working less to procure funding. Because she relied solely on her goals to give her the motivation to follow through, she did not give herself anything to actually help her defeat the negative aspects of the business side of her foundation.

The true problem that Sally had, however, was failing to find a true source of motivation. She needed to have found a true source of motivation to help carry through the discouraging effects of the negatives. By creating a balance between her dream, the positives, and the negatives, the negatives would have been acceptable obstacles in pursuit of her grand goal. She could have also kept her motivation alive by reminding herself of why she undertook this project in the first place and how each thing she did, even the tasks she hated, led to the fulfillment of her idealistic dream.

Sally is a great example of how you can’t just count on your passion for something to lead you to follow through.

Sometimes we just don’t care about what we are doing, and thus we don’t follow through. We lose steam because of disinterest. That’s understandable. But even caring about something is not always the key to following through. Sometimes, even for things we care about, we still can’t follow through because we lack a drive to push us forward.

This lack of drive is caused by a massive disconnect between three important aspects: (1) what the things we care about represent, (2) the positive benefits we receive from our actions, and (3) the negative consequences we can avoid related to our causes. When we lose steam, we aren’t tied closely enough to any of those aspects, which come together to create *motivation*.

What is motivation? Things that really matter to you and are near and dear to your heart. Things that make you actually want to work toward your goal. Things that not only drive you, but also discourage you from giving up. On top of that, you have to minimize negative consequences involved with your work and simultaneously maximize the positive benefits that you receive.

There are many ways to define the concept of motivation, but an effective framework to view them through is *external* and *internal* motivations.

# External Motivators

External motivators entail using sources besides yourself as motivation to do something. They are other people or circumstances that drive you to action. You

are doing something to avoid a negative circumstance or earn a positive circumstance from people and things outside of you.

More typically, external motivators are about avoiding negative consequences. For example, you might be trying to avoid disappointing your family by failing, so you are determined to succeed. You might be afraid of getting fired, so you act with aplomb. A majority of these motivators are punishments or negative consequences that you are desperate to avoid. The only positive external motivation is self-bribery.

Still, you can get a lot of mileage out of external motivators if you make them work to your advantage. Driving yourself to avoid a negative consequence can serve as an excellent push to do something. No one wants to suffer. If you know that not following through will result in some sort of suffering, you will do anything to avoid that negative consequence. Therefore, you feel as if you have no choice but to follow through.

***Accountability partners***. Accountability partners are people who hold you accountable. This is a person that you commit to something with. This person lets you know when you need to do things, and he or she chides you when you want to give up. Then he or she gets on your case for not following through.

Since you want to avoid disappointing this person, you are more likely to act. You rely on this person to give you the external motivation to avoid shame so you become accountable for your actions and your goal to avoid his or her negative feedback. You may also become accountable in order to avoid letting this person down, as he or she counts on you to complete the goal with him or her.

***Accountability group***. An accountability group can be more effective than a single partner. By having multiple people holding you accountable, you face the possibility of exponential shame—the shame and disappointment of multiple people building on top of each other is a horrible feeling that you will want to avoid. Plus, you will still have people to hold you accountable should one person drop out of the race. It can be hard to rely on a single partner’s commitment, but a group is much steadier in its pressure. Having more people to answer to and to guide you can help you stay on track to avoid shame.

***Putting money down***. The risk of losing money is another motivator that you can use to your advantage. A good example of this is an expensive gym membership fee that makes you want to go to the gym more often. You don’t want to waste money, so you go to the gym just to make that fee you paid worthwhile.

Another example is paying a lot of money for a course. You want to finish the course because you paid so much for it and you consider it a shame to just waste that fee. By investing in something monetarily upfront and even slightly before you feel ready, you’ll be pushed to follow through to avoid wasting and losing money. The primary operator here is guilt for spending money on something that you never used or did.

You can take monetary investment motivators to the next level by hiring a coach or trainer of some type. This is the next level because paying someone money to hold you accountable combines both monetary investments and accountability partners. Now you have two reasons not to quit or back out of your commitment. You don’t want to waste money or hear about how you have failed from a disappointed accountability partner.

Finally, you can give someone money and then tell them not to give it to you until you complete something. When you give a friend $500 and instruct them not to return it to you until you complete your tasks, you’ll quickly discover just how much your work ethic is worth to you. If $500 is not enough, up the ante next time to make it truly something you’ll work toward.

***Self-bribery***. A final external motivator is to bribe yourself. This is where you promise yourself a reward if you follow through. Therefore, you let that reward drive you and surmount your difficulties. For example, you might know that you can take your dream beach vacation if you save your money wisely and earn enough to have spare. Keeping the emotions of the beach vacation can be powerful reminders every time you want to spend your money.

External motivations are mostly about avoiding pain, so figure out what pains you are avoiding or can create for yourself. Then let your urge to avoid those pains drive you. Avoiding negative social emotions works well because no one wants to feel shame, guilt, or rejection. Use your fear of negative social emotions

to carry you through a project or commitment to the very end.

# Internal Motivators

Internal motivators are about what you *want*, as opposed to avoiding a negative consequence or punishment.

If you are motivated by avoiding a negative consequence, but you realize at some point that maybe negative consequence won’t actually kill you so you can deal with it, there goes your motivation—you’ll simply deal with the consequences sometimes.

In some cases, relying on external motivators and fear does not work as well as going after the things you love and want. Therefore, internal motivators are often better sources of motivation than external ones. We can view it thusly: if you are driven by fear or face a substantial negative consequence, external motivation is ideal, while internal motivation is more suitable if you know what you want and there is little to fear.

Internal motivators are your “why” for taking action and putting in effort. Think of a donkey walking forward to reach the carrot. Internal motivators are the carrot, while external motivators are the stick. External motivators drive you forward out of fear of something unpleasant, while internal motivators make you feel that reaching your goal is going to give you a big reward and lots of pleasant benefits.

The more internal motivations you can articulate, the more motivated you will be to follow through and finish. Ask the following questions to determine how you will benefit, then let your desire for those benefits drive you forward. Internal motivations tend to be more uniform because they speak to people’s universal desires and needs.

*What are you getting out of this*? Maybe you are getting money or a sense of happiness and fulfillment in life. You are getting closer to a goal, which can mean a lot in terms of benefits.

*How will your life change or benefit*? You may be able to get a better home or a

nicer car if you earn more money. Or you may be able to recover from depression and ultimate sadness by attaining a higher sense of fulfillment.

*How will your family benefit*? Your family means a lot to you, so let them motivate you. Imagine the smiles on their faces as you give them a better life and make them proud. Imagine getting your kids better school clothes, living in a safer neighborhood, and being able to afford private school and college.

*What impact will you have on others*? Perhaps you will become a role model for some people, which in turn will make you feel important and good about yourself. Perhaps you can donate to charity or gift needy people with clothes and shoes come winter. Perhaps you can donate money to erect new structures in your community that will be named after you.

*What positive emotions will you get*? Consider the happiness, pride, and self- esteem you will reap from your goal’s ultimate completion. After all, this may be the root of all philanthropic efforts.

*How will your actions lead to your long-term and short-term goals*? Are you accomplishing steps toward your goals? Think of the things you must do to finish a novel, for example, such as research and actual word count. Then think of the steps you take each day toward those goals.

Using internal motivators in your daily life can really help you follow through with every task you have to complete. Even when the going gets tough and you contemplate giving up, finishing what you start is way easier when you are focused on how your world will benefit. So whenever you have to do something that you hate, think of how it will bring you closer to your goals. Or whenever you find yourself bored or tired while working on your goals, consider how great you will feel when you finish. Every day, review your goals and why you want to complete them. Then let that fill you with motivation to drive you forward toward project completion.

Answer the above questions and consider writing them down somewhere. Review the answers periodically to remind yourself why you want to change or improve your status quo.

# Understand Opportunity Cost

Following through and finishing what you start will always call for sacrifice.

You have to spend money, expend effort, and give up time that you could use for doing things you love in order to commit to things you have to complete. Since by definition no one likes sacrifice, sometimes the looming shadow of a sacrifice will overshadow your goals—unless you create motivators powerful enough to overpower your sense of sacrifice and make each sacrifice seem worthwhile.

Everything in life is an *opportunity cost*, which means that everything you do will call for something from you. Every act takes away time or effort that could be committed to something else. Learning to play the guitar means solitary hours of drilling scales, chords, and dealing with painful calluses on your fingers. Going to college entails getting up early and heading to a boring lecture and spending hours doing homework. Are you ready to make the trade-off?

If the opportunity cost is too expensive for you to want to pay it, then you will not follow through. Therefore, you must find a motivator that drives you to accept the opportunity cost. If you don’t feel motivated enough to pay that cost, then you are guaranteed to lose steam and give up.

Therefore, there are two ways to solve this problem. The first is that your motivation must be even stronger and more salient in order to make you ignore these opportunity costs and the things you are missing out on. The motivation must mean more to you than the things you sacrifice to make you feel that this is all worth it.

The second solution is to make your sacrifices smaller. This means that there is less pain associated with getting things done. In both cases, the cost-benefit analysis must be significantly weighed in favor of the benefit—but the first method manipulates the benefit, while the second method manipulates the cost.

An example of this is giving give up your weekly Friday night out with friends to go to a late-night history class. This class is essential to getting the degree you need to break into your dream career. But you sure do love your night out with friends. To use the first solution, your desire to get into this career and better

your life and feel proud of yourself must outweigh how much you love Friday nights out. You must keep in mind that your life will drastically change for the better if you can resist a few Friday nights. Otherwise, you will find the conflict too great to overcome and you will quit the class in favor of your friends.

Let’s apply the second solution for the same results. Instead of just giving up on your Friday night out, schedule a different night or drum up the energy to go out after class and spend just a little less time with your friends every Friday night. You’re turning a full sacrifice into a compromised sacrifice. The end result is a compromise that makes it possible to keep doing what you want while also working on your goals.

When faced with opportunity cost and potential sacrifice, keep in mind that your life can’t continue 100% as you want it to—but if you focus on increasing the benefit or minimizing the sacrifice, you can continue progress toward your goals while staying motivated and not listless.

# Keep Your Motivation on Your Mind

Internal and external motivators are great ways to fuel the productivity and commitment required for following through. But they won’t do anything for you if they are out of sight and out of mind.

According to *Psychological Science,* people are more inclined to follow through if they are exposed to stimuli that remind them of their motivators. Seeing or hearing their motivators can drive them to maintain motivation. In other words, sometimes the simplest solutions work best: constant reminders will keep you on track because our minds can only fixate on so many things.

Additionally, Katherine Milkman of the University of Pennsylvania developed the hypothesis that reminders through association could aid people in remembering goals and following through with them.

To confirm this hypothesis, she conducted a study whose participants were asked to complete an hour-long computer task. They were promised compensation as well as a dollar donated to the local food bank. They were asked to make sure their donations were made by picking up paperclips when they got their compensation. The control group was told this and then thanked for their time. The test group was told that the paper clips would be waiting by an elephant

statue.

It turned out that 74% of the group told about the elephant statue remembered to get their paper clips at the end of the study. Only 42% of the members of the other group remembered to do this. Having the visual cue of the elephant statue actually made it easier for students to remember to complete the simple task. When students saw the unusual statue, it sparked their memories far more than ordinary-looking notes.

On top of that, Rogers and Milkman discovered that having very noticeable cues worked better than cues that did not stand out. For example, a written reminder did not remind study participants as well as a visual cue such as one of the aliens from *Toy Story.*

Therefore, the best way to make motivators work for you is to expose yourself to them often. You can use cues to help prompt you to keep your motivation in mind and thus to follow through. However, these cues also need to stand out to you.

For instance, use loud, vivid images that you can’t ignore, or employ other senses and include sounds, textures, and scents. Include a picture on your desk of your child to remind you to keep working toward your dream for a better financial future for your family—but make the picture frame smell of your child’s shampoo or your spouse’s perfume or cologne. To emphasize, we aren’t just talking about visual aids of putting Post-its everywhere—the cues we can use can be spread across our five senses in imaginative and creative ways.

However, be sure to move and change these cues around every few days so that you do not become too accustomed to them and start to ignore them as part of the background noise of your life.

Finally, you can also write your motivators down every few days with different phrasing. Again, be sure to change them up to avoid getting too used to them. The act of creating the cue each repeatedly helps to keep the motivation firm and fresh in your mind.

Takeaways:

 How do we stay hungry and motivated? By delving deep and really asking what internal and external motivators you have at your disposal

—a task that is rarely performed.

 External motivators are when we leverage other people, places, and

things to push us into action. For the most part, these are when we want to avoid negative consequences involving other people, places, and things. These methods include accountability partners and groups, putting money down upfront, and self-bribery.

 Internal motivators are when we look at how we stand to benefit and improve our lives. These are universal needs, drives, and desires that are easy to lose track of. The easy way to find these is to answer a set of questions that directly asks things such as *how am I going to benefit from this* and *how does my life stand to improve from this*? It’s only through answering these questions that you realize what you are neglecting.

 Anything we want to accomplish has an associated opportunity cost. We must sacrifice, even if we are sacrificing our ability to lie on the couch and watch television. We can deal with this mental obstacle by playing with the cost-benefit ratio so the cost is minimized or the benefit is maximized.

 Motivation has been shown to work best when we are reminded of it— otherwise, out of sight, out of mind. Thus, you should have cues you’re your motivations all around you—but make sure to keep them distinct and memorable, use all five senses (even taste), and make sure to change and switch them periodically to avoid growing used to them and forgetting them.

# Chapter 3: Create a Manifesto

You will face forks in the road where you must deliberate between following through or giving up. Instead of having to make the hard decision and reach deep into your willpower toolbag every single time, having rules for yourself can help you decide which direction to take whenever you reach the fork.

We’ve been told since we were young that we have to follow rules. Well, this time we can choose our own rules that will ultimately help us accomplish exactly what we want.

Rules can generally be called *mental models*, which can be critical to follow- through. This is because they create a set way that you have to make every decision, no exceptions. With your decisions already made for you by your rules, you thus make decisions automatically and you no longer have room to make the wrong decision based on waning willpower and self-discipline, which is to give up.

Rules hold you accountable so that you are not winging it every day but instead are guided. Use your rules to guide your worldview and your daily actions. Let them make every decision for you.

A good example of a rule is to always complete two tasks on your to-do list for your goal every day. It’s simply unacceptable to not do this—you have to complete the steps no matter what. As a result, you’ll find that you make progress toward your goal, even when you don’t want to. The choice was out of your hands. Deciding to work each day is not your decision to make; it has

already been made for you by your rule, and thus you have no choice but to do it.

Consider an example of when John, a writer, doesn’t use the rule of always completing two steps on his to-do list.

In the morning, he is excited and thinks, “After work, I will go home and start writing my novel! I will write two chapters.” Then he goes to work and grows fatigued and loses his inspiration slowly but surely throughout the day. By the time he gets home, all he wants to do is watch *Gossip Girl*. So since he does not have this rule in place, he fails to write. He has made zero progress and is far from his goal. The sense of guilt that plagues him is horrible. As he goes to bed, he vows to himself that he will make up for the lost progress by writing four chapters tomorrow.

What do you think will happen then? He comes home tired and defeated again. He lets the fact that work drains him become his excuse for not writing. Moreover, since he faces the monumental task of writing four chapters today, it feels impossible to start on. If he didn’t have energy for two chapters the night before, he certainly won’t have the energy for four chapters tonight. He gets overwhelmed and doesn’t write at all. It seems as if he will never finish this novel because he always finds some excuse to let himself off of the hook from actually writing.

He gave himself too much choice and leeway and thus allowed self-sabotage all too easily.

Now let’s consider if John applied the rule every day, which is black and white and doesn’t care about fatigue. No matter how tired and uninspired he feels, he knows that he has to write two chapters a night after work, no exceptions and no excuses. So when he gets home, he looks at his computer and he feels tempted to just go watch TV and conserve his energy by being lazy. But because he follows a rule in his life, he can’t break it and so he has to write. In fact, he plans for it all day because he knows it’s coming. He sits down and tackles the two chapters and goes to bed exhausted but contented and proud of himself. He has made significant progress on his novel. Pretty soon, he is done with his novel and the feeling of accomplishment is worth the energy he had to spend on the novel

when he was drained after work.

Rules help you follow through because they limit your vision. When you are robbed of your decision-making power—the same power that leads you to fiddle with social media when important tasks need to be done—then your hands are tied and following through is the only choice you have.

This chapter is about creating a set of rules, collectively a *manifesto*, for you to follow every time you come across a fork in the road. They push and guide you into the right direction and avoid depleting the willpower you do have. Here are a few ideas for you.

# Rule 1: Evaluate Yourself

Rule 1 is to ask yourself, “If not for laziness or fear, would I be giving up?” This makes it very clear to yourself that you are not acting out of a lack of ability or talent, but rather you are just taking the easy way out. Is that what you want to admit to yourself? When you face the fact that you are being lazy or fearful head-on, it makes you not want to be that way anymore. It’s the kick in the butt that forces you to call yourself lazy/fearful and then drives you to take action.

Realizing that only fear or laziness stands in your way helps you realize how silly that is so you get over it. So before you give up, make it a rule that you always ask yourself if it is laziness or fear that is holding you back from action.

Let’s say that you have a goal to make a certain amount of money by delivering so many projects to your clients in a month. But the work is hard and you find yourself losing motivation. You want to stop working and take several days off. Ask yourself, “Am I just being lazy?” That kicks your butt into gear and you take action. You do your work and you feel better about yourself knowing that you are doing the best you can.

# Rule 2: Three Tasks Maximum

Rule 2 is to focus on three things a day *maximum*. Only. Tops. Being overwhelmed or disorganized can kill your ability to get things done. Sometimes we can’t follow through on what we want because we don’t plan smartly. We

give ourselves too much to do and we become overwhelmed. But using this rule enables you to plan against that problem by only allowing yourself to focus on three things a day maximum. Plan how to reduce your focus to only three things by deciding on what they are going to be the night before. Prepare to focus only on those things so that you can plan logically and not react emotionally.

One setback you’ll face when you attempt to limit yourself to three main tasks a day is differentiation. Specifically, you will need to learn to differentiate between *important* things and *urgent* things. Important things must be done and should make it to your top three, while urgent things are not necessary.

Urgent things will seem important and will cause you stress, but they may not actually be important or take priority. An urgent thing might be making time for a harried client who is rushing you. Meanwhile, getting a project to a client before the deadline is an example of an important task. Everything on your agenda will appear important *and* urgent so you must determine which is which and plan accordingly.

Similarly, differentiate between useless motion that looks busy but gets nothing done and actual action, which is movement toward what you want. Useless motion is shifting papers around your desk, while actual action is using those papers to get work done and make progress on a project. Make what really matters the priority.

How might you use this rule is to set an agenda for yourself? Suppose you have five tasks to do for your business. Two of the tasks are not really important and only appear to be since they are urgent, so you decide to focus on them later.

You pick three tasks to focus on, and you evaluate which one is most important so that you can focus on that first. The night before, look at those three items on your to-do list and determine what steps you will take in actual action to complete those items, starting with the most important one. The next day, take that actual action for your first task, then your second, then your third. Only complete one task at a time and do not multitask. By the close of the workday, you just completed three major tasks at a realistic pace!

# Rule 3: Create Limitations and Requirements

Rule 3 is to make actual rules for yourself. Create an actual code of conduct for you to follow in terms of being more disciplined and following through more. Write your code down in detail and then post it in a visible area. While you may not adhere to all of them every day, you at least stand a better chance of follow- through when you actually take the time to think about your code of conduct and write them down.

The rules should focus on creating either *limitations* or *requirements* for what you do each day so that you actually take initiative and get tasks done.

This rule forces you to determine what you really need and want and analyze what you hope to achieve. Basically, you are stopping to check yourself and evaluate how you are progressing toward your ultimate goal. It helps you focus more on your intentions and clarify them, making them an integral part of your work ethic. So when you set out to accomplish something, you have a rule in place to make yourself follow through on the project.

Give yourself five daily limitations and five daily requirements. Make clear statements about what you *cannot* do and what you *must* do.

Limitations are relatively easy to understand. They limit distraction and temptation. As for requirements, understand that you are not Superman or Superwoman, so you can’t overload yourself. Instead, work smarter and have five requirements that you can *reasonably* meet. You may not always adhere to this rule, but you at least have some guidance for yourself. In addition, you gain some clarity about what you have cut out for you each day.

An example is to set a limitation that you will not watch more than one hour of TV a day, you will not spend more than an hour on Facebook, and you will not take longer than a one-hour lunch break. Meanwhile, your requirements are that you must read at least 30 pages a day, you must complete at least four hours of work before lunch, and you must complete eight hours of work total by the time you sign out or clock out of work.

# Rule 4: Reaffirm Your Intentions

Rule 4 is quite similar to rule 1. This rule comes into play when you are faced with a fork in the road between deciding to follow through or not. This rule seeks to *reaffirm your intentions* by reminding yourself what they are and why you want to achieve them.

When you find yourself deliberating between quitting and following through, ask these three questions to yourself. Better yet, have the answers written somewhere so you can look over again.

***“I want…”*** This is where you state your end goal and how you will benefit from it. What is your reason and motivation? Keep reminding yourself of the external or internal motivators that you have on your side. Remind yourself something like, “I want to be rich.”

***“I will…”*** This is where you state how you must reach that end goal and all the work you should be doing to get there. This statement brings your attention back to how necessary it is to complete what you are currently doing and how these tasks tie into the end goal. The journey is a necessary part of the goal. It helps for you to be very specific in this statement to see what actions you really do have to take. For example, tell yourself, “If I want to be rich, I will need to finish this project and work hard on other projects.”

***“I won’t…”*** This is where you state what you shouldn’t do because that action will impede your progress toward your end goal. There are many things detrimental to your progress, including distractions, temptations, lack of discipline, procrastination, and other destructive or wasteful actions. Tell yourself something like, “If I want to be rich, I won’t distract myself with social media and I won’t prioritize social media over my work projects.”

Let’s apply this concept to a potential real-life conundrum that you may encounter. As you work to complete a certification program necessary to get a pay raise at work, you find the volume of work overwhelming and you despise having so little free time on your hands. You contemplate giving up and saying “whatever” to the certification. After all, you have a job, so do you really need to advance yourself anymore?

As you contemplate this, realize that this is the time when you should apply this

rule because you have hit a fork in the road of follow-through. You choose to implement the rule and you state three things to yourself:

“I want to make more money at work and be able to afford a nicer home for myself and a future family.”

“If I want to have more money and move into a better place, I will finish this certification program in order to get a raise at work.”

“If I want to make more money at work and move into a better place, I won’t let myself get discouraged and stop doing the work to complete this program or be thrown off track by simple temptations or laziness.”

You have just stated your intentions from beginning to end. As you may have noticed, a running theme in this book is that repetition helps follow through, and presence of mind is key. We may have the best intentions, but if we simply forget about them, then what good are they? When you face these questions constantly—your end goal and the steps you must take to reach, as well as the steps you must not take to reach it—it all becomes crystal clear.

# Rule 5: Think in Terms of 10-10-10

The next time you feel that you’re about to give in to an urge or temptation, stop and ask yourself how you will feel 10 minutes, 10 hours, and 10 days from now. This rule may not seem all that powerful, but it’s effective because it forces you to think about your future self and to see how your actions are going to affect yourself in the future—for better or worse. A lot of times, we may know that we are losing willpower or doing something harmful in the moment, but that’s not enough to stop us from doing it because we don’t have any connection to our future self that will have to deal with the consequences. This rule quickly creates that connection, and that can make the difference between a success or failure of discipline.

Why time intervals of 10 minutes, hours, and days? Because that helps you realize how short-term the pleasure or comfort of a discipline is relative to its long-term consequences. At 10 minutes, you might be feeling good, with perhaps just the initial bit of shame creeping in. After 10 hours, you’ll feel

mostly shame a regret. Ten days later, you might be consumed by regret having realized some of the negative consequences that your decision or action has had on your pursuit of your long-term goals.

On the other hand, you might apply this rule and realize that a lapse in following through now won’t make a difference 10 days into the future. If that’s the case, then you can indulge a bit without guilt or shame.

For example, imagine that you apply this rule when deciding whether or not to skip a workout to go to dinner with coworkers. If you’ve just begun exercising and haven’t built it into a consistent habit yet, your decision to skip a single workout might increase the odds of skipping future workouts or stopping working out altogether.

How will you feel in 10 minutes, hours, and days? Ten minutes—good, with a slight tinge of regret, as you can still taste the lasagna or ice cream. The pleasure is still tangible. Ten hours—almost entirely regret, as the pleasure is gone and fleeting, and your diet has been soundly broken. Ten days—100% regret, because the broken discipline is now completely meaningless and but a faint memory. The lasagna does not have a lasting benefit, but it does have a lasting cost.

On the other hand, if exercising is already a consistent and enjoyable habit for you, then imagining how you’ll feel 10 days from now will quickly show you that one skipped workout isn’t harmful to your long-term discipline or goals.

And when you’re not swayed by this rule or your dilemma of willpower is extra difficult, you can add a final question for yourself. That is, how will breaking willpower now affect you in 10 weeks or even longer-term? You might want to change the parameters to 10 weeks if you’re mostly engaged in longer-term decisions and tasks.

In this process, it’s crucial to be honest with yourself and wary of your own abilities to rationalize and make excuses. For example, you may have tried to quit an addictive habit many times in the past, only to fail and eventually reinforce the harmful behavior. If you have a history of falling into bad habits after a single lapse in discipline, then an honest assessment of how you would

feel after 10 days or 10 weeks will tell you that you simply can’t afford a lapse in discipline now if you’re going to achieve your long-term goals. It wasn’t an exception or justified in that one circumstance—it is a reflection of your character for better or worse.

Without that honesty and ability to see your own rationalizing and excuses for what they are, applying this rule may be a futile exercise.

# Rule 6: Just 10 Minutes

The final rule is simple, easy, and powerful.

If you want something negative, harmful, or detrimental to your follow through, wait at least 10 minutes before getting it. It’s simple and leaves no room for debate or excuses. When you feel an urge, force yourself to wait for 10 minutes before giving in to whatever the urge is. If you’re still craving it after 10 minutes, then have it. Or wait 10 more minutes because you’ve already done it and survived just fine. Simply by choosing to wait you remove the “immediate” from immediate gratification—building discipline and improving decision- making.

Similarly, if you want to quit something beneficial, wait just 10 more minutes. It’s the same thought process applied in a different way. Ten minutes is nothing, so you can wait or continue that long easily. Then, if you do it once, it’s easy to repeat, isn’t it? In other words, say to yourself “just 10 minutes more of willpower” each time you reach a fork in the road.

Another benefit of this rule is the purposeful escalation of good habits. If you’ve forced yourself to do something productive for 10 minutes, you might end up doing it for 15 or even 20 minutes more. Next time, your tolerance will build such that you’re more immune to temptation and distraction—the following time you might continue for an extra six or seven minutes.

Every time you feel distracted, just exercise willpower for a few minutes longer, and you’ll steadily follow through better with each escalation. At some iteration of “just 10 minutes more” you’ll reach a point of momentum, and that’s often enough to carry you for hours.

Takeaways:

 A manifesto is nothing more than a set of rules to follow every day. We might hate rules, but rules take the guesswork out of our days and give us guidelines to follow. They make matters black and white, which is helpful to following through because there is simply no other choice.

 Rule 1: Are you acting out of laziness? If so, is this a characterization you want about yourself?

 Rule 2: Three major tasks a day, maximum. Differentiate between important tasks, urgent tasks, and simple wasted motion.

 Rule 3: Create daily limitations and requirements for yourself. These keep you within the bounds of what you know you need to do. These are also the building blocks of good habits.

 Rule 4: Sometimes we lose sight of what we want to accomplish. Thus, reaffirm your intentions by stating “I want,” “I will,” and “I won’t” statements.

 Rule 5: Try to look into the future, 10 minutes, hours, and days at a time. Do you like what you see when you consider not following through? Is it worth the benefit to the current self at the expense of the future self? Probably not.

 Rule 6: It’s just 10 minutes, right? So if you want to quit, it’s just 10 minutes. And if you need to wait, it’s just 10 minutes.

# Chapter 4: Follow-Through Mindsets

Follow-through is 100% mental. It takes a cognitive effort to follow through on something, especially when you hit discouraging obstacles. Mindsets help with that.

What is a mindset? A mindset is a set way of visualizing and approaching situations and problems. Certain mindsets are all it takes to find the will and motivation necessary to follow through on something.

Gerald is an example of someone with a mindset that impeded with his progress. Gerald had many aspirations to create his own business. He was determined in spirit and relished the idea of one day being a well-known and rich entrepreneur like Steve Jobs. While he knew that success is not just something easy that anyone can grab, he did not realize how sometimes success calls for uncomfortable situations.

When he actually endeavored to start his own business, he ran into a lot of situations that cause him fear. For example, he had to make a monetary investment and it terrified him to think that he may lose his money and never get it back. This fear made Gerald uncomfortable. Another thing he hated was having to conserve his money and cut expenses and luxuries he didn’t need to devote more money to his start-up. Living without the luxuries he was used to made him quite uncomfortable as well—so much so that he could not handle it.

Instead of adapting to uncomfortable situations and embracing new things that made him feel scared, Gerald freaked out. He decided that the lifestyle of an

entrepreneur was not worth it. He liked the idea but was not prepared for the reality. Finding out that starting up a new business was not all sunshine and rainbows made him give up on it. Instead of starting his dream company and having a shot at becoming the next Steve Jobs, Gerald settled back into the job that he hated simply because it was comfortable to him. He never amounted to much and never reached his dreams as a result.

Gerald’s mindset was negative, to say the least. He refused to deal with discomfort or make sacrifices that were mildly unpleasant for his dream career. He preferred what he knew over the unknown, even though what he knew did not satisfy him as much as his dream would have satisfied him. That mindset made him choose to approach the situation from the vantage point that it was all bad and not worth it. He focused on the negative and the discomfort and he refused to work around it.

Gerald may have succeeded at his goal had he held a different mindset. But his collection of poor and inflexible mental habits caused him to approach problems incorrectly, which left him with no hope for success. He let himself fail by approaching problems in the wrong way and eventually giving up.

Had he decided to become comfortable with discomfort, he never would have given up just because the going got tough at one point. He could have adjusted to the discomfort of making sacrifices and embracing unknown scary situations, which would have made him better able to found his business and become an entrepreneur.

# Mindset 1: It’s Worthwhile

Consider what the Chicago Consortium on School Reform (along with many other educational experts) says motivates students to persevere even when things become difficult at school. Three concepts contribute to student success, which are easily transferable to our adult lives.

The first concept is holding the belief that hard work can and will lead to improvement. No matter how hard things get, it is your efforts that will get you the results you desire, nothing else. Everything else is a byproduct of luck—the hard work itself is a prerequisite. Of course, hard work doesn’t overcome everything, but it’s an essential component that cannot be skipped.

The second concept is having the confidence that you, and people like you, belong in school and that school is a place where you can thrive. You can apply this to settings outside of school.

The heart of this concept is that you believe in yourself and that you are just as good as anyone else. Basically, you need to believe in your own abilities and trust in your opportunities. Don’t create self-limiting beliefs that hold you back, such as thinking that you are not as good as everyone else. This belief is illustrated by feeling that you *also* have valuable input at a business meeting or that you have just as much ability to handle a client as *everyone else* in the office.

The final concept is holding the belief that what you are doing is valuable and relevant to your goals. Why would you stick with doing something if you don’t see how it benefits you or helps you reach your goals? That would undermine entire chapters of this book.

Understanding why you do something and how it fits into the big picture of what you are trying to accomplish makes it seem more worthwhile. You won’t want to quit an endeavor if you think that it is getting you somewhere. You don’t even have to see instant gratification and goal completion to know that you are on the right track. Assigning value and remembering how each thing you do ties into your main goal is very important because it helps you feel that you are doing well just by working.

There is a point to everything you do, so every action you take is valuable. An example of this concept at work would be when you feel that the classes you are taking for your degree are pointless. Remember that they are not pointless, because they are leading to your graduation, which in turn will lead to your dream job in the field of your interest.

These concepts can help you because they lend value and meaning to your work, and they can make you feel like you are making a difference just by following through and executing.

# Mindset 2: Comfort with Discomfort

Another critical mindset is believing that your journey to success will become supremely uncomfortable at times, so you need to get comfortable with discomfort. Following through is never comfortable because it asks you to do things that are unfamiliar and new. To be successful and never give up, you need to minimize negative consequences of uncomfortable situations by getting immunized to the sense of discomfort.

Sometimes, you feel the need to avoid something that will lead to success out of discomfort. Maybe you are avoiding extra work because you are fatigued, or you are avoiding talking to new people because it makes you nervous. You are actively shutting out success because you want to avoid being uncomfortable for a little while.

Therefore, overcoming your instinct to avoid things just because they are uncomfortable for you at first is essential. Change is always uncomfortable, but it is key to doing things differently in order to find that magical formula for success. Try doing new things outside of your comfort zone. Do something new, try to learn new skills, talk to new people, and practice new actions that you are bad at until you are good at them. Expose yourself to new situations and things. The unfamiliarity will feel very uncomfortable, but you will not be able to expand your horizons and achieve success any other way.

The more you do things that make you uncomfortable, the more comfortable you become with discomfort. You will find that discomfort is a temporary emotion that leaves with exposure to the situation. The benefits of being uncomfortable far outweigh the mild and fleeting unpleasantness of the sensation. Your mind will come to stop fearing discomfort so much when it realizes that discomfort does not actually hurt you.

Meanwhile, staying comfortable by only doing what you know is a bad idea. It is the recipe for complacency and for staying static. You will not make any changes if you do what you always do.

Don’t ever give up on things just because they call for some change and discomfort. Discomfort is merely your fear instinct at play and does not actually hurt you, so getting comfortable with it is a good idea.

You can choose to stay home and not meet new people, or you can choose to go out and make valuable connections that will help you reach your goals. You can choose to never learn a new language, or you can choose to learn it and find a wealth of new business opportunities, such as fun jobs overseas or well-paying jobs in translation. By repeatedly going to language classes and talking to new people, you will become conditioned to the sensation of going out of your comfort zone. Thus, you will become comfortable with being uncomfortable. Then you will stop fearing discomfort and you will open yourself up to some positive changes in your life. Just push yourself consistently every day and try new things to expand the edges of your comfort zone and make your life what you dream about.

# Mindset 3: Allow Learning

This mindset entails developing the viewpoint that following through and finishing equals learning and evaluating yourself. You are essentially testing and scoring yourself based on your progress. Giving up is an automatic failure.

When you finish something, on the other hand, you ace the test. You get to see how you do and you get to evaluate your performance. You also gain a lot of valuable skills and information that can help form your success and enable you to try again with better success should you ever fail at something.

You only learn certain things if you see them through to the end. You are in a constant state of seeking information and knowledge, which you can only gain when you complete a project in its entirety. Otherwise, you don’t catch the full glimpse of how things work. You get to learn about what it takes to finish something and what you are made of if you follow through. If you don’t follow through, then you don’t learn all that you have to do and you don’t learn anything about yourself except that you are lazy or afraid or a failure.

You can also teach yourself what doesn’t work. If you follow through to the end and still don’t succeed, you can evaluate your work and see where you went wrong. Then you can avoid that issue in the future. You can become more successful in the future as a result. View life as a series of lessons that you can use for future betterment.

Viewing your endeavors as quests for knowledge can make challenges seem less daunting. It takes the fear out of failing because you still gain knowledge. You will be less inclined to just give up when faced with a challenge because you instead want to learn how to work around the challenge. You want to see what happens when you try something to overcome the challenge. You will gain no knowledge if you don’t follow through, so you have to have the mindset to leap over challenges more fearlessly.

One way to adopt this mindset is to ask yourself, “What can I learn from this?” That breeds a thirst for knowledge, which can be infinitely more motivating than any other mindset. You get curious and you want to see what the finish line looks like. You want to gain the experience that your endeavor can give you, so you go after follow-through in order to get that experience.

# Mindset 4: De-Stress

Stress affects how much willpower and self-control you have. You may not be consciously aware, but think about how little you can get done if you’re stressed

out or anxious. Even more so if you’re simply tired and fatigued. Your working spirit is more delicate than you might imagine, which is why it’s important to protect it and *de-stress*.

An Australian study showed that students who were stressed because of their exams neglected healthy habits like maintaining a proper diet, getting enough sleep, and exercising. They also smoked more, consumed more caffeine, struggled with controlling their emotions, and paid less attention to household chores, self-care habits, commitments, and spending.

It’s easy to conclude the following: if you fail to take care of your mental health, your discipline and willpower quickly deteriorate. Prevent this situation by introducing stress-reducing habits in your life. Each day, spend at least 30 minutes doing relaxing activities. Meet with friends. Read a book. Listen to music. Meditate. Exercise. Cuddle. Take a walk in the woods. Whatever works for you to unwind and turn your brain off.

It’s important to relax when you can and overall be aware of your *affect—*the psychological term for the emotions you are feeling and overall temperament.

Why? Because *negative affect* is among the most important triggers of self- control failure. For instance, depressed people desire specific things that bring immediate gratification and procrastinate or avoid any activity that involves effort. Emotional distress causes a behavioral shift toward immediate improvements in mood, and so people make poor decisions. This gets even worse when you realize that *projection bias* occurs every day without our conscious knowledge.

Projection bias is when people falsely project their *current* feelings onto their *future* feelings. If you feel depressed, stressed, and tired, you imagine you’ll feel that way next time you want to follow through and finish something. Of course, there’s no correlation, but people routinely fail to see that there is no solid connection between these feelings.

For example, people condemn junk food when they aren’t hungry without realizing how much they want those delicious cookies once they are hungry. When you plan your diet, you are probably calm and in a mood to make drastic changes. You can also see projection bias as overenthusiasm that your current feelings are how you will feel about something *forever*.

Point being? Don’t underestimate the impact of stress on your ability to follow through.

Takeaways:

 Following through is 100% mental, which means it’s probably a good idea to talk about the mindsets you attempt to embody.

 Mindset 1: It’s all worthwhile. If you feel that your hard work will get you somewhere, you belong and are as good as anyone else, and you feel impact toward your overall goals, execution is easier to stick with.

 Mindset 2: Become comfortable with discomfort. Everything you want to do will have elements of discomfort, unless you just want to watch television all day by yourself. Thus, becoming used to this feeling allows you to tackle what you want without fear.

 Mindset 3: Without following through, there is no learning. Only when you finish something can you evaluate yourself and correct your errors. Embody an information-gathering mindset.

 Mindset 4: The detrimental power of stress and anxiety can’t be overstated. Even being in a poor mood is dangerous to your productivity and follow-through. Be aware and take proactive measures to modulate your stress levels.

# Chapter 5: The Science of Smashing Procrastination

Procrastination is a huge problem in following through. How can you approach it effectively?

Madeleine has a big project coming up soon. Her deadline is in a week. She knows that to meet this deadline, she has to complete 15 pages of code a day. But when it comes down to it, she just cannot work. So she puts it off, planning to write 30 the next day to make up for lost progress. Then she can’t write 30 pages so she puts it off and now has to write 45. Now she is right on her deadline with almost no code written.

She pulls an all-nighter and sends in a code that is rife with errors. She ran into many challenges with this code that she did not have time to solve because she was so far behind in work. The client rejects the code and is not happy. Madeleine just earned a bad review and no repeat client.

Michelle works on the same types of projects. Unlike Madeleine, Michelle understands what her challenges may be. She breaks the work into small, manageable parts and writes what she can each day and gives herself rewards for every section she completes. Usually she is able to meet or exceed the 15 pages minimum quota that she has set for herself. At the end of the week, she compiles the code with no errors and sends it to her client. He is very happy to have a working code that runs well and he pays her well. She earns a five-star review and the client is eager to hire her again for future projects.

The difference between these two coders is that Michelle succeeded at her

project by not procrastinating. She used a system called temptation bundling to ensure that she did not put off work. That gave her plenty of time to not only write code but to find and fix bugs. Madeleine did not use this foresight so she produced poor-quality work. You can see how procrastination leads to intense stress, frustration, and sloppy work.

We all know what procrastination is. But why is such a common issue in people trying to meet deadlines and get quality work done? There are some answers regarding this covered by behavioral psychology.

The main component in this self-defeating habit is called *time inconsistency*. This is where humans value immediate and instant gratification over long-term rewards.

Imagine that you have two selves, a present self and a future self. In this instance, they are completely different people with different desires that do not overlap. When you make goals, you are making plans for your future self. It is easy to plan for what is best for your future self. You can see what you need in the future and you want that so you plan for it. Researchers have found that envisioning your ideal future reality is quite easy.

However, only your present self can actually do anything. To make goals reality, your present self has to take action. Sadly, your present self wants rewards *now.* It does not want to wait to see the results in the future. So it wants to avoid having to do work for long-term goals, favoring instead tasks that reward you right now. For example, you want to get a big project done to make money, but you really need a nap. You are going to choose the nap over work because that’s an immediate reward for your present self. Meanwhile, you are hurting your future self by napping instead of working.

Your future self wants goals that pay out at some future date after work performed in the present. The present self wants rewards that pay out now, which in turn often hurt your chances to get your future self its long-term rewards.

The best way to counteract time inconsistency is to move future long-term rewards into the present more effectively. That way, your present self sees the

benefit and wants to stick to the long-term program. Waiting for a future reward is often not sufficient to motivate your present self because your present self does not want to wait.

# Temptation Bundling

Temptation bundling is an excellent and efficient way to kill procrastination and increase productivity by combining present and future selves and their conflicting needs.

This takes the above concept and introduces the means to reducing temptation to neglect your future self in the present moment. Conceived by behavioral Katy Milkman at the University of Pennsylvania, temptation bundling is a way to blend both future and present self needs by making future rewards more immediate. You give yourself instant gratification in the present while also achieving goals that benefit your future self in the long-term.

It’s simpler than it sounds.

Basically, you make a positive (but difficult) behavior or habit in the long-term feel good at the present moment as well. Think eating Twinkies while working out, working out while watching TV, or doing work while soaking your feet in a salt bath—these are examples of ways to make the long-term feel good at the present moment.

There is no need to suffer in the present to get something done for your future self; if you do suffer, then you will lose all motivation and procrastinate. So find ways to bundle your temptations with your long-term goals. In other words, pair your obligations with instantaneous rewards.

Milkman found that up to 51% of her study participants were willing to exercise with temptation bundling. It is an effective means to correct procrastination habits. You should make a list with two columns, one side being your guilty pleasures or temptations and the other side being things you need to do for your future self. Then figure out creative ways to link the two conflicting columns in harmony.

Suppose you like chocolate, surfing, soccer, and running. But work, homework, and piano lessons stand in your way. How might you combine things to make the unpleasurable more tolerable?

# Small, Easy Increments

Another way to mitigate procrastination is to start in small, easy increments. Really, you want to break tasks down into minuscule, microscopic components. This makes your first step seem incredibly easy—and taking that first step is the hardest part with procrastination.

Think of procrastination as an enormous wall you must climb. If you collect enough small pebbles and rocks, you can eventually create a step for yourself high enough to simply walk over the wall. You can collect boulders the size of your torso, and you may get the same result, but it’s a much tougher road.

Just make sure your barriers to starting are extremely low. For example, you can even complete 95% of a task and leave the remaining 5% as a starter task for later, so you can get back in the swing of things easily. Doing this breaks inertia and enables you to gain forward momentum. You gain momentum by working and creating work that you can build off of later as you tackle the harder parts of the project.

Small and easy increments involve two key parts. The first part is to break your tasks into smaller, more manageable steps. Don’t view your task as one huge boulder that you have to get done all at once. Rather, view it as a series of steps to take from Point A to Point B. Your mind will thank you for this as things suddenly seem easier and more doable. An example of this is to view the writing project you have ahead of you as a series of paragraphs only 100 words long.

Maybe you have to write 100 pages, but don’t look at it that way. Look it as taking baby steps with short paragraphs. After you complete so many paragraphs, you have written your 100 pages. Small tasks build up rapidly, especially when you are not procrastinating, so create tiny, mentally palatable steps that you can take to build something monumental and reach your ultimate goal. A book is composed of words, after all.

The second part is to start with the easiest tasks first. This may seem counterintuitive. Why would you leave all the hard stuff for later? Remember that procrastination is about making the first step as easy as possible. You are encouraging yourself and proving to your mind that this task is more than possible with each easy task that you tick off your to-do list. By the time you reach the harder tasks, they will seem more attainable and surmountable to your mind since your mind has already done a lot of work.

Inertia is the force that builds as you are at rest. On the other hand, momentum is the drive to keep moving forward until you get everything done. Your task here is to break inertia and gain momentum. Small and easy increments accomplish that because nothing else will get you moving more quickly.

Back to the writing example: consider how you can do the easy parts, such as the outline and the research notes. Write the parts that take the least effort first. Get the bulk of it done, the easy and simple things that are not hard but that take up a lot of time. Leave the hardest 5% of the writing for last for when you have momentum. You will not feel so frustrated and overwhelmed, and thus you will not consider this writing task a huge sacrifice that taxes your present self. You will accomplish it and not suffer, which offers some pleasure to your present self.

# Consider Risks

A final tactic is to consider what may go wrong. Being hypervigilant about *what may go wrong* is a tactic employed by highly successful and productive people like Bill Gates. Jim Collins explores this tactic in his book *Great By Choice*. Referring to this as *productive paranoia*, he discusses how people like Bill Gates were constantly paranoid about what may go wrong. By always planning for the worst and trying to avoid the worst, these people actually ended up working extremely hard. They were always focused on their projects just to avoid the worst possible scenarios. As a result, fear motivated them and kept them from procrastination.

Be paranoid and start to question what could go wrong. Think about making contingency plans and working to avoid certain challenges or problems. Thinking about what can go wrong can serve to make you work to avoid things going wrong. As a result, you become more productive just because you are afraid and hypervigilant at the moment.

Be sure to ask yourself how you might lose out if you delay taking action at this moment. The opportunity may go to someone more proactive. Your opportunity may even simply go away, since many things are time-sensitive. Consider how disastrous it could be to your success. The fear of losing out will motivate you. Sure, fear is not a pleasant motivator. But if it works, why not use it? Knowing that you are in danger of some kind kicks you into overdrive. Procrastination comes from boredom, complacency, and safety, so stripping those feelings away can leave you paranoid and eager to avoid bad consequences.

Of course, fear is not a fun motivator, so only use this tactic in small, safe doses. Doing it too much can really drain you and stress you out. As we all know, stress is damaging to your working spirit. Avoid stress and only use this tactic when you begin to feel an intense temptation to procrastinate.

Our opening example of Madeleine could have used fear to help her detect possible mistakes and thus to motivate herself to write her code each day. Using fear, she would have planned to leave plenty of wiggle room in her schedule so that she could properly compile the code and ensure that there were no errors in her code writing. She would have anticipated possible errors and would have worked each day in order to give herself time to catch and fix these errors.

Takeaways:

 Tackling procrastination is similar to pushing Sisyphus’s stone. You can beat it back for a bit, but it’s so natural that you will never be fully rid of it. The problem is typified by time inconsistency, where we comprise two selves that don’t have overlapping desires—one wants gratification in the future and the other wants it right now.

 Temptation bundling is an effective method to battle procrastination. It consists of combining your unpleasurable tasks with something pleasurable. This mainly works because you are battling time inconsistency and giving both selves what they want simultaneously.

 Start easy and small. Procrastination thrives off inertia. Therefore, you need to make the path to motion and action as easy as possible. Then eventually you can gain momentum—the opposite of inertia.

 Sometimes beating procrastination just requires a kick in the pants. Fear and productive paranoia can do that to you—if you are so fearful of the negative repercussions you will face, then you will certainly be spurred into action. But this is not a method to use very frequently.