

I'm a Quitter

I have noticed that I have a tendency to start things and not finish them. I start personal projects, and a week or two later I decide I'm done working on it. I plan to go for a 5 mile run and 2 miles in, I decide I can be done. I start working out every day, and after a few weeks convince myself that there are better uses of my time. Often when I start an endeavor with no deadline or punishment for not achieving what I set out to do, I quit. I know this is not due to a lack of work ethic or laziness. I am always working on something, but convince myself it's more beneficial to work on something else after a certain period of time. Reflecting on the past couple months, I am dissatisfied with the amount of goals I have actually completed. I feel like I have done a ton of work with nothing to show for it.

On the other hand, when there is a deadline or punishment for not achieving, I'm able to perform at a high level and complete my tasks. In school and my job, I have done my best work when deadlines are approaching and the pressure is high. I'm able to block everything out and be extremely efficient at the task at hand. I've always been a good test taker for this reason. I've been thinking about a few questions. How can I recreate this mentality in an environment where these pressures don't exist? How can I not convince myself that there are better things to work on when I have new ideas or I get stuck?

There are two main things I've been doing recently. The first is a mindset I've been trying to get myself into. I was listening to a podcast with Lex Fridman and Roger Gracie, who's one of the best Jiu Jitsu competitors of all time. Lex asked him if he ever got nervous before a match and how he handled the thought of wanting to quit when he got tired. Roger's answer resonated with me. He said he never got nervous and the thought of quitting never entered his mind. He went on to say that through years of training himself, he developed a mindset where he would just "go numb and get to work." Every thought was blocked out and he just performed. He explained that he convinced himself that quitting was not an option, and eventually he stopped thinking about it altogether. At that point there was nothing to be nervous about before the match, and nothing to think about during the match. Go numb and just work.

This has been helping me out with exercising. I have been pushing myself to beat personal cardio records. Previously, I would have gotten very tired, decided that was a good workout, and quit. Now, when I have this urge, I push it to the back of my mind. I won't stop doing what I'm doing until I reach the goal or I break my leg. If I am going to complete the workout no matter what, then there is nothing more to think about. I've been finding that the thought of stopping has been entering my mind less, which makes me want to workout more.

The second thing I've been doing is also a mindset shift but in a different way. I forget where but I was listening to an ultra-marathon runner. He was talking about how he avoids the temptation to quit, when he's dead tired 30 miles into a 100 mile race. I often have similar thoughts - "I've done all this work without much to show for it, and I still have so far to go." He said he takes a more holistic view when thinking about it. Sure, if he's just looking at the individual race he still has a long way to go. However, if he takes into account the months if not years of training that

lead up to that moment, he's 99% done. He can't quit when he's one percent away from being finished. I've been trying to take a similar approach, don't focus on the individual race, but rather the bigger picture. Think about everything that has gone into getting you to a particular moment, and you're much closer to achieving the task than you may think.

I've been finding these mindset shifts useful. I doubt many people are reading this, but if you struggle with something similar give them a try.