# Self Control

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# Self Control

• Saving money for retirement
• Sticking to a diet
• Exercising regularly
• Staying faithful to your partner
• Quitting smoking
• Sticking to your 2 drink limit

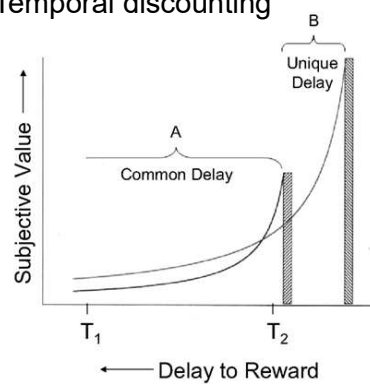What do these have in common?

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# Self Control Dilemma
aka Dynamic Inconsistency

• Choice 1
  • SS apple in 7 days
  • LL apples in 8 days *

• Choice 2
  • SS apple today *
  • LL apples tomorrow

SS  = smaller sooner
LL = larger later

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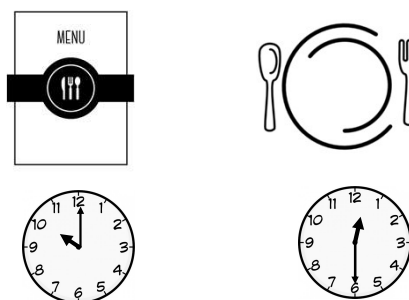
# Temporal discounting



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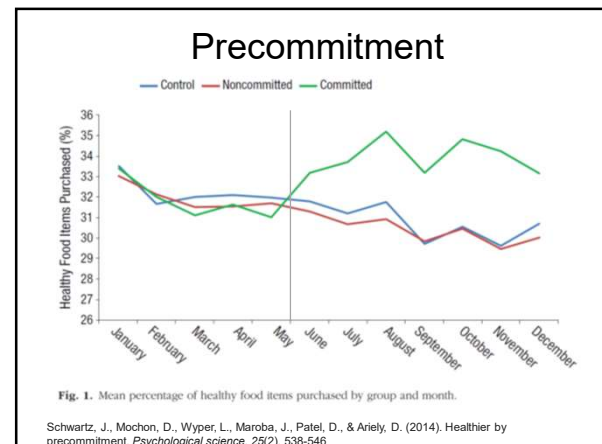
# Ulysses and the Sirens



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# Ordering in Advance



VanEpps, Downs, & Loewenstein (2016).

**Slide 7**

# Healthier by Precommitment

Janet Schwartz[1], Daniel Mochon[1], Lauren Wyper[2], Josiase Maroba[2], Deepak Patel[2], and Dan Ariely[3]
[1]Department of Marketing, A. B. Freeman School of Business, Tulane University; [2]Discovery Vitality, Sandton, South Africa; and [3]Department of Marketing, Fuqua School of Business, Duke University

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# Precommitment

Fig. 1. Mean percentage of healthy food items purchased by group and month.

Schwartz, J., Mochon, D., Wyper, L., Maroba, J., Patel, D., & Ariely, D. (2014). Healthier by precommitment. *Psychological science*, *25*(2), 538-546

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**Slide 9**



A smarter way to think about willpower

(iStock)

By Angela Duckworth, Katherine Milkman and David Laibson

April 17, 2019 at 9:00 a.m. EDT

The Washington Post

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**Slide 10**

# What is Willpower?

- Limited cognitive resource
- Effortful / system 2
- Deliberatively choose the should over the want
- Just do it / just say no
- It can "run out" or get depleted

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# Beyond Willpower: Strategies for Reducing Failures of Self-Control

Angela L. Duckworth[1], Katherine L. Milkman[2], and David Laibson[3]
[1]Department of Psychology, University of Pennsylvania; [2]Operations, Information and Decisions Department, The Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania; and [3]Department of Economics, Harvard University

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# How's our Self Control?

- Obesity rates keep rising, but
- Smoking rates are way down
- Alcohol consumption has decreased in past 30 years
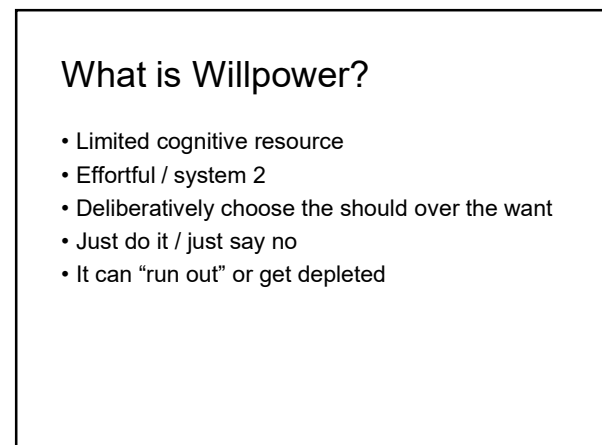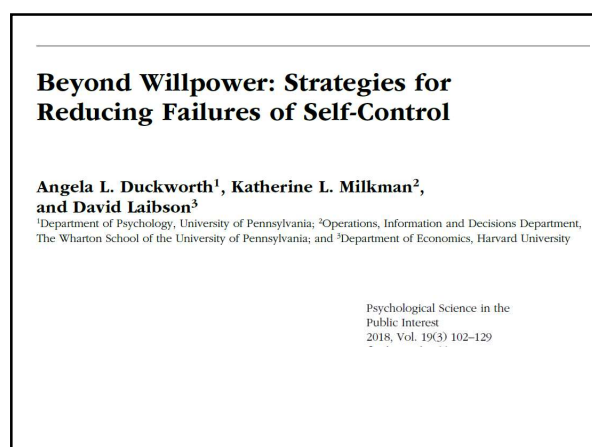- Seatbelt use is high
- Savings down but wealth up

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## Slide 13

# How to increase self control

1. Tax, regulate, restrict, ban
   - Soda tax
   - Cell phone ban in school
2. Nudge
   - Defaults for retirement savings
   - Reminders for seat belt use
3. Use science-backed strategies, not willpower
   - Precommitment
   - Make temptations less accessible

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## Slide 14

FREAKONOMICS   RADIO   BOOKS   LECTURES   ABOUT   EXTRAS   LIVE

Radio

When Willpower Isn't Enough (Ep. 200)

March 13, 2015 @ 12:02pm
by Stephen J. Dubner
PRODUCED BY: GREG ROSALSKY

DOWNLOAD EPISODE

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## Slide 15

MANAGEMENT SCIENCE
Articles in Advance, pp. 1–17
ISSN 0025-1909 (print) | ISSN 1526-5501 (online)

informs

http://dx.doi.org/10.1287/mnsc.2013.1784
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### Holding the Hunger Games Hostage at the Gym: An Evaluation of Temptation Bundling

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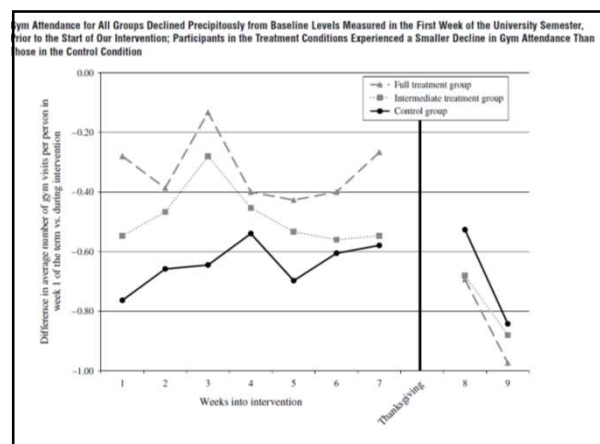
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# Temptation Bundling

N=226

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## Slide 17

| Table 2 | Average Weekly Gym Attendance | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Control group (N = 76) | Intermediate treatment group (N = 75) | Full treatment group (N = 75) |
| Baseline (first week of school) | 1.51 (1.80) | 1.41 (1.50) | 1.44 (1.60) |
| Rolling enrollment period | | | |
| Week 1 of intervention[a] | 0.75 (1.17) | 0.87 (1.38) | 1.16 (1.51) |
| Week 2 of intervention | 0.86 (1.38) | 0.95 (1.40) | 1.05 (1.45) |
| Week 3 of intervention | 0.87 (1.26) | 1.13 (1.53) | 1.31 (1.58) |
| Week 4 of intervention | 0.97 (1.36) | 0.96 (1.38) | 1.04 (1.34) |
| Week 5 of intervention | 0.82 (1.35) | 0.88 (1.26) | 1.01 (1.21) |
| Week 6 of intervention | 0.91 (1.38) | 0.85 (1.34) | 1.04 (1.27) |
| Week 7 of intervention | 0.93 (1.47) | 0.87 (1.39) | 1.17 (1.45) |
| Pre-Thanksgiving total | 6.11 | 6.51 | 7.79 |
| Thanksgiving break | | | |
| Week 8 of intervention | 0.99 (1.56) | 0.73 (1.17) | 0.75 (1.22) |
| Week 9 of intervention | 0.67 (1.19) | 0.53 (1.06) | 0.47 (0.88) |
| Study total | 7.76 | 7.77 | 9.00 |

*Note.* Standard deviations in parentheses.
[a]Note that the week 1 averages *exclude* participants' gym visit made during our study's intake session, which was not a voluntary visit to the gym.

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## Slide 18

Gym Attendance for All Groups Declined Precipitously from Baseline Levels Measured in the First Week of the University Semester, Prior to the Start of Our Intervention; Participants in the Treatment Conditions Experienced a Smaller Decline in Gym Attendance Than Those in the Control Condition

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**Slide 19**

The Fresh Start Effect: Temporal Landmarks
Motivate Aspirational Behavior

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Figure 1    Changes in the Fitted Daily Search Volume for the Term "Diet" as a Function of the Date and Its Proximity to a Variety of Temporal Landmarks



Note. These effects are compared with the effect of the *New York Times* releasing a report about a promising new diet pill (see Pollack 2005) on searches for the term "diet."

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Figure 2    Changes in the Fitted Probability of Going to the Gym as a Function of the Date and Its Proximity to a Variety of Temporal Landmarks



Note. These effects are compared with the effect of a one-hour increase in the gym's operating hours on the likelihood of going to the gym.

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**Slide 22**



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**Slide 23**

Figure 3    Changes in the Fitted Probability of Creating a Commitment Contract as a Function of the Date and Its Proximity to a Variety of Temporal Landmarks



Note. These effects are compared with the effect of *ABC News* releasing an article featuring stickK (see Farnham 2012) on the likelihood of creating a commitment contract.

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**Slide 24**
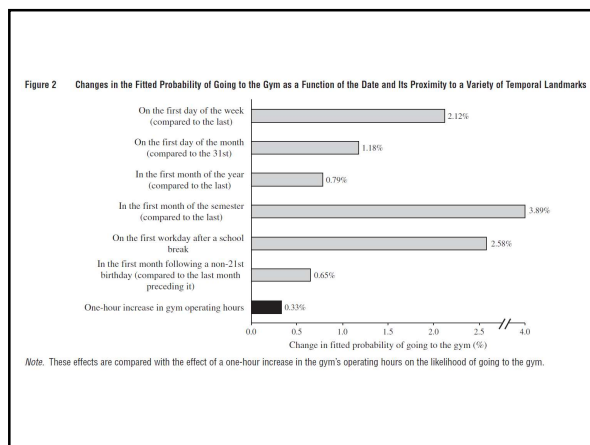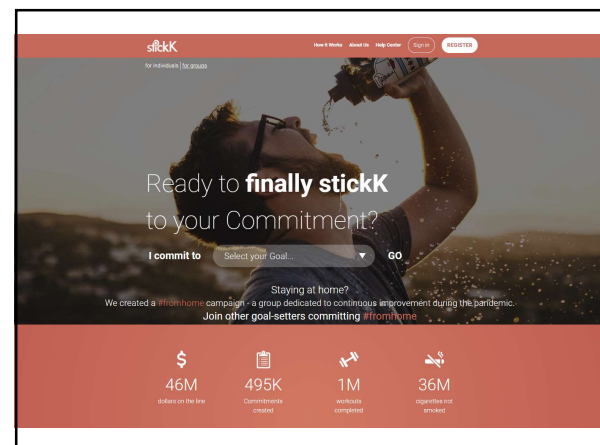
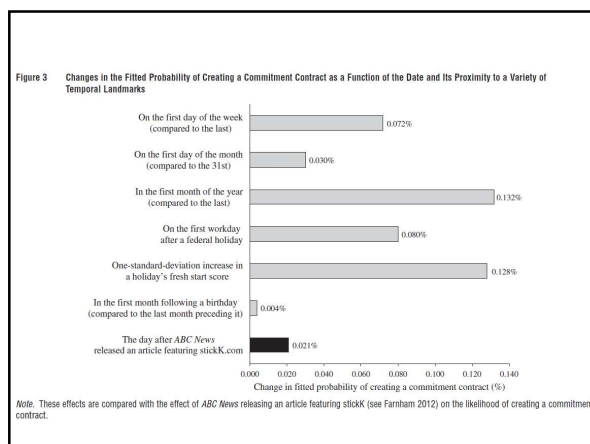# Self Control Solutions

- Deciding in advance
- Precommitment
- Temptation bundling
- Fresh start

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