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Principle 9: Enforce Self-Discipline

The Power of the Will

Earlier chapters have placed heavy emphasis on the importance of taking control of your mind. This control is pivotal to your personal initiative, positive mental attitude, and controlled enthusiasm. Self-discipline is the process that ties all these efforts together for you. It isn't possible to achieve self-discipline without making some progress on those other principles; self-discipline requires self-knowledge and an accurate assessment of your current abilities. Likewise, the other principles can't really be put into action without self-discipline.

It is the channel through which all your personal power for success must flow. Think of your mind as a reservoir in which you have been storing up potential power. You will now learn to release that power in precise quantities and specific directions. This is the essence of self-discipline.

Controlling Your Emotions

Most people act first and think about the consequences later. Self-discipline will reverse that process. You will learn to think before you act. The primary means to this end is your control of your emotions. For review, the fourteen major emotions are repeated below.

Positive Emotions

1. Love
2. Sex
3. Hope
4. Faith
5. Enthusiasm
6. Loyalty
7. Desire

Negative Emotions

1. Fear
2. Jealousy
3. Hatred
4. Revenge
5. Greed
6. Anger
7. Superstition

All these emotions are states of mind and are thus subject to your control. You can see right away how dangerous the negative emotions can be if they are not mastered. The positive emotions can also be destructive if you do not organize and release them with conscious control. Inherent in these emotions is explosive power. If you regulate that power properly, it can lift you to the heights of achievement. But if you let it run wild, it can dash you to pieces on the rocks of failure.

You learned in earlier chapters that a definite major purpose, activated by a driving motive, is the starting point of all worthwhile achievement. This motive must be so strong that it will subordinate all your thoughts and efforts to the attainment of your definite purpose. But your drive--your emotions--must also be subject to your own good judgment so that your enthusiasm and desire will not run over your wisdom. In other words, you must discipline yourself so that your drive is always under control and directed in the proper channels.

Self-discipline calls for balancing your emotions with your reasoning. This means you must learn to consult both your feelings and your reason before you reach any decision. Sometimes you will need to set aside your emotions and follow the dictates of reason alone. Other times you will decide in favor of your emotions, modified by your reason. A happy medium is important. Consider, for example, those people who are so in love that they will do anything for their beloveds. They are putty in the hands of others. They rarely amount to anything because they

have no purposes of their own in life. You might wonder if this danger means that it would be safer and wiser to control your life strictly on the basis of reason and leave emotion out of every decision. The answer is an emphatic no.

Don't forget, your emotions provide your driving power, the activating force which enables you to put your decisions into action. If you destroyed hope and faith, what would there be to live for? If you killed enthusiasm, loyalty, and desire but still retained reason, what good would reason be? It would still be there to provide direction, but what would it direct? You must control and direct your emotions, not abolish them. Besides, abolition would be an impossible task. Emotions are like a river. Their power can be dammed up and released under control and direction, but it cannot be help forever in check. Sooner or later the dam will burst, unleashing catastrophic destruction.

Your negative emotions can also be controlled and directed. PMA and self-discipline can remove their harmful effects and make them serve constructive purposes. Sometimes fear and anger will inspire intense action. But you must always submit your negative emotions—and your positive ones—to the examination of your reason before releasing them. Emotion without reason is a dreadful enemy. What faculty provides the crucial balance between emotion and reason? It is your willpower, or ego, a subject which will be explored in more detail below. Self-discipline will teach you to throw your willpower behind either reason or emotion and amplify the intensity of their expression.

Both your heart and your mind need a master, and they can find that master in your ego. However, your ego will fill this role only if you use self-discipline. In the absence of self-discipline, your mind and heart will fight their battles as they please. In this situation the person within whose mind the fight is carried out often gets badly hurt.

The Big Four

Your self-discipline will not only control your emotions and balance your reason but also be incredibly useful in four highly important areas.

Appetite

Too much food, drink, and other outside influences—such as drugs—which are bad for your body can shorten your life, sap your energy, and distract you from the work at hand. It isn't necessary to moralize on these points. The empirical effects of not being in control of your appetite are sufficient cause for you to subject your appetites to self-discipline.

Positive Mental Attitude

PMA is the only frame of mind in which you can have definiteness of purpose. Through it you can induce others to cooperate with you and help you; it can also attract the power of Infinite Intelligence by applying your faith. Self-discipline ensures that you use your mental attitude to attract the things you want and to repel the things that threaten you.

Time

There is an old saying: "Wasting time is sinful," Most people waste enough time in gossip alone to earn them all the luxuries they envy in others. Time is your most precious asset. If used correctly, it is like money in the bank. You must spend it under strict self-discipline. One of the easiest ways to do this is to schedule your time use for the next twenty-four hours, and stick to that chart. Do it once, and it will be easier the next time. Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn is another example of someone whose self-discipline allowed him to have an enormous impact. Not only did he survive years in Soviet gulags and then dare to write about it, he kept to a rigorous schedule of writing even after being exiled to the United States. Though he was an international celebrity and could have spent the rest of his life basking in attention, Solzhenitsyn moved to a small town in Vermont so he could find solitude.

Until he returned to Russia to participate in the reform of the country, he would get up at six and begin to write after eating a small breakfast. He would stop for a short lunch, then begin writing again, often until late in the evening and sometimes until the sun rose again. He didn't allow the telephone to interrupt his work and he rarely

even left home. The result was a series of novels called *The Red Wheel*, a historical epic of tremendous importance. Even when history finally caught up with his Soviet oppressors, Solzhenitsyn resisted the urge to rush back to Moscow because he knew he had to finish his work. He didn't let countless opportunities to appear on news programs--which would have gained publicity for his books and made him money--distract him from the job at hand. His self-discipline, honed during his years in the gulags, allowed him to finish what he had started and made him a powerful figure when the Soviet empire finally collapsed.

Definiteness of Purpose

The importance of definiteness of purpose had better be clear to you by now. You know that it is the beginning of all achievements when it is tied to a strong, compelling motive. If you haven't yet made up your mind about your definite purpose, go back to the first chapter, and write out your major objective in life and your plans for attaining it. This is the first step in self-discipline. Even Infinite Intelligence can't help you get where you're going if you haven't made up your mind about exactly where you want to go. There's an old joke about a preacher who was stranded on the roof of his church in a flood. As the waters rose higher around him, he prayed fervently for God to rescue him. "The Lord will provide," he told himself.

Soon a boat floated by. The occupants called to the preacher to swim to them. "Don't worry about me," the preacher called back. "The Lord will provide." Reluctantly the people on the boat went on. The waters rose higher and soon were lapping around the knees of the man of God. Another boat appeared within a few yards of the church rooftop. The rescuers inside called to the preacher, and again he replied, "The Lord will provide!" This boat went on, and the preacher prayed even more fervently.

Just as the water reached the preacher's chin, a third boat appeared. It came so close that the preacher could have jumped right in. But the terrified man clutched his steeple and cried, "Save someone else. The Lord will provide for me!" And the boat went on. Within a few minutes the waters closed over the preacher's head, and he drowned. Reaching the gates of heaven, he asked for an immediate audience with the Lord, which was granted. In the divine presence the preacher humbled himself and asked, "Heavenly Father, my work on earth was not yet finished. Why didn't you save me?" "Good grief" came the reply. "I thought you *wanted* to come here. I sent you three boats, didn't I?" Self-discipline makes you jump when your boat comes by.

The Power of Self-Discipline

When you speak of power, you usually think of a Rockefeller or a Trump, somebody with money or property. But one of the most powerful men who ever lived had neither. Mahatma Gandhi didn't own a house, he had no money, but his influence eclipses that of any other person of this century. That's an astounding statement until you look at it and analyze the source of Gandhi's power. Here was a man who over long years, step by step, defeated the British Empire. He wrested freedom for India from the British by using a power His Majesty's Government didn't understand. There were five sources to his power:

- *Definiteness of purpose.* Gandhi's purpose was to free the people of India. He knew precisely what he wanted, what his major aim in life was, and he was determined that nothing would defeat him.
- *Going the extra mile.* No one asked Gandhi to spend his life as he did; no one paid him to do so. He did not have a selfish purpose; he did not think in terms of personal reward. He went not only the extra mile but many millions of extra miles because he was planning to benefit the four hundred million people living in his country. No wonder he had power.
- *Applied faith.* Gandhi completely cleared his mind of any doubt that he would eventually win the freedom he desired for his people. He kept his mind securely fixed on his definite major purpose. And this resolute purpose and his persistent action to achieve it opened his mind to the power of Infinite Intelligence.
- *Mastermind.* Gandhi assembled what is probably the greatest mastermind alliance in human history. It consisted of hundreds of millions of minds. Many of these minds may have been lacking in formal

education, but each had the capacity for faith and a burning desire to achieve the goal of freedom Gandhi was leading it toward. No power in the world could have defeated such a powerful mastermind alliance--except an even larger one.

- *Self-discipline.* How do you suppose Gandhi managed to keep his mind focused on one definite major purpose all those years? He must have had many opportunities to capitalize on his situation or to use his power for his personal benefit. Anyone who had the power Gandhi had might have been tempted by such opportunities. But he had the self-discipline to lead a simple life, and thus he had the self-discipline to free a nation.

The Structure of Your Mind

Your mind is divided into six departments which are subject to your conscious control. Understanding these departments helps you understand self-discipline.

The six departments are:

1. The ego. The source of willpower. It acts as a supreme court, with the power to reverse, modify, change, or eliminate the entire work of all the other departments.
2. Emotions. Here is generated the driving force which sets your thoughts, plans, and purposes into action.
3. Reason. This is where you weigh, eliminate, and properly evaluate the products of your imagination and emotions.
4. Imagination. This is where you create ideas, plans, and methods of attaining your desired ends.
5. Conscience. Here you test the moral justice of your thoughts, plans, and purposes.
6. The memory. This acts as the keeper of records of all your experiences and as a storehouse for all sense perceptions and inspiration from Infinite Intelligence.

The Ego

The ego, seat of your willpower, is the most valuable thing your body possesses. The rest of you is a collection of chemicals which, on the open market, aren't worth the price of dinner in a decent restaurant. You must control and discipline this priceless part of yourself. It can stand for anything you value, from poverty and ill health to your brightest ambitions. Some egos are weak and lacking in courage. Some are overinflated. Neither kind amounts to anything, but most people struggle with weak ones. Don't let a weak ego hold you back. A prosperous man I knew suffered a defeat in business and ended up driving a taxicab for a few hundred dollars a week. There's nothing wrong with driving a taxicab, but it isn't the right kind of employment for someone who was making six figures. That man needed to bolster his ego so he could return to success.

One woman I know wore a huge diamond ring on her finger. That ring was a symbol of her success, not a sign of vanity or ostentation. Once she had been poor, but with that ring on her finger she constantly reminded her ego that her poverty was of the past. She fed her ego with images that strengthened it. That is just what you must do with your ego. It may not require something as visible--and expensive--as a diamond ring, but it requires sustenance. Always treat your ego as your most precious possession.

Emotions

Earlier in this chapter we talked about the need for balancing your emotions with the faculty of reason. Here we will look at a different aspect of the emotions. Consider for a moment the serious problems which can arise in your mind when old disappointments and failures surface again and again in your emotions.

Self-discipline is the only real solution to such problems. It begins with the recognition that there are only two kinds of problems: those you can solve and those you can't.

Problems that can be solved should immediately be dealt with by the most practical means available. This is why you were told in an earlier chapter to make amends for old wrongs you many have done. Problems which can't be solved should be put out of your mind and forgotten. Think of this forgetting as closing the door on whatever it is that disturbs your emotional equilibrium. Self-discipline allows you to close this door and lock it securely, instead of standing in the door and looking wistfully back at what might have been. Look forward instead into the future.

One method is to visualize some symbol of the unsolvable problem floating deep in space. Imagine a giant envelope opening next to that symbol and the symbol sliding gently into that envelope. Let the envelope close, and then watch it drift away into the void. Whether you close a door or dispatch an envelope, you are employing a valuable technique. It requires a good, strong will, and repeated practice of this process only strengthens your will. Door closing does not make you hard, cold, or unemotional, but it does require firmness.

Self-discipline cannot permit lurking memories, and you cannot waste time worrying over the unsolvable. Doing so destroys your creative force, undermines your initiative, disturbs your faculty of reason, and just plain confuses all the departments of your mind. Closing the door on fear and worry allows you to open the doors of hope and faith.

Reason

If your ego functions as a supreme court, your reason functions as a superior court, handling the more routine functions of judgment. It evaluates the creations of the imagination, modifies the expression of the emotions, and ratifies the decisions of the conscience. You train your rational faculties by observation, study, and analysis of truth.

Imagination

Your imagination is responsible for all creative effort. New ideas are assembled here, and you must allow your reason to control its activities carefully. Keep your imagination workshop focused on things related to your definite major purpose, not on fantasies about winning the lottery. Because imagination is responsible for creating everything new in the world, it is an invaluable tool for your progress along the path to success.

Conscience

Your conscience keeps an eye on the moral justice of all your thoughts and deeds. If you always consult it and heed its advice, it will repay you by keeping you honorable and esteemed by others. If you ignore its advice, be careful. At the least you will alienate the members of your mastermind alliance, cut yourself off from the power of Infinite Intelligence, and be plagued by countless fears. At the worst you will discover that society has built many special rooms for people who don't obey their consciences. The view from these rooms is usually obstructed by bars.

The Memory

Here you store all impressions of both your conscious and subconscious minds. Self-discipline will allow you to keep unpleasant memories tucked away, after you have learned the lessons those memories inspire. Many positive things may also be stored in your memory, ready to be called forth upon demand by a willpower strengthened by self-discipline. Your self-discipline is the procedure you use to coordinate these departments of your mind and keep each of them under control. Its most immediate effect is the mental harmony you need to focus all your efforts toward success.

The Things You Cannot Discipline

There are four other elements that play a role in your mental process but that you cannot control. You must learn to understand them and adapt to their ways.

Infinite Intelligence

The chapter on applied faith explains the power and importance of Infinite Intelligence. You cannot discipline it; instead you must discipline yourself to be ready to receive it and to act on its wisdom.

The Subconscious

You cannot directly control your subconscious; that's a big part of what its name implies. It acts only in response to stimulus from your emotions, but these are something you can control through self-discipline. When your emotions are positive and directed toward a definite purpose, your subconscious will be powerfully and similarly affected. However, it will respond just as quickly to negative emotions; it can't distinguish between the two. This is why your self-discipline must be applied to your emotions, so that your subconscious works for you, not against you.

Telepathy

Telepathy is the broadcasting of your mental attitudes and thoughts to others. I'm not talking about such mundane uses as telling the baby-sitter when to put the kids to bed while you're out at the movies. I'm referring to the mental communication that develops between you and others committed to similar purposes. Your mastermind alliance is the best example of this power. As your alliance grows, each member will learn to anticipate the ideas of others and to connect immediately with their intense enthusiasm and inspiration. You can't control this process, but your self-discipline will aid you in cultivating the positive qualities which bring it into play.

The Senses

Sight, sound, taste, smell, and touch all may deceive you. They are capable only of perceiving the obvious. Much of what goes on in this world is not obvious, and the senses are easily fooled. While you can, to an extent, train your senses to serve you better, you must always evaluate the messages you receive from them by applying your reason. All four of these things must be a part of your mental processes. Your self-discipline will not give you direct authority over them, but it can--and must--make you more aware of their operations at all times.

The Power of the Will

The greatest manifestation of self-discipline is in the strength of your will. As I have pointed out, your will is the supreme court of your mind. It may have the theoretical authority to order all your mental processes, but that authority depends upon constant, consistent, and ethical exercise. The power of a will trained by self-discipline is an irresistible force. The only limit on that power is the one that you impose on it by restricting or ignoring your self-discipline. History and folklore are full of stories of people whose wills alone triumphed over death and other incredible adversities. Who remembers the people whose weak wills kept them mired in mediocrity?

Goals' Value Not What You Expect

"No other single requirement for individual success is as important as self-discipline.... Self-discipline is the tool with which man may harness and direct his inborn emotions in the direction of his choice." - Napoleon Hill

Speaker Jim Rohn startles his audiences by saying that the real value of setting goals is not in their achievement.

The acquisition of the things we want is secondary. The main value of setting goals is compelling us to become the kind of person it takes to achieve them.

Rohn writes in his book *Seven Strategies for Wealth and Happiness* that the greatest value in becoming a millionaire is not the money itself nor the things it will buy.

The greatest value "is in the skills, knowledge, discipline and leadership qualities you'll develop in reaching that elevated status."

He points out that if you give a million dollars to someone who does not possess the attitude of a millionaire, that person will most likely lose it.

But take away all the wealth from true millionaires, and in no time they will build a new fortune.

Why? Because those who earn their millionaire status develop the skills, knowledge and experience to duplicate the process again and again.

When someone becomes a millionaire, the least important thing is what they have. The most important thing is what they have become.

Rohn's rule is **income rarely exceeds personal development**.

When Rohn looks at his life, he asks, "Well, here's what I want, but am I willing to become the kind of person it will take?"

He knows if he's too lazy or unwilling to do the learning and work to become what it will take to accomplish that goal, he's faced with a choice: "I must decide to either change myself or change my wants."

Rohn suggests we all ponder the question: What kind of person will I have to become to get all I want?

The answer should include the kinds of skills and knowledge you need to gain. Use it to set some new goals for personal development.

From *Think & Grow Rich Newsletter*, Vol. 1, No. 4, January 1989. Copyright 1989, Napoleon Hill Foundation

The Mirror Technique

Self-discipline is easier if you reinforce what you want to think, do and say by practicing it before the person who knows you best -- yourself.

"Before you can control conditions, you must first control yourself. Self-mastery is the hardest job you will ever tackle. If you do not conquer self, you will be conquered by self. You may see at one and that same time both your best friend and your greatest enemy-by stepping in front of a mirror." - Napoleon Hill

You soon will be making an important presentation, and you want to come across confident and convincing. What can you do in advance to prepare yourself emotionally?

Claude Bristol recommends the mirror technique.

Bristol discovered this approach many years ago when he was the dinner guest of a wealthy industrialist. He was among a group of bankers, newspaper publishers and other prominent people invited to hear the industrialist's plans for a new paper mill operation.

Liquor flowed freely, and it wasn't long before the host appeared intoxicated. Just before dinner was served, he left the room and staggered into his bedroom.

Self-Discipline Wins Out

Bristol followed to offer assistance. At the door, he saw his friend grab the dresser, stare into the mirror, and say, "John, you old --, they're getting you drunk, but you're going to fool them. You're sober, cold sober. This is your party and you've got to be sober."

As the industrialist kept repeating than and similar words to his reflection in the mirror, Bristol noticed a transformation taking place. The man's body was becoming more erect, his facial muscles were tightening and his drunken look was disappearing. The whole performance took less than five minutes.

Bristol ducked out of the room. The host soon followed him to the dining room, a bit flushed, but walking briskly. At the end of the dinner, he gave a dramatic and convincing picture of his new business plans. It was a powerful and memorable demonstration of Napoleon Hill's principle of Self-Discipline.

Since that time, Bristol has suggested the mirror technique to thousands of people whom he counseled.

When people wept about the circumstances they faced, Bristol stood them before a full-length mirror and had them take a good look at themselves. He made them look into their own eyes and tell him what they saw -- crybabies or fighters?

The crying soon stopped, and Bristol became convinced that people cannot weep long while looking at themselves in the mirror.

Many orators and preachers use the mirror technique. Winston Churchill, according to Drew Pearson, never made an important speech unless he made it to a mirror first. Pearson said the same about Woodrow Wilson.

One of the outstanding insurance salesmen in America once told Bristol that he never called upon an important prospect without first giving the sales presentation in front of a mirror. His sales were phenomenal.

In his own firm, Bristol put mirrors up everywhere, including beside the doorframe of the main door to the office, so it would always be the last thing salesmen would see as they left. Even during hard times, his staff dramatically outsold their competitors.

Try These Steps

Here is the technique Bristol advocates:

1. Stand before a mirror, one that provides at least a waist-up reflection.
2. Come to attention-stand fully erect, heels together, chest out, head up.
3. Breathe deeply three or four times until you feel a sense of power, strength and determination.
4. Look into the very depth of your eyes. Tell yourself that you are going to get what you want-name it aloud so you can see your lips move and hear the words uttered.
5. Make the mirror technique a morning and evening habit.
6. If you're going to call on a tough prospect, use the mirror technique until you are convinced you can convey your message without trepidation.
7. If you're a manager, and you want more push from employees, teach them the mirror technique.

Points to Ponder

1. Self-discipline is the process that ties together all your efforts of controlling your mind, your personal initiative, positive mental attitude, and controlling your enthusiasm.
2. Self-discipline makes you think before you act.
3. Emotions are states of mind and subject to your control.
4. Emotions are the activating force which enables you to put your decisions into action.
5. Your ego is the seat of your willpower and is the most valuable thing your body possesses.
6. The subconscious has access to all departments of the mind, but is not under the control of any.
7. Close the door on fear and worry, and open the doors of hope and faith.