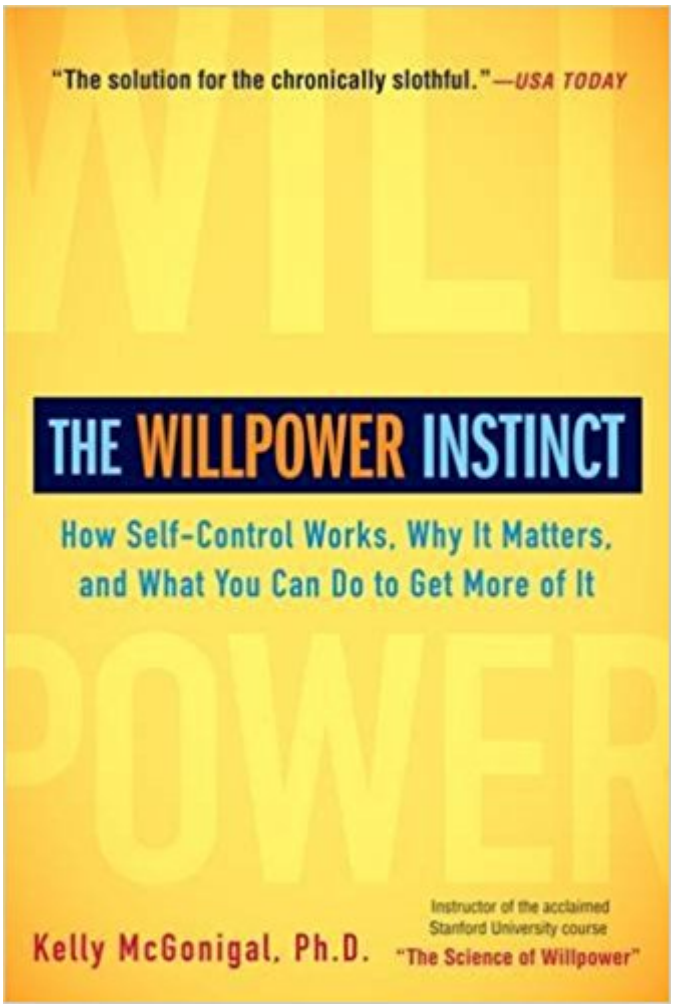
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The Willpower Instinct: How Self-Control Works, Why It Matters, And What You Can Do To Get More Of It



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Synopsis

Based on Stanford University psychologist Kelly McGonigal’s wildly popular course "The Science of Willpower," The Willpower Instinct is the first book to explain the new science of self-control and how it can be harnessed to improve our health, happiness, and productivity.Informed by the latest research and combining cutting-edge insights from psychology, economics, neuroscience, and medicine, The Willpower Instinct explains exactly what willpower is, how it works, and why it matters. For example, readers will learn:Willpower is a mind-body response, not a virtue. It is a biological function that can be improved through mindfulness, exercise, nutrition, and sleep.Willpower is not an unlimited resource. Too much self-control can actually be bad for your health.Temptation and stress hijack the brain’s systems of self-control, but the brain can be trained for greater willpowerGuilt and shame over your setbacks lead to giving in again, but self-forgiveness and self-compassion boost self-control.Giving up control is sometimes the only way to gain self-control.Willpower failures are contagiousÃ¢â ¬â •you can catch the desire to overspend or overeat from your friendsÃ Â- Ã Â- Ã¢â ¬â •but you can also catch self-control from the right role models.In the groundbreaking tradition of Getting Things Done, The Willpower Instinct combines life-changing prescriptive advice and complementary exercises to help readers with goals ranging from losing weight to more patient parenting, less procrastination, better health, and greater productivity at work.

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Customer Reviews

"What a liberating book! McGonigal explains the scientific reality of willpower, exploding the myths

most of us believe. Stronger willpowerÃ¢â ¬â •based on inspiring facts, not oppressive nonsenseÃ¢â ¬â •is finally within everyone's reach."Ã¢â ¬â •Geoff Colvin, author of Talent Is Overrated: What Really Separates World-Class Performers From Everybody Else"The Willpower Instinct is a new kind of self-help book. Using science to explain the why and strategies for the how, McGonigal has created a must-read for anyone who wants to change how they live in both small and big ways."Ã¢â ¬â •Book Page"Each chapter could stand on its own as something helpful, but taken as a whole, this book could be downright life-altering. If you are trying to lose weight, become more successful at work, rid yourself of toxic habits...heck, if you're HUMAN, you need to read this book."Ã¢â ¬â •Library ThingÃ¢â ¬Å“This book has tremendous value for anyone interested in learning how to achieve their goals more effectively. McGonigal clearly breaks down a large body of relevant scientific research and its applications, and shows that awareness of the limits of willpower is crucial to our ability to exercise true self control.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •Jeffrey M. Schwartz, M.D., co-author of You Are Not Your Brain and author of bestselling Brain LockÃ Â Ã¢â ¬Â• **** out of four.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã Â Ã¢â ¬â •USA Today Book ReviewÃ Â Ã¢â ¬Å“A fun and readable survey of the field, bringing willpower wisdom out of the labs.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •TIME magazine

Kelly McGonigal, Ph.D., is an award-winning psychology instructor at Stanford University, and a lecturer and program developer at the Stanford Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education. She is also the author of The Upside of Stress andÃ Â Psychology TodayÃ¢â ¬â„¢s Science of Willpower blog. McGonigal lives in Palo Alto and New York City.

If you need more willpower (don't we all?), then this book is for you.The author leaves no stone unturned as she cites study after study to explain why we lack willpower and how we can get more of it. An important theme throughout the book is awareness-- once we understand the circumstances under which we fail to exercise willpower, then we can began to make changes. And as the author points out at the close of the book, the mere act of becoming more self-aware is sufficient enough to create change in some people's lives. However, do not mistake this to mean that this is simply a book full of academic theory about willpower; rather, each chapter is replete with "experiments" that provide clear-cut guidance as to how you can put the theory into practice in your own life.Here's a brief breakdown of each chapter:1) The author defines willpower, distinguishes between "I will" (I will begin exercising each day) and "I won't" (I won't eat fatty foods) challenges, and discusses how we have essentially two warring sides to our personality (the side that wants instant gratification, and the side that wants to achieve our long-term goals). She suggests tracking

your willpower choices to increase your awareness and meditation as a means of building willpower (willpower is like a muscle and can be trained to become stronger over time).2) The author discusses the evolution of willpower and why a lack of willpower may have served an evolutionary purpose (our ancestors would have been wise to consume large amounts of fatty food if given the opportunity, since there was more uncertainty back then about when their next meal might arise), as well as the ways in which stress reduces our willpower (you are sad after a relationship ended and decide to eat a piece of cake as comfort food). As a means of increasing willpower, the author suggests engaging in focused breathing, outdoor walks or activity (just five minutes is sufficient to have an impact), getting adequate sleep, and lying down to relax.3) The more frequently we exercise willpower, the easier it becomes. Willpower can become drained, and it ebbs and flows throughout the day. Sometimes we think our willpower is exhausted but this is just our brain trying to trick us into conserving energy-- this explains how long-distance runners are able to push on. The author suggests eating a better diet and engaging in certain activities intended to increase willpower.4) This is easily one of the best chapters-- the author discusses "moral licensing" and how we can use our good behavior (not eating chocolate cake) to justify being bad (eating chocolate cake). The author's solution is to remind yourself why you were being good in the first place. This section also discusses how we discount the future and assume that tomorrow will be different than today. We tell ourselves we'll have more willpower tomorrow, but the fact is we will face the same challenges tomorrow that we face today.5) The author discusses the function of dopamine and how it can prompt us to behave like rats pulling a lever to get an electric shock. Many of our willpower failures (e.g., checking email excessively) are simply us pointlessly trying to get a reward because of a rush of dopamine (that occurs when we hear a trigger, like "You've got mail!"). Fortunately, by understanding how dopamine works we can turn it to our advantage by linking rewards to tasks that we've been procrastinating.6) This chapter was counterintuitive and thus incredibly helpful. It turns out that beating yourself up over willpower failures (e.g., I shouldn't have eaten that Twinkie!) actually makes us more likely to fail again because we're making ourselves sad (and what do we turn to when we're sad? More Twinkies, of course!). The author recommends self-acceptance and positivity instead of guilt and self-criticism-- fantasize about how good you'll feel when you eat healthier foods instead of guilt-tripping yourself about that chocolate bar you ate at lunch.7) Many of us see the future far different than we see the present-- we naively assume that we'll be more responsible or have more willpower in the future, so we put off onerous tasks for our "future self" to deal with. Unfortunately, our future self is the same person as our present self, and we're only tricking ourselves if we think otherwise. An additional problem is that some of us deeply discount the

value of future rewards and place far too much emphasis on present rewards (taking $10 today instead of $50 one year from now). The author suggests thinking more about your future self (e.g., using FutureMe.org to write a letter to your future self) to become accustomed to the notion that you and your future self are one and the same. Also, you can "pre-commit" to your future self by doing things like purchasing an expensive gym membership to exercise, but this struck me as a little superficial as someone who is struggling with willpower can simply ignore the commitments they made. On a side note, the author suggests waiting 10 minutes before engaging in any behavior that the present self is screaming for (I NEED to buy that book now!) that I have found incredibly useful.8) Willpower is contagious-- if you hang out with a bunch of people who are unmotivated, you will be tempted to "mirror" their behaviors and emotions. "Social proof" even suggests that we engage in foolish behavior due to a herd mentality (everybody else is doing it, so I should do it too). The author recommends finding a willpower idol we can look up to (someone we believe exerts exemplary willpower), spend some time reviewing our goals at the beginning of each day, and publicly commit to our willpower challenges so the pressure of not disappointing our friends and family can motivate us to exercise self-control. I can personally attest to the power of publicly committing to a challenge, as I thru-hiked the Appalachian Trail in 2012 and saw many hikers continue onward simply because they didn't want to tell everyone they didn't have what it takes to go on. Of course, this strategy isn't fool proof-- otherwise hundreds of people wouldn't quit the trail each year. But knowing that other people are watching is certainly an incentive to exercise willpower. The author also mentions getting a willpower buddy and holding each other accountable, which works for the same reasons that making a public commitment does.9) This chapter seemed a little out of place. The book had been discussing willpower and then all of a sudden it takes a U-turn and starts discussing how unpleasant thoughts can intrude in our minds. However, I soon saw the value in what the author was saying as well as how it fits into the overall willpower picture. The main idea is that we cannot control whether we have unhelpful or even disturbing thoughts, and suppressing such thoughts only causes us to focus on them more. Instead, we need to accept these thoughts, but also acknowledge that we are not compelled to act on them. The author cites an entertaining study about a group of people who were asked not to think of white bears but subsequently could think of nothing else. The trick is to allow yourself to permit the thought (or urge, say to smoke a cigarette) rather than fighting it. We can't control our thoughts, but we can control whether we choose to act on them, and trying to suppress our thoughts only increases the probability we will act on them. Again, it's counterintuitive, but it's supported by an ample amount of research which the author weaves into the narrative of the book.10) A good conclusion, albeit a little

brief.This book is an excellent addition to the positive psychology genre, and I can easily see how this became such a popular class at Stanford (where the author is a professor).If you want to know why you don’t have the willpower you wish you had and how you can take action to change this, then stop procrastinating and exercise the willpower to buy this book :)

I’m one of those people who hate the self-help movement but can’t stop hoping that the next book is actually going to make a difference, that it’s the one that going to make me stop procrastinating and deal with my bad habits. So, I keep on reading books and blogs, only to be disappointed.Not so with this book.While the book offers the regular mix of science, personal experiences and tips, it’s more down-to-earth than other books I have read. Maybe that’s because it’s based on a course that actually dealt with people going through the motions described in this book.Usually, I read a book, highlight what I think makes sense and move on without incorporating what I just noted. In this case, I’m remembering on a daily basis what the author wrote and implementing her suggestions. It might actually be the last self-help book I ever read.

This was a fascinating book. It was brimming with psychology experiments that were both interesting and very revealing. For instance, did you know that if someone offers you a hundred dollars later, or fifty dollars now, you’ll be more likely to wait for the future reward then if they offer you fifty dollars now, or a hundred dollars later? You’re likely to choose the first option offered to you. Or did you know that a person is more likely to splurge on unhealthy food if they’re asked how much progress they’ve made towards their weight loss goal then if you ask them how committed they are to their goal?I think my favorite experiment discussed in this book is the white bear experiment. The essence of the study is that as soon as you tell people to not think about white bears, that’s exactly what they’ll think about. It was a fascinating study on the effects denial has on your brain and your willpower.Smokers who acknowledge their cravings and acknowledge the associated feelings are more successful at quitting than those who try to ignore them. People who deny themselves certain food are more likely to think about the food constantly and ultimately binge on that food, resulting in a fascinating statistic that in the long-term, people who diet end up heavier than those who don’t.However, there were a few contradictions that I think detracted from the book. At one point, the author suggested turning your "I will" power challenge into an "I won’t" power challenge, at another point she suggests doing the opposite. At one point she talks about how if you exhibit superb self-control, you should work on giving in to your willpower occasionally. And while I understand that different people may need different "treatment" methods, I don’t think the difference

was explained as clearly as it could have been, other than "If this doesn't work, try this." I also think there were a few places where the author did a better job of explaining human psychology then actually suggesting a fix for the behavior, such as where she said that the more you think about future you as a different person than current you, the less you will prepare for your future.While the book wasn't perfect, it was an engaging and informative read with practical techniques the reader can employ. I recommend it.

This Book Opened my mind to wealth of Knowledge.I didn't start the challenges scientifically yet, but few things I have started applying and are producing result. Like.. trying not suppress thoughts, consideration of LONG Term goals over immediate gratification. Trying to Avoiding guilt, instead learn and Improve...Many thanks to the Writer!It was mind blowing I loved It.I wish there was a sample Guide, worksheet to assist.

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