WE KNOW THE BENEFITS OF A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE... SO, WHY IS IT SO HARD TO MAKE HEALTHY DECISIONS AT THE END OF THE DAY?

DECISION FATIGUE

- Gradual depletion of decision-making power due to overuse
- Can occur in the absence of physical fatigue
CONSEQUENCES OF DECISION FATIGUE

- Decision paralysis
- Impulsive decisions
- Mistakes
- Loss of self-control

When you're starving, but can't decide what to eat.

PEOPLE HAVING TO EXERT SELF-CONTROL WILL ULTIMATELY MAKE UNHEALTHY DECISIONS

- Finite storage of mental energy for willpower
- Ultimately give up trying to exert self-control

JUDICIAL SYSTEM

JUDGES ARE MORE LIKELY TO GRANT PAROLE EARLIER THAN LATER IN THE DAY

PRESCRIPTIONS FOR ANTIBIOTICS SOMETIMES OR NEVER INDICATED INCREASE THROUGHOUT THE DAY

WAYS TO DEFEAT DECISION FATIGUE:

- Set time limits
- Take a time-out
- Delegate the decision
- Use checklists
- Make a list
- Limit your choices
- Make decisions as a group
- Just decide!

WHY WAS STEVE JOBS ALWAYS WEARING THE SAME OUTFIT?

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“YOU’LL SEE I ONLY WEAR GREY OR BLUE SUITS. I’M TRYING TO PARE DOWN DECISIONS.”

HABITS

ELIMINATE THE NEED FOR SELF-CONTROL

KEY TO FORMING SUSTAINABLE HABITS = LACK OF DECISION-MAKING
TYING IT ALL TOGETHER…

FOUNDATIONAL HABITS

“Self Knowledge is the beginning of Self Improvement”

HEALTHY HABITS

Resilience

“If we change our habits, we change our lives.”

“Clear clutter, make space for you.”

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The Four Tendencies

Gretchen Rubin’s Four Tendencies

- Obliger: Meets outer expectations, meets inner expectations.
- Upholder: Meets outer expectations, meets inner expectations.
- Questioner: Misses outer expectations, meets inner expectations.
- Rebel: Misses outer expectations, misses inner expectations.

Accountability buddy
- Reminders
- Applications / messages
- Visual cues
- Coach / trainer
- Clients
- Money
- Virtual communities
- Mentee/mentor
- Lost loved one
- “Future Self”

Scheduling

Clean Slate... New:
- Year
- Job
- Relationship
- Pet / child
- Season / quarter
- Month

You manage what you monitor, so find a way to monitor whatever matters.

Journal (food, exercise, sleep)
- Budget / money app.
- Fitness monitor
- Tracking results (e.g., weight)
Choose one that ideally takes you deeper into your habit (or reinforces other healthy habits)

- New yoga mat
- Longer gym membership
- Healthy take-out meal
- New book or magazine
- Meditation cushion

**Treats**... small pleasure or indulgence that we give ourselves just because we want it (to boost vitality and self-control)

- Meeting a friend for lunch
- Browsing the bookstore
- Buying a latte

Anticipate and manage temptation with if-then planning

- Dinner parties
- Work-related travel
- Change in energy

Prevents a one-time lapse from turning into a complete relapse

Mindfully shift attention away from the bad habit or temptation and do something else

- Play with your dog or cat
- Go for a walk
- Read a book
- Phone a friend
Pairing...good habits with fun activities and bad habits with not-so-fun activities

- Checking social media --- squats
- Running on the treadmill --- Netflix®

Justifications to excuse ourselves from good habits...

- “I deserve a glass of wine”
- “I’ll go to the gym tomorrow”
- “If I go to bed earlier, I won’t have time with my husband”
- “Work is too busy…”
- “What are weekends for!”
- “All veterinarians are unhealthy”
- “My clients need me, there’s not time to focus on my health”
- “You only live once” (YOLO)

SO...HOW DO YOU GET STARTED?

- Pick a habit that you would like to adopt
- Start with a foundational habit (unless you’ve already tackled those!)

USE SMART GOALS TO DESCRIBE YOUR HABIT

CONSIDER YOUR TENDENCY AND HOW IT MIGHT HELP

TRY TO USE STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT YOUR HABIT
EXAMPLE: I WANT TO GET MORE SLEEP…

• Specific: I want to get the recommended amount of sleep daily
• Measurable: I will sleep 7 hours each night
• Achievable: If I set an alarm for bed, I think it will help
• Realistic: Right now I sleep 6 1/2 hours per night (so increasing this by 30 min seems doable)
• Timely: I will start tomorrow

EXAMPLE: I WANT TO GET MORE SLEEP…

• Upholder: set a bedtime alarm
• Obliger: ask your partner to go to bed at the same time
• Questioner: keep a sleep log to track your hours / energy levels
• Rebel: if you feel like sleeping more, then do, if not, then don’t!

EXAMPLE: I WANT TO GET MORE SLEEP…

• Scheduling: set a bedtime alarm in your phone
• Monitoring: use your FitBit® to measure your sleep habits
• Reward: buy new bed sheets, pillows, mattress, etc.
• Convenience: simplify your bedtime routine
• Safeguard: anticipate being out “late” for social events and plan sleep accordingly

Conclusions

• Decision fatigue is common and can lead to unhealthy choices
• Habits eliminate the need for self-control
• Understanding your traits and tendency can help foster habit formation
• Use SMART goals and strategies that support habit formation
• Know that it can take 3 weeks to form a habit

QUESTIONS?
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Biweekly wellness posts

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