

61. Self-discipline / Self-Control

Discipline is the soul of an army. It makes small numbers formidable; procures success to the weak and esteem to all. (George Washington)

The Sirens were three mysterious women who, according to Homer's *Odyssey*, lived on an island. Whenever a ship passed by, they would stand on the cliffs and sing. Their beautiful song would tempt sailors closer and closer, until eventually they were shipwrecked on the rocks below. Odysseus was curious to hear the Sirens' song but was well aware of the dangers. He ordered his men to tie him to the mast as they approached the island and then to plug their own ears with beeswax. When Odysseus heard the Siren call, he demanded to be untied, but his shipmates bound him more tightly, releasing him only when the danger had passed. The story explores the powerful pull we all feel at times to flirt with choices that take us off the right course. The point of this story is that self-discipline is what ties you to your purpose and stops you from making a shipwreck of your life and destiny.

When he was diagnosed with ADHD as a child, his kindergarten teacher told his mother, Michael can't sit still. He can't be quiet, he's not gifted. Your son will never be able to focus on anything. Yet Michael Fred Phelps II is the most successful and most decorated Olympian of all time, with a total of 28 medals. Phelps also holds the all-time records for Olympic gold medals, Olympic gold medals in individual events and Olympic medals in individual events. Today, his mother reports, Michael's ability to focus amazes me. His coach since the age of eleven, Bob Bowman, calls it his strongest attribute. How did it happen? He trained daily 365 days a year from the age of fourteen. He spent up to six hours in water daily. He channelled all his energy into one discipline.

I have found 999 keys to success, but without self-discipline none of them works! (Kop Kopmeyer)

Discipline is a constant human awareness of a need for action and a conscious act by us to implement that action. If our awareness and action happen at the same time, then we begin a valued sequence of disciplined activity. If there is considerable time that passes between our time of awareness and action, then that is called procrastination. This is an almost exact opposite of discipline. We are always presented with these two choices: do it now or do it later. A choice between a disciplined existence which leads to achievement and contentment or procrastination leading an easy life in which the future will bear the fruit of regret and bare branches of mediocrity. A do-what-you-can attitude or do-what-you-must attitude. Procrastination says, Do it tomorrow instead of today. Discipline says, Get it done today and do it now, to the best of your ability, and then do it every day always, until finally the worthy deed becomes an instinctive habit that leads to achievement. The rewards for a disciplined life are immeasurable, though they are often delayed till sometime in the future; but be assured they will come. The reward for lack of discipline is immediate - like a fun day at the beach - but the reward for discipline can be like owning the beach. Choose fortune over pleasure, choose a disciplined life.

Success is tons of discipline. (Al Tomsik)

Our world seems to be designed to give fewer rewards to easy things and more rewards to the things that are not so easy and require discipline. You cannot succeed beyond your discipline. You must run on a schedule.

Keep doing what you are doing in a disciplined way and it will grow. It will grow, it will keep growing. Just be disciplined. Intelligence is overrated. Discipline can help you achieve beyond those of high intelligence who won't put in the effort. A wise man said if you will do for eighteen months what others won't do, you will do for the rest of your life what others can't do.

Our ambition should be to rule ourselves, the true kingdom for each one of us; and true progress is to know more and be more and do more. (Oscar Wilde)

Self-discipline is the ability to make yourself do what you should do, at the time you should do it, in the way you should do it with consistency and without anyone breathing down your neck. Commitment to do what we should in a consistent way is discipline. Discipline is the difference-maker - the bridge between what we do and what we are capable of doing. Successful people are highly self-disciplined; they guide and encourage themselves to do the work they ought to do. That's what takes average to good and good to great.

With self-discipline almost everything is possible. (Theodore Roosevelt)

Discipline is the bridge between goals and accomplishment. There is little that can withstand a man who can conquer himself, said a wise man. Discipline is the bridge between thought and accomplishment; between inspiration and achievement; between necessity and productivity. It is like a set of magic keys that unlocks all the doors of wealth, self-worth, happiness, culture, high self-esteem, sophistication, satisfaction etc. It helps you feel better about yourself, and that good feeling, that surging feeling of self-worth is almost as good as accomplishing the discipline. Though discipline does not change your destination immediately, it helps you change direction immediately. Discipline attracts opportunity. Opportunity is always looking for ambition, preparation and skill in action. Discipline taps the unlimited power of commitment. Discipline is the unique step of intelligent thought and activity that puts a lid on temper, encourages success and deters failure, enhances health and curbs sickness.

It's not the mountain we conquer but ourselves. (Edmund Hillary)