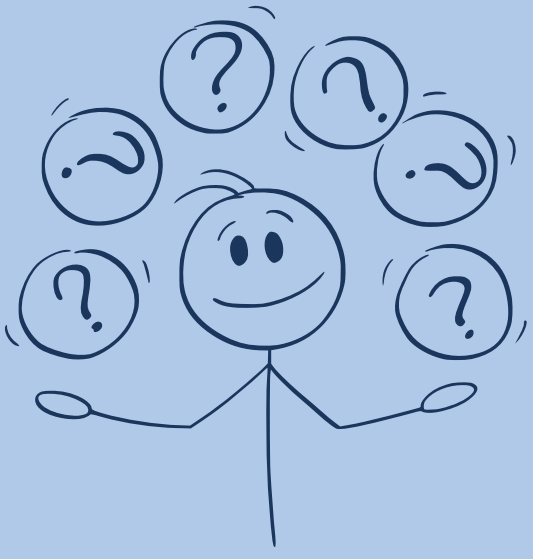
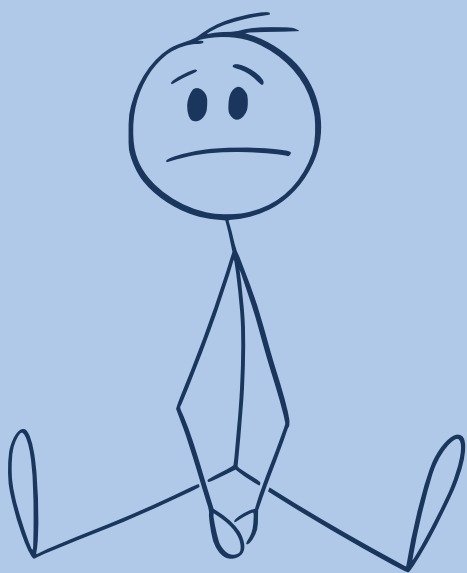


Willpower Wisdom



What is willpower?

- Willpower can be defined as the ability to delay short-term gratification to reach long-term goals.
- Willpower is *not* an innate trait that you're either born with or without.
- It is a complex mind-body response to an internal conflict.
- The need for self-control prompts changes in the brain and body that allow us to resist temptation and override self-destructive urges.
- Willpower is like a muscle that can be trained - it may be tiring at first, but eventually you build more stamina.



Willpower and stress

- The biology of stress and the biology of willpower are incompatible.
- The stress response diverts energy away from the areas of the brain needed for rational decision-making.
- Stress encourages you to focus on short-term outcomes, but self-control requires keeping the big picture in mind.



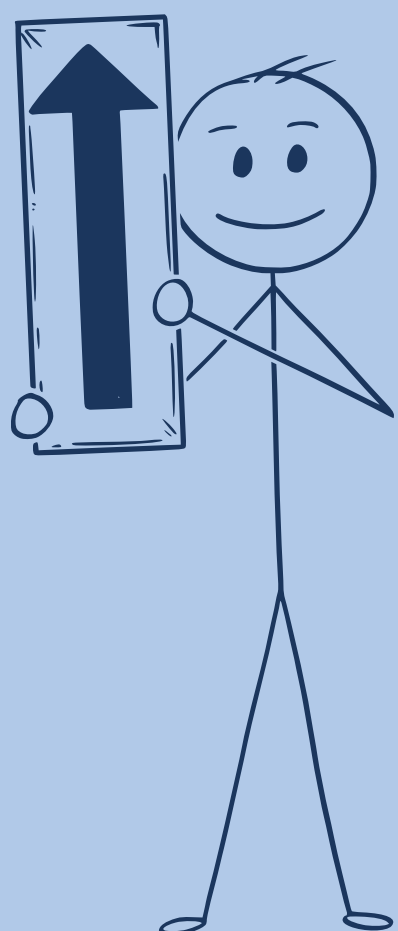
Willpower and sleep

- Sleep deprivation (< 6 hrs/night) is a kind of chronic stress that impairs how the body and brain use energy.
- The prefrontal cortex is especially hard hit, impairing your ability to exert self-control.
- As a result, the brain overreacts to ordinary, everyday stressors and temptations.



Willpower and nutrition

- Nutrition influences the energy that is available to the brain.
- Stable blood sugar levels support brain function and self-control.
- Ignoring hunger, eating too little and eating low-nutrient foods deprive your brain of the energy it needs for decision-making.



How can I have more willpower?

- Manage your stress. Even just taking a few deep breaths when you are feeling overwhelmed or tempted can be very effective.
- Improve the duration and/or quality of your sleep.
- Create a diet that emphasizes nutrient-dense foods containing fiber, protein and healthy fats.
- Eat in a way that honors your body's hunger cues and energy needs.
- Try simple meditation practices. Meditation training improves a wide range of willpower skills, including attention, focus, stress management, impulse control and self-awareness.
- Move more. Regular movement makes the body and brain more resilient to stress, which is a great boost to willpower.
- Clarify your "why." Working towards something that is personally meaningful for you automatically boosts willpower.
- Be realistic and take baby steps. Trying to do more than is possible will kill your willpower.