

Accomplish Difficult Goals With The 4-Layer Method

33 upvotes | 4 March, 2019 | by resolutions316

God I fucking hate that title. I read too many business books.

We talk a lot about what goals we need to accomplish, but not a ton about HOW to accomplish those goals (especially if you've struggled in the past...and if you hadn't, would you even be here?)

Anyway, I picked up this useful method for accomplishing difficult goals in a productivity seminar, and thought I would pass it along.

I am assuming you are familiar with [how to set effective goals](#). And, based on reading the sidebar, you know the general direction you're headed in, right? Good.

There's Always That One Fucking Thing

For almost every system of self improvement, there's going to be one element of it that's much harder than the others. Typically, this is something that goes against our natural tendencies, something we actively dislike and need to expend a lot of will power to get going (building a regular gym habit, for example).

It can also be something in which we have a *knowledge gap* - we're just not sure HOW to get started, and that extra bit of friction prevents us from getting started (I'm like this was game - I haven't done the work to really figure out where, when, and how to practice, and this additional step - sitting down, breaking out some books, and putting together a plan - has thus far added just enough difficulty to trigger my procrastination).

Whenever you have one of "those fucking things" - a goal that's particularly hard to get traction on - it's a good time to build in *layers of accountability*.

Four Layers of Accountability

When you're resistant to doing the work, outside accountability is often the key. The classic example is that if you're having trouble getting to the gym, you hire a trainer. Knowing that the trainer will be there - expects YOU to be there - provides the extra motivation to get you there.

When you have A LOT of resistance to moving forward, build in **4 layers of accountability** to get yourself moving.

The 4 layers of accountability:

Internal (holding yourself accountable by tracking a concrete number and engaging with that number every day)

Mentor (hire a coach, consultant, or trainer to guide and track your progress)

Financial (give yourself a financial penalty if you fail)

Social (have other people keeping track of your progress)

Each of these layers should be personally motivating, for YOU. You should pick people that you really do not want to disappoint for social or mentor accountability, for example. For financial, it should be an uncomfortable sum of money - something that would truly hurt.

Some examples:

I want to lose weight, but I can't make it happen. Ok, let's build in four layers of accountability:

- 1.) hire a diet coach that monitors your diet each week. **(mentor accountability)**
- 2.) get a friend to lose the weight with you, and check in with each other. **(social accountability)**
- 3.) Use <https://www.stickk.com/> to bet an uncomfortable amount of money that you will lose the weight. **(financial accountability)**
- 4.) Plot your weight on a graph and post it prominently above your desk **(internal accountability)**

I want to practice more game. Ok, let's build in four layers of accountability:

- 1.) Join a meet up group that practices game. **(social accountability)**
- 2.) Hire a coach that will give you a plan and check on your progress. **(mentor accountability)**
- 3.) Set a daily conversation target; track it, and do not go to sleep each night unless you hit your target. **(internal accountability)**
- 4.) Bet your friend that you will get 10 phone numbers in the next 30 days. **(financial accountability)**

Having four different layers of accountability is enough to get pretty much anyone moving on anything. Make sure the layers are things you

I can already hear some of you saying, "**Hurr durr you just need to man up and do it bro, hurr durr hurr**"

Well, sure. If you can do that, awesome. But if you're having trouble sticking to some of your goals, accountability is a good way of outsourcing enough will power to get you some forward momentum.

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Comments

Reach180 • 5 points • 4 March, 2019 04:34 PM

I want to lose weight, but I can't make it happen. Ok, let's build in four layers of accountability:

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- 2.) get a friend to lose the weight with you, and check in with each other. (social accountability)
- 3.) Use <https://www.stickk.com/> to bet an uncomfortable amount of money that you will lose the weight. (financial accountability)
- 4.) Plot your weight on a graph and post it prominently above your desk (internal accountability)

In my personal experience, only 4 works. The first 2 cause me to sabotage my goals. #3 I've never tried. Although I won a biggest loser contest once and was fat again in 3 months.

resolutions316[S] • 1 point • 4 March, 2019 04:56 PM

How did the sabotage happen? Curious.

Reach180 • 5 points • 4 March, 2019 05:14 PM

If I'm accountable to someone else, it's easier to rationalize cheating when they aren't around.

There's also that thing - I'm sure there's a name for it - where telling someone about your goal gives you that same dopamine as actually accomplishing your goal. Probably more applicable to the friend than the coach.

Maybe what this all comes down to is that if I'm willing to hold myself accountable, I actually really want to achieve the goal. And if I need someone else to hold me accountable, I simply want to want to achieve the goal.

maineventcomingup • 1 point • 7 March, 2019 07:54 PM

If I'm accountable to someone else, it's easier to rationalize cheating when they aren't around

That's some covert contract bullshit faggot, does it hurt your fee fees too much to own up to letting them down?

Reach180 • 2 points • 8 March, 2019 02:32 AM

covert contract

Hey, we learned a new term this month. Maybe next month you can use it in proper context.

mabden • 1 point • 4 March, 2019 06:06 PM

If I'm accountable to someone else, it's easier to rationalize cheating when they aren't around.

Absolutely. Chicks do this all the time.

weakandsensitive • 11 points • 4 March, 2019 07:48 PM

so do men. so do lazy workers. so do most people in most situations.

i really hate this "hur dur women" attitude.

hack3ge • 5 points • 5 March, 2019 01:45 AM

This post is crap.

All except internal are about motivation but what you want is self discipline.

I eat right and exercise because it matters to me - fuck anyone else.

It's the reason why you are floundering - you look for motivation when you have zero discipline.

resolutions316[S] • 2 points • 5 March, 2019 12:37 PM

Self discipline is highly over rated.

Nothing wrong with feeling proud of what you have accomplished. But it lines up just about zero with all research on behavioral change.

Environmental changes are much more effective at changing actual behavior.

johneypocalypse • 5 points • 5 March, 2019 02:24 PM

Self discipline is highly over rated...

Environmental changes are much more effective at changing actual behavior.

Self-discipline is the single most valuable skill a man can possess, in my opinion. In the absence of that discipline, sure, environmental changes are helpful. But they're not more helpful than actual self-discipline.

Of course weak-willed people lacking self-discipline in the first place make up another story and are sure to turn to other tools, some of which, like the ones you mention, may be helpful.

Importantly, motivation and discipline are very different. Motivation comes and goes with the wind. Discipline either exists or it doesn't exist. Discipline - hopefully - is there for you when motivation wavers.

Edit: I think you saying "self discipline is highly over rated" has merit, because so many people lack self-discipline. It's a strong and relatively rare trait in my experience.

resolutions316[S] • 2 points • 5 March, 2019 08:52 PM

The problem with placing self discipline at the head of the behavioral change hierarchy is that if you were able to do things with just self discipline, you wouldn't need to change your behavior.

Self discipline also isn't a permanent characteristic. Discipline itself is highly environmental and impacted by all sorts of factors (people perform less well on discipline tasks in a laboratory setting when asked to remember a 9 digit number beforehand, for example).

We mostly agree, but it seems like we're inverted; you said your discipline is there for you when all else fails. I think the opposite; when discipline fails, it's environment that ensures success.

I think the one thing we can ALL agree on is that true love is all that matters, and you should just be yourself while looking for that one special girl who will love you forever.

hack3ge • 2 points • 6 March, 2019 01:28 PM

There's a reason why we say the changes must be for you and not to save your marriage and why we say don't worry about her or use the 1000 ft rope analogy.

Authentic change comes because you have the discipline and desire to change yourself and not

because of external factors and the same goes for your wife.

If you require external motivation or external accountability then you aren't ready to change, plain and simple.

resolutions316[S] • 1 point • 6 March, 2019 07:02 PM

It sounds like you're assuming discipline is an unchanging personality characteristic. It isn't.

All sorts of thing affect discipline - diet, sleep, dehydration, depression, past records of success, mindset, access to temptation, public expectations, etc.

All these things are variable. There is no such thing as "self discipline," only patterns of behavior in a specific environment.

Very possible to have the desire but not the discipline. In that case, best to use the environmental tools at your disposal to help you reach your goals.

This is why Odysseus tied himself to the mast when they passed the Sirens. He wanted to hear them sing, but he knew enough not to place too much faith in his self discipline. :-)

hack3ge • 2 points • 7 March, 2019 02:35 PM

All sorts of thing affect discipline - diet, sleep, dehydration, depression, past records of success, mindset, access to temptation, public expectations, etc.

Fuck you just don't get it at all...half of this shit above is fucking excuses or you literally being a faggot. "Access to temptation" holy fucking fuck man - you have been here for over 2 years what the fuck.

Self discipline is 100% a personality trait that you can learn and foster and it carries into all aspects of life.

My kid was up throwing up for 2 hours last night, I was sore as fuck from hard rolls in BJJ helping guys prepare for tournaments and I didn't eat enough yesterday - you know what my faggot ass didn't do, skip the gym this morning. I still showed the fuck up and got the work done because its just what I do. I didn't expect a trainer to give me a call or my buddy to show up and ring the doorbell and drag my ass out of bed or have some bullshit contest I'm running at work to see how much weight I can lose in x weeks.

Fuck man you need to drop your ego here and realize this is likely the biggest thing holding you back. You continue to rely on external motivations to make changes and progress in your life. Do that shit for you because you fucking deserve it and because no one else is going to do it for you. Once you realize that you can literally accomplish anything just because you have the will to do it the world changes.

P.S. - You should check out the books and podcast by Jocko Willink - might do you some good.

resolutions316[S] • 0 points • 7 March, 2019 08:30 PM

Well have to agree to disagree, I suppose.

To be clear, nothing I've said here is "my opinion." Everything above is demonstrable in a lab.

This is like, three decades of behavioral psychology. You can believe that's horse shit

- that's your prerogative. But I think that will lead you to make worse decisions over time.

I'm in the top 1% of earners worldwide. I'm in the best shape of my life. I have happy and healthy kids. I work less than 30 hours a week.

I use motivation and discipline for exactly none of that. I use systems - systems, systems, systems. Even coming on MRP is a system - an environmental trigger and habit that forces me to continuously engage with my weakest personality traits.

It sounds like your process is working for you. I would just argue that I am more like the general population than you are.

hack3ge • 2 points • 7 March, 2019 08:49 PM

Yes you are correct and hit the nail on the head - you are more like the general population than me.

CaptJohnLukeDiscard • 4 points • 4 March, 2019 04:09 PM

I read this a couple of times and I don't like this post because it's too damned simple.

So is "just go to the gym." So is "stop chugging sodas all day." So is "just go ask for her number already." So is "STFU when she nags."

Sometimes, hard problems are solved by simple solutions that just aren't fun but you do them anyway.

Good post.

SBIII • 2 points • 5 March, 2019 11:04 AM

Everywhere I turn, in every post - people making things more complicated than they need to be.

resolutions316[S] • 3 points • 5 March, 2019 12:39 PM

Nah. Behavioral change IS complicated.

If behavior wasn't hard to change we'd all be thin and healthy.

We ain't.

(I mean, *I* am. But I'm Chad, sooo)

simbarlion • 1 point • 6 March, 2019 01:51 AM

Did you miss my post on the 6-layer method for keeping things simple?

hack3ge • 1 point • 6 March, 2019 01:29 PM

I made a post on 7-layer mexican dip - shit is on point

Rhyat250 1 points 4 March, 2019 04:30 PM **[recovered]**

Please dont say "god" so casual please

gettingmymojoback • 3 points • 4 March, 2019 04:53 PM

God, I wonder why you're not getting your balls drained on the regular....

weakandsensitive • 2 points • 4 March, 2019 06:07 PM

god damn

resolutions316[S] • 1 point • 4 March, 2019 04:55 PM

Lol