

3 Habits that Build Relentless Discipline

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The New Year is over a month old now, and most New Years resolutions have been forgotten or tossed aside. There's a simple reason for this: **most resolutions focus too much on the RESULT and not enough on the PROCESS.**

This mindset has been HUGE for me in athletics, coaching, school, relationships, you name it. I was extremely fortunate to have Brian Cain as my high school athletic director and mentor. Cain helped mold me from a flustered headcase into a calm, focused athlete. I never would have made a college baseball roster without Cain's mental game advice.

You'll never get results unless you make a plan, stay disciplined and trust the process. That said, resolutions that focus on the process instead of the result are bound to be more successful. For example:

Result-Oriented Goal	Process-Oriented Goal
Lose 10 pounds	Eat more veggies and fewer starches at each meal
Get better grades	Study 10 minutes each day before breakfast
Make more friends	Say "Hi" to at least one stranger every day
Get stronger	Get a program or hire a coach

You can see that the 'result' column is way too abstract and doesn't include a plan of action to reach the goal. On the other hand, the 'process' column includes **a daily action or habit** to get you closer to your goal on day at a time. **Daily action toward a goal requires discipline. Like any skill, you have to make discipline a habit.** It has to become automatic – something you do without thinking about it. We're talking raw behavior modification, which doesn't happen overnight.

Here are three habits that can help you **build discipline, focus on the process and reach your goals.**

1. MAKE YOUR BED

I think I made my bed the first day of college and didn't make it again for four years. But once I graduated, I learned that **daily excellence starts the moment you wake up.**

Cain talks about the importance of morning routines. When Philadelphia Eagles head coach Chip Kelly was the football coach at the University of Oregon, he would have his players make their beds every morning. This started the day with attention to detail and forced the players to **act differently than they feel.** That last point is important. Even if you're tired, hung over or would rather just stay under the covers, getting up and making the bed starts the morning on a positive note and sets the tone for the rest of the day.

2. FLOSS EVERY NIGHT

I wish I could remember where I read it, but a trainer once wrote that before he ever designed a diet plan or gave nutritional advice to a client, he told them to start flossing every night. He said **if they couldn't make the simple commitment to floss, they weren't ready to revamp their eating habits.** It makes perfect sense. Flossing is one of the simplest things you can do to enhance your health. And it's way easier than counting calories or cycling carbs. It's a good first step towards taking control of your eating habits and improving your nutrition.

3. PICK UP PENNIES

Another Brian Cain gem: every time you see a penny on the ground, pick it up.

This is not a get-rich-quick (or get-rich-ever) scheme. It's about doing just a little bit extra to be successful. Here's my personal example. I know that I have a lot of work to do if I want to make strength and conditioning my full-time career. So I get up early and do work. I don't always feel like it, but it has to be done. There have been days I've slept in instead of getting up early, and every single time I've felt like a jackass for staying in bed. **But not once have I gotten up early and regretted it,** even if I didn't want to at the time.

Getting up early is how I pick up my pennies. How do you pick up yours?

Here's an excerpt from Cain's book:

PICK UP PENNIES – DISCIPLINE WINS

My grandfather and I were walking to Space Mountain at Disney World when he stopped and asked if I had seen the penny on the ground that I just stepped over. I had seen it but was fired up to attack Space Mountain and did not want to waste the time to pick up the penny. He stopped me dead in my tracks, asked for 30 seconds of totally undivided attention and told me that picking up pennies would make me rich. I told him that I could spend my whole life picking up pennies and never become rich like a millionaire.

Then, what he said changed my life – the eureka moment that helped paved my path to success.

He said that picking up the monetary value of the penny was not what would make me rich; rather, it was the habit of picking up the penny, the habit of doing what others don't have the time to do, are too busy to do, just don't want to do, or don't think is important enough to do.

Next time you see a penny on the ground, discipline yourself to pick it up. Be reminded that success is about doing what others are not willing to do, and is a result of the daily commitment to doing the little things, to picking up the pennies.

What is an example of picking up pennies for you right now? What is the thing that you must do that others are not willing to do?

So you can see it's not about the money. It's about doing the little extra things that most people won't. Be disciplined, go the extra step and pick up pennies – literally or figuratively.

WE ARE WHAT WE REPEATEDLY DO

Discipline doesn't have to be scary or complicated. A few small changes can add up in the long run. Make a habit of these three simple actions and you'll be on the road to a more disciplined, successful life.

Stop Saying These 4 Phrases If You Want to be Successful

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Thoughts become things. What you think about, you bring about. Your thoughts will manifest your physical actions.
– Brian Cain

This past weekend I drove down to Pennsylvania to coach my good friend Dave through his first powerlifting meet. Dave's been training hard and kicked ass on the platform, hitting PRs across the board. I was immensely proud, not just because Dave and I go way back (we were partners for our senior thesis in undergrad), but because Dave, a former skinny kid who was about as far from a powerlifting prototype as you could get, took it upon himself to put in the work and compete.

On the drive back, I listened to an EliteFTS podcast with Coach Mark Watts and, to my surprise, Brian Cain. Cain was my high school athletic director and has gone on to become *the* premier mental conditioning coach in the nation, working with top-level professional and college teams along with champion athletes like Georges St-Pierre. Watts, a former strength coach at little Denison University in Ohio, has written before about Cain's incredible teachings on mental toughness. The first time I saw Watts mention Cain, I texted Cain right away, saying, "Hey, this awesome coach is singing your praises. Ever heard of him?" Cain replied, "No, I'll have to look him up." So **it's incredibly cool to see that they've joined forces** and kicked out an unbelievably informative podcast.

Cain played a huge role in my young athletic career. I was undersized and *not* that talented, and I can safely say that I never would have had a meaningful college baseball career without Cain's teachings. **He taught me to be unrelentingly positive** and to use my thoughts and words to shape my mindset. He taught me that **perception is reality**. Your self-talk, whether positive or negative, becomes your actions. He taught me that you have to **dominate the day or the day dominates you**, and to never waste a day because **today + today + today = your life**.

It's important to have phrases that you say to yourself every day to keep your mind right. But **it's also important to avoid certain phrases** that send you spiraling into negativity, doubt and self-pity. Over the past few years, I've weeded out a handful of phrases that kept me from being as successful as I wanted to be. If you cut these **four poisonous sayings** out of your life for good, I guarantee you'll be more successful.

1. "I HAVE TO"

"I can't believe I *have* to go to work today."

"I *have* to study for this test."

"I wish I didn't *have* to take extra batting practice to make the team."

We hear stuff like this all the time. We think we *have* to do all kinds of stuff, when in reality, we don't *have* to do anything.

A lion *has* to hunt or it will starve. The gazelle *has* to run or it gets eaten. Suddenly, you realize **all your "have to's" are pretty weak.**

But **simply changing "have to" to "get to" completely changes everything.** Your mindset becomes positive. You treat every opportunity as a privilege and your efforts become deep and sincere.

Who has a better chance of making the team – the guy who says, "I *get* to take batting practice today," or the guy who says, "I *have* to take batting practice today"? **For one guy it's an opportunity and for one it's an obligation.** One will seize the chance and one will trudge through it. No doubt the guy who "gets to" will be more successful.

So the next time you're grumpy about dragging your butt out of bed to go to the gym, or the next time you'd rather not prep your meals ahead of time, think of it this way: you **GET** to exercise. You **GET** to eat healthy. You **GET** to be in control of your life.

2. "HOPEFULLY"

I cringe every time someone answers a question with "hopefully". But wait, you say. Isn't hope great? Aren't you supposed to be unapologetically positive? Yes, absolutely. Hope is huge. But there's extreme danger in putting all your stock in hope. And when you're constantly saying, "Hopefully I get this" and "Hopefully I do that", you're not exuding the confidence necessary to be successful. Remember, thoughts become things, and thoughts form your words, so **if your words lack confidence, so will you.**

Put it this way: **Always have hope, but never rely on it.**

What does that mean? That means never despair. No matter how bad an outcome is, recognize that things will get better. But **do not blindly lean on hope in lieu of concrete actions**. Hope without action is almost always useless.

“I didn’t study for this test so hopefully I don’t fail,” is drastically different than “I studied hard for this test, so I have hope that I’ll do well.”

For a long time, I sat around and said, “I hope I find a strength and conditioning job.” Well, I sat around for two years without taking much action and didn’t find a job. Then I realized I needed to take matters into my own hands. Get out there, meet people, make connections. And finally, I found the next step.

Have hope and take action. Don’t sit back and hope for the best.

3. “GRIND”

I stopped checking Twitter first thing in the morning to avoid all the rage-inducing “Rise and Grind” tweets. Then, I just unfollowed everyone who tweeted anything about “grinding” on a regular basis. Just a heads-up, college kids – you’re not “grinding” if you wake up at 9 a.m.

Yes, we all “grind”, i.e. do things on a daily basis that aren’t fun but are necessary. We get up early, work, exercise, go to class, study, eat food that’s healthy but doesn’t taste the best. We forgo parties, TV, sleeping in, and delicious foods that make us fat and sick. We’re all busy, so get over it.

“Grinding” suggests that you dislike the process. But whether you like it or not, **success comes from focusing on the process, not the result**. So you’d better embrace the process. The more it feels like a grind, the less likely you’ll endure til the end and see things through to a successful result. And if you’re ever tempted to tell someone that you’re out there grindin’, ask yourself this extremely important question: **compared to what?** This is so important that I’ll repeat it in very large letters:

COMPARED TO WHAT?

Cain frequently uses this phrase to keep things in perspective. So you struck out with the bases loaded. So you failed a test. So you slept through your alarm and were late to work. So you’re crippling sore from your workout. Those things might seem bad, but compared to what?

Every day that you wake up in a warm bed, open a fridge full of food, have a bathroom with running water and walk out a front door that doesn't lead to a war zone or third world country, **YOU ARE NOT GRINDING.**

Keep things in perspective. Coupled with “get to vs. have to”, keeping “compared to what” on the tip of your tongue at all times will make even the most difficult of times seem not so bad. And it's a lot easier to work hard when you appreciate how good you have it.

4. “IT IS WHAT IT IS”

My girlfriend will laugh because she knows how much this phrase grinds my gears. I'm all about controlling what you can control, which Cain taught me at a young age. But there's no worse phrase of butt-dragging apathy than “it is what it is.”

Some things in life we can't control. We can't control the shortstop making a diving catch on the line drive we hit. We can't control the umpire that made the wrong call. We can't control the weather, the traffic, the line at the grocery store or tons of other trivial things we get upset about. But chalking things up to “it is what it is” is **giving up before we even determine if something is within our control.**

To be happy in life, **you must learn to be process-oriented, not outcome-oriented.** Before you even *think* about uttering “it is what it is,” ask yourself, “What was my process to arrive at this result?” If your process wasn't satisfactory, whether it's due to a lousy effort or poor planning, you'd better try again and try harder this time. If your process *was* satisfactory, but the result was not, then don't fret and control what you can control. But rather than throwing your hands up and saying “it is what it is,” change your perspective. Say, “I'll do better next time.”

TALK THE TALK, WALK THE WALK

Actions speak louder than words, but words can dictate your actions. Swapping negative or self-doubting phrases for positive and confident ones can completely change your perspective. Step one: eliminate these four useless phrases from your life today. Step two: move forward with a positive, disciplined attitude.