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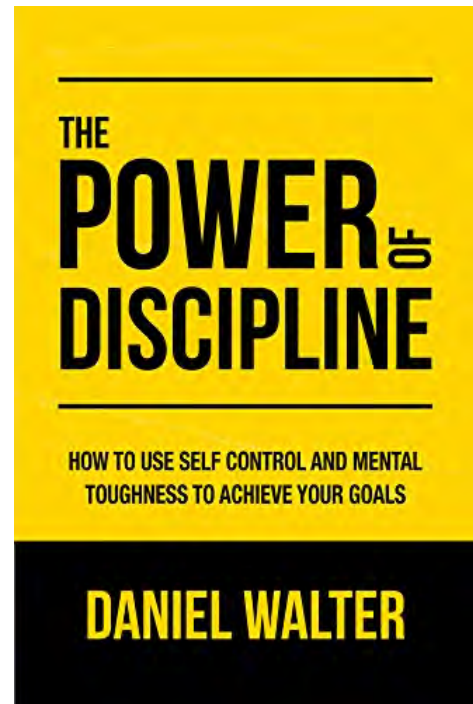
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INSIDER: The Power of Discipline

Corrie A. H. Penraat, MBA

Did you know only about 10% of New Year’s resolutions are achieved? Research cites the biggest reason people fail is a lack of self-discipline. In Daniel Walter’s *The Power of Discipline: How to Use Self Control and Mental Toughness to Achieve Your Goals*, he shares the biological argument of self-discipline, its benefits, and how you can quickly begin increasing self-discipline at home and in the office.

Self-discipline is the key to personal fulfillment and accomplishing your goals. By strengthening this one skill, the ordinary can become extraordinary. Challenge yourself to take responsibility for where you are and where you hope to be in 5, 10, and 15 years both within the real estate industry and in your personal life. You don’t have to be the most talented or most intelligent agent—simply begin taking small steps each day forward toward building healthy habits and strengthening self-discipline.



THINK POINT #1: The Science of Discipline

Most people are under the assumption that when you are born you are either gifted with self-discipline or you are not. Walter says that self-discipline, however, is a learned skill. When you choose to exercise willpower and delay gratification, neuroscientists can detect higher levels of brain activity in the prefrontal cortex. When you make healthy choices, this area of the brain is strengthened like a bicep as you lift weights. On the flip side, neural pathways are weakened when one gives in to impulsivity and immediate gratification. With this type of purposeful reprogramming, discipline is a skill you can develop if you are willing to put in the work.

One’s level of focus directly affects the ability to make use of self-discipline. The ability to focus is determined by “executive functions” including working memories, cognitive flexibility, and impulse control. Discipline, for this reason, will require goal setting and distraction filtering. Write down your goals in your real estate career for the next month, year, and five years. Begin removing distractions that pull you away from these goals. You will not be able to master self-discipline without first addressing focus.

Note that self-discipline, like other strenuous workouts, can eventually cause fatigue. If you are required to say no to the same tempting piece of cake 10 times in the same day, you may eventually falter. The priority of our brain is survival. When we continually face temptation, our

brain biologically begins to crave immediate gratification. The easiest way to beat this is by removing yourself from temptation and reducing stress. Discipline is about “doing what you know you’ve got to do even when you don’t feel like it.”

THINK POINT #2: Get Comfortable with Being Uncomfortable

Self-discipline is not comfortable. Choose to embrace discomfort and resist the urge to take the path of least resistance. Each day, plan to step outside of your comfort zone so that the feeling becomes familiar. The more you confront fears and discomfort, the more quickly you will realize that there is no reason to be afraid. When you can distance yourself from these types of urges, they will lose their power to influence your behavior.

Understanding urge surges is a great first step in overcoming feelings of discomfort and fear. An urge is defined as, “physical and mental impulse to engage in habitual behavior.” Psychologist Alan Marlatt first compared urges to ocean waves; the urge swells up but eventually crashes like a wave. The average length of an urge if you fight it will only last 20-30 minutes. Urge surfing is simply the concept that you can ride an urge till the intensity passes. Urges teach us to resist temptation and ride out the feelings of discomfort.

Urges can only overtake you if you give into them or fight them. Distraction is not enough. Instead, realize where the urge is coming from. Like the urge music gives you to tap your foot, urges usually are felt in some part of the body. Walter stresses that once you have located the urge, focus your energy on observing the sensations you are feeling. Focus on your breath for two minutes. Visualize the urge as a wave swelling and falling as the urge intensifies and then eventually dies. Pay attention to how you are feeling now that the urge has passed. Discipline is all about conquering short-term pains for long-term gains. As you master the practice of discomfort, you can slowly begin to change habits.

THINK POINT #3: How to Build Self-Discipline

Habits are daily activities you perform without even thinking. Just as brushing your teeth before bed requires little to no effort, Walter’s aim is to make the actions you need to achieve your real estate goals become just as natural. The only difference between successful and unsuccessful people are the habits they follow each day. Set a healthy routine and stick to it. Everything you do should aim toward improving your mental, physical, and spiritual wellbeing.

Your morning routine, in particular, is of great importance because it sets the tone for your entire day. Get out of bed when your alarm goes off, exercise, and eat healthy before heading to the office or meeting your first client for the day. Take note of your bedtime habits as well! Turn off your phone, avoid caffeine and nicotine, and get a minimum of eight hours of sleep each night.

Set goals, create small actionable steps, and celebrate milestones along the way. Soon you will begin building momentum. Stay organized as you tackle your goals. Organization will help you improve productivity, decrease stress, have higher levels of energy and enthusiasm, and encourage a positive self-image. Rome was not built in a day, just as your aspiration in real estate will not happen without a diligent daily pursuit.

Conclusion

Walter concludes with a simple call to action saying, “your life is a reflection of the decisions you have made, and if you want a better future, it’s essential for you to start making better decisions.” Self-discipline is a lifestyle and a part of a person’s character. All of the talent, skill, or intellect in the world will not promise you a successful and fulfilling life. Self-discipline is an inevitable predictor of how far you make it in life. The choice is up to you, so how far will you go to master self-discipline and take your real estate career and personal life to the next level?

Recommended Reading

Walter, Daniel (2020), *The Power of Discipline: How to Use Self Control and Mental Toughness to Achieve Your Goals*, Pristine Publishing: Coppel, Texas.

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Corrie Penraat earned her MBA in Data Analytics from Baylor University and a Bachelor of Science in International Business from Grove City College. Her past work experience includes roles for non-profits such as World Vision and Samaritan’s Purse. Corrie currently serves as an Associate Technical Specialist for The Walt Disney Company.



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