


DECISION FATIGUE



cognitive resources are scarce, limited, quickly and easily-depleted

- Gradual depletion of decision-making power due to overuse
- Can occur in the absence of physical fatigue



CONSEQUENCES OF DECISION FATIGUE

- Decision paralysis
- Impulsive decisions
- Mistakes
- Loss of self-control

When you're starving, but can't decide what to eat.

PEOPLE HAVING TO EXERT SELF-CONTROL WILL ULTIMATELY MAKE UNHEALTHY DECISIONS



- Finite storage of mental energy for willpower
- Ultimately give up trying to exert self-control

JUDICIAL SYSTEM

JUDGES ARE MORE LIKELY TO GRANT PAROLE EARLIER THAN LATER IN THE DAY

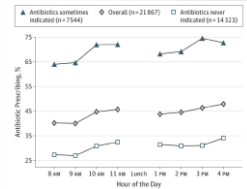


PRESCRIPTIONS FOR ANTIBIOTICS SOMETIMES OR NEVER INDICATED INCREASE THROUGHOUT THE DAY

Published in *Health Affairs* (doi:10.1371/journal.pmed.1001422) 2014

Time of Day and the Decision to Prescribe Antibiotics

Jeffrey A. Linder, MD, MPH, Jason N. Doctor, PhD, Mark W. Friedberg, MD, MPP, Harry Reyes Navea, BA, Caroline Birks, MD, Daniela Meeker, PhD, and Craig R. Fox, PhD
 Division of General Medicine and Primary Care, Brigham and Women's Hospital, Boston, Massachusetts (Linder, Friedberg, Reyes Navea); Harvard Medical School, Boston, Massachusetts (Linder, Friedberg, Reyes Navea); Center for Health Policy and Economics, University of Southern California, Los Angeles (Doctor); RAND, Boston, Massachusetts (Friedberg); Division of General Medicine, Massachusetts General Hospital, Boston (Birks); RAND, Santa Monica, California (Meeker); Anderson School of Management, University of California, Los Angeles (Fox)



ways to defeat decision fatigue:

- set time limits
- take a time-out
- delegate the decision
- use checklists
- make a list
- limit your choices
- make decisions as a group
- just decide!

WHY WAS STEVE JOBS ALWAYS WEARING THE SAME OUTFIT?





DOG TRAINING (ADVANCED)
HUMAN BRAIN

"The prefrontal cortex is involved in higher mental functioning, like using a can opener and remembering to feed you."

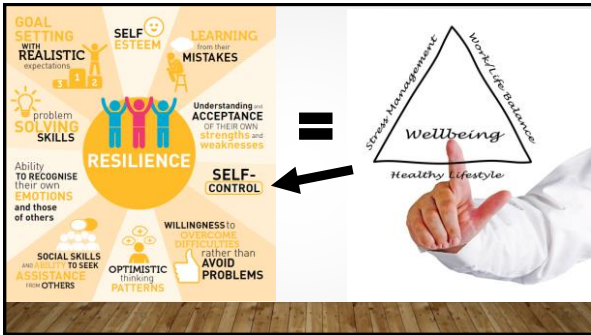
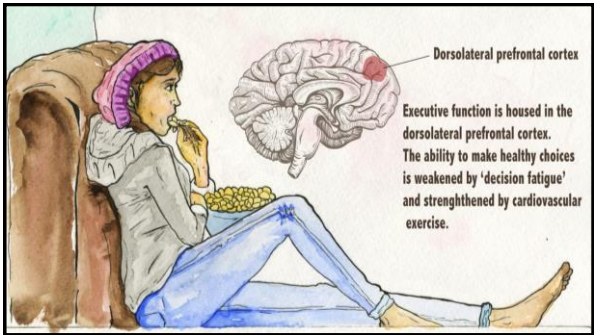
DECISION FATIGUE (EXAMPLE)

5 DECISIONS IN A DAY

10 DECISIONS IN A DAY

20 DECISIONS IN A DAY

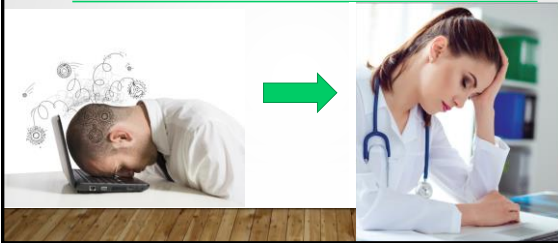
30 DECISIONS IN A DAY



HABITS ELIMINATE THE NEED FOR SELF-CONTROL

KEY TO FORMING SUSTAINABLE HABITS = LACK OF DECISION-MAKING

TYING IT ALL TOGETHER...



TYING IT ALL TOGETHER...

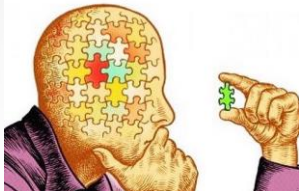


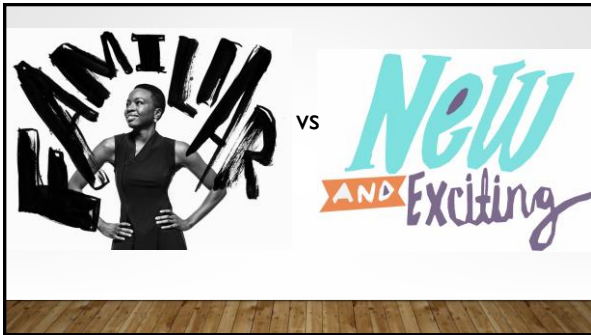
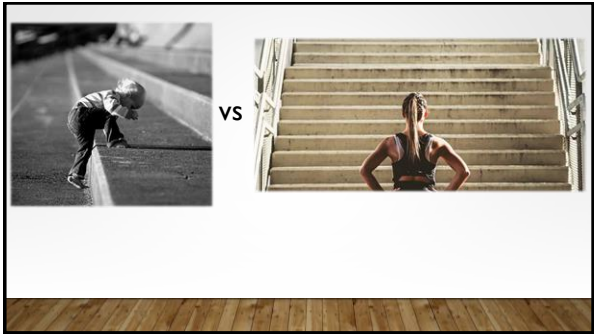
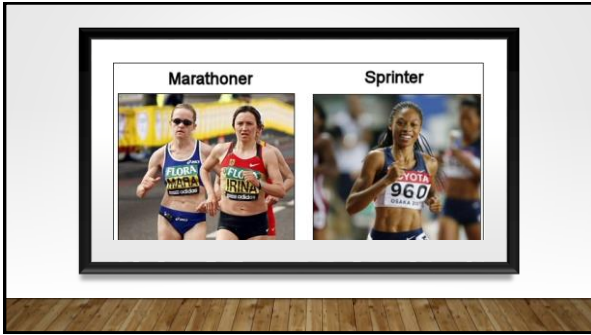
"If we change our
HABITS,
we change our
LIVES"
--Gretchen Rubin



FOUNDATIONAL
HABITS

"Self Knowledge is
the beginning of
Self Improvement"





www.happiercast.com/quiz

Gretchen Rubin's Four Tendencies

www.happiercast.com/quiz

- Accountability buddy
- Reminders
- Applications / messages
- Visual cues
- Coach / trainer
- Clients
- Money
- Virtual communities
- Mentee/mentor
- Lost loved one
- "Future Self"

You manage what you monitor, so find a way to monitor whatever matters.

- Journal (food, exercise, sleep)
- Budget / money app.
- Fitness monitor
- Tracking results (e.g., weight)

GRETCHENRUBIN.COM | #BETTERTHANBEFOREBOOK

Clean Slate...New:

- Year
- Job
- Relationship
- Pet / child
- Season / quarter
- Month



Choose one that ideally takes you deeper into your habit (or reinforces other healthy habits)

- New yoga mat
- Longer gym membership
- Healthy take-out meal
- New book or magazine
- Meditation cushion




Treats...small pleasure or indulgence that we give ourselves just because we want it (to boost vitality and self-control)

- Meeting a friend for lunch
- Browsing the bookstore
- Buying a latte



CONVENIENCE vs **Sorry for the Inconvenience!**



Anticipate and manage temptation with *if-then planning*

- Dinner parties
- Work-related travel
- Change in energy

Prevents a one-time lapse from turning into a complete relapse



I DON'T ALWAYS GET DISTRACTED

HEY LOOK, A SQUIRREL!

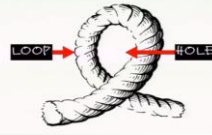
Mindfully shift attention away from the bad habit or temptation and do something else

- Play with your dog or cat
- Go for a walk
- Read a book
- Phone a friend



Pairing... good habits with fun activities and bad habits with not-so-fun activities

- Checking social media --- squats
- Running on the treadmill --- Netflix®



Justifications to excuse ourselves from good habits...

- "I deserve a glass of wine"
- "I'll go to the gym tomorrow"
- "If I go to bed earlier, I won't have time with my husband"
- "Work is too busy..."
- "What are weekends for?"
- "All veterinarians are unhealthy"
- "My clients need me, there's not time to focus on my health"
- "You only live once" (YOLO)

SO... HOW DO YOU GET STARTED?

- Pick a habit that you would like to adopt
- Start with a foundational habit (unless you've already tackled those!)



USE SMART GOALS TO DESCRIBE YOUR HABIT



CONSIDER YOUR TENDENCY AND HOW IT MIGHT HELP



TRY TO USE STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT YOUR HABIT

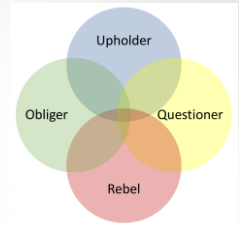


EXAMPLE: I WANT TO GET MORE SLEEP...

- Specific: I want to get the recommended amount of sleep daily
- Measurable: I will sleep 7 hours each night
- Achievable: If I set an alarm for bed, I think it will help
- Realistic: Right now I sleep 6 ½ hours per night (so increasing this by 30 min seems doable)
- Timely: I will start tomorrow

EXAMPLE: I WANT TO GET MORE SLEEP...

- Upholder: set a bedtime alarm
- Obliger: ask your partner to go to bed at the same time
- Questioner: keep a sleep log to track your hours / energy levels
- Rebel: if you feel like sleeping more, then do, if not, then don't!



EXAMPLE: I WANT TO GET MORE SLEEP...

- Scheduling: set a bedtime alarm in your phone
- Monitoring: use your FitBit® to measure your sleep habits
- Reward: buy new bed sheets, pillows, mattress, etc.
- Convenience: simplify your bedtime routine
- Safeguard: anticipate being out "late" for social events and plan sleep accordingly



Conclusions

- Decision fatigue is common and can lead to unhealthy choices
- Habits eliminate the need for self-control
- Understanding your traits and tendency can help foster habit-formation
- Use SMART goals and strategies that support habit formation
- Know that it can take 3 weeks to form a habit

QUESTIONS?

criticalcarevet@outlook.com
www.criticalcarevet.ca

 [DrMarieKHolowaychuk](#)
 [@DrMHolowaychuk](#)
 Biweekly wellness posts

DR. MARIE HOLOWAYCHUK
Critical Care Vet 

