



ACTION BASED RECOVERY

Module 1: **Self Discipline**

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Phase one: The Benefits of Self- Discipline - Intro

In popular media the idea of being controlled by something or someone is usually quite distasteful.

In science fiction or horror movies, the idea of being taken over by someone or something else is a common theme. Generally, there is some poor person lurching about every which way, their eyes wide and staring, their mouths open in a silent scream as they are forced to do something they do not want to do.

During recovery, exercising self-discipline can feel a lot like you are giving up control to what others want or that you are doing what you “should” do. You may imagine yourself agreeing to be committed to follow a set of rules for the rest of your life. You will think about all the things you will have to give up if you are self-disciplined. You think about all those things you have committed to do – terrible, awful things that you would never do otherwise.

To many people being self-disciplined can seem a lot like a self-imposed jail cell.

Actually the opposite is true! In many ways practicing self-discipline opens you up to the greatest freedom of all. The freedom to choose and to experience a more fulfilling life without the use of alcohol and/or drugs. A life where you have peace of mind and one in which you are no longer controlled by the effects of addiction.

Self-discipline *is not* about control, it is about effectively managing your life’s circumstances.

Everything you have experienced in your life so far is the result of decisions you’ve already made. The good news is you can change what has been happening by making different choices that could help you live a much better life.

As you go through this program you are going to discover just how much freedom self-discipline offers you. You will also be getting several tips on how to put self-discipline into action. The freedom that comes from self-discipline is yours for the taking.

Week One: The freedom of discipline

To a child having no limits is what the freedom of adulthood looks like. After all grown-ups have cars and know how to drive them. They have wallets stuffed with money and when that runs out they have credit cards to solve the rest of their problems.

Children picture adulthood as one long party where they can eat all the cake they want and whenever they want. And when they are done they can get in their cars and drive to the beach, to amusement parks, to everywhere fun and exciting that they have ever dreamed of experiencing.

When children look at the adults in their lives they cannot figure out why they are not just having fun. It seems a horrible waste to be going somewhere called “work” all day. Especially when it doesn’t sound like it is a whole lot of fun.

At some point in our lives we learned that life is not just all fun and games. We realized that a steady diet of cake would lead to a monster stomach ache. We learned that amusement parks cost money and time, two things that always seem to be in short supply. And while driving might still be fun there are the fuel, license, registration and insurance costs.

We learned that the freedom of adulthood also has a whole set of rules and expectations. And adults are faced with all sorts of other people only too willing to tell them what to do.

We lost the control we thought we had over our lives as we adjusted and/or rebelled.

We became bogged down in work and overwhelmed in our relationships. Somehow, we were always out of time and money. Life became less about *action* and more about *reaction*. We became unhappy with the person we had become.

Chances are you have experienced some variation of these experiences.

Now you are looking for a way out. A way to take back your life, to take back the person that you felt like you could always become.

You do not want the world to rule over you. Instead, you want to be in charge. Just like you pictured when you were a kid, only better. You do not want cake for breakfast (or you might, even though you know better now) but you want other things. You want your health back. Peace of mind. A job that fulfills. Relationships you enjoy. You want life at its best. And you realize you are not going to get it until you make the necessary changes.

The only way you are ever going to be free is to learn how to manage your life effectively.

If you still see self-discipline as giving up any control over the life, consider the ways it actually makes you free:

1. Self-Discipline frees you from being trapped in one place.

The biggest challenge of change is finding a way to put yourself and keep yourself in motion. Using self-discipline to act helps you to go forward as the actions you create are repeated as consistently as possible. So, you are not just eating healthy today. You maintain that habit as consistently as possible. Once you are in motion, it is much easier to stay in motion, meaning your odds for maintaining success in your goals are increased dramatically.

2. Self-Discipline frees you from misdirection.

That is because self-discipline is all about laser-focus on what you want. Once your goals are defined you use self-discipline to realize them. This means minimizing how long and/or how often you allow yourself to get distracted.

3. Self-discipline frees you from complicated decision-making processes.

By managing your actions through focusing on your goals your choices tend to become very clear. Either you are doing something that serves your eventual purpose or you are not. It is that simple and maybe not always easy.

4. Self-discipline frees you from procrastination.

By using the motivation that comes from staying on course you have more energy to act. This means that things will be able to get done with a minimum of excuses and procrastination.

5. Self-discipline frees you from acting on your emotions.

Decisions based on runaway emotions tend to be the ones we regret the most. By using self-discipline to manage your emotions you can make decisions that are also guided by logic and facts rather than on only what you are feeling at the time.

6. Self-discipline frees you from temptation.

When you are in the zone and focused on achieving your goals those old habits you are trying to break just do not have the same hold on you they once did. Temptation starts to fall away as you discover the joy of a life no longer being influenced by old behaviors.

So, what does this look like then when it is all put into practice?

- **On waking up:** The self-discipline of a morning routine frees you from a stressful start to the day. You are more energized, organized, and ready to face whatever comes your way.
- **When you exercise:** Using self-discipline to establish a regular workout routine frees you from all the problems that go along with a body that was not in shape. This means you now have more energy and stamina. You feel better and stronger and can do more than you used to be able to do.

- **When dealing with money:** Self-discipline in the world of finance means being caught up on your bills and managing your debt. You might even be saving for something special that you will want in the future. This frees you up from worry about not having enough, over the utilities being turned off or the rent going unpaid. You have confidence that the money is there for things you need and even for some of the things you want.
- **When you eat right:** With self-discipline you are eating what is right for you. If you have diabetes it means your food choices are under control in regard to sugar. If you want to lose weight you are not indulging in a lot of junk food. If you are looking to be healthier then maybe you are not eating fast food so much, or you have cut out processed foods. Eating right frees you from a lot of health concerns. Even the things you may currently suffer from, like high blood pressure, become less of a worry because you are eating what is right to manage it. Having relatively consistent self-discipline to manage your food choices means you can even let loose once in a while and have that special treat. You have the freedom to know that the occasional splurge is not going to hurt you.
- **When you explore new ideas:** By using self-discipline to read more about what interests you and what is related to your goals you can find new ideas and strategies that will help you achieve and maintain your success. This will help you be more of an activist in the things that matter most to you.
- **When dealing with people at work:** By practicing the self-discipline of saying no you are now free from being trapped in obligations that serve you no purpose and do not push your career forward. By applying self-discipline to the quality of your work you are freed from the worry regarding job security. You also have the comfort of knowing that you are acting as an important part of the team – something that will not go unnoticed at employee review time.

- **When you start making healthier choices:** By using self-discipline to quit smoking or to quit a habit involving alcohol and/or drugs you are freeing yourself from an addiction that is not only costly but does have other harmful side effects.
- **When you manage your time:** By using self-discipline to arrive on time for things you free yourself from worrying about being late. It also frees you from the consequences that result from being late. Using self-discipline to manage your calendar frees you from the inconvenience of missed appointments and of overbooking yourself.
- **When you establish new habits:** By using self-discipline to create new behaviors that are admirable or useful you free yourself from old habits that have been holding you back. You are no longer tied to the habits that hold you back because you are embracing habits that move you forward.
- **On relationships:** By using self-discipline in your relationships you no longer allow people to take advantage of you. You set boundaries that free you from toxic relationships that only drag you down.
- **As you are in recovery:** By using self-discipline to be abstinent you have the freedom to party and truly have fun. You will find you save considerable money and not suffer from hangovers or other consequences. You might even find you enjoy your time better when you have a clear head.
- **When you go to bed:** By using self-discipline to establish a bedtime and a routine to go with it you give yourself the freedom of a good night's sleep. You will wake up more rested and more ready to face the day.

As you can see there are numerous (and maybe even surprising) ways that using discipline actually restores you to a life of freedom. This is by no means an exhaustive list. As you develop your own plan of self-discipline you are going to find some freedoms that are uniquely your own.

But first you have to begin. To help you get started with your plan you will now learn tips on how to establish a life of self-discipline and how to fine tune it to suit your needs.

Week Two: Self-discipline tips part 1

To fully explore the freedom, and yes, even joy, that comes with self-discipline you have to first start with making some decisions.

Developing a self-discipline practice may not be easy at first, but it is worth the effort because it yields a high payoff.

Start by doing an honest assessment of where you are right now. Only you know what you need. Only you can define the things that would enable you to be your best you.

Since your idea of self-discipline is going to be different than that of others, then you know you can discount criticism you may face from others that is not useful. Commit to change and free yourself from worrying about the thoughts of others.

Are you ready? Let's get started?

Create a goal.

Start by setting a goal in any of the areas of your life where you are dissatisfied. When it comes to Self-Discipline you will start first with the end result you hope to see. Then you can go back and determine the repeating behavior that will get you there.

If you have a history of drug and/or alcohol use and your goal is to be in recovery then your self-discipline will come in the form of abstaining from drug and/or alcohol use. To make this easier start with just a few goals and then ask yourself how self-discipline can help you accomplish your goals.

Find your reason.

You are never going to get anywhere if you are not motivated to begin. While having a goal is a good start it is important to know why you are doing what you are doing.

To some the reason becomes obvious. To the person who has lost a relationship, has a DUI and has trouble paying bills becoming and staying abstinent are easy goals to identify. He/she knows exactly why he/she wants to be in and stay in recovery. For other's it might take some soul searching to understand just what makes your particular goal so important.

Once you have this information, then use it. Create affirmations that you can read to yourself often or memorize.

It is also helpful to schedule time to regularly reflect on your goals and reasons. You will want to see if there are any helpful changes you would want to add to them. As you work towards change you might find some of these motivations changing as well.

Create a backup plan.

Maybe your first goal does not work out the way you wanted it to or you hit a major obstacle along the way.

Why?

Chances are the fault was not in the goal, but in the means you were using to get there. Here is where a backup plan becomes important. Not everything is going to work as expected or planned.

For example, you hoped to stop using drugs or alcohol by going to 2 meetings a week. But then you started craving.

Are you going to struggle or give in and use? Without a backup plan, chances are you are going to struggle or use. If you plan ahead in case you start to slip by knowing that you will go to more meetings then you will be ready for when things do not go as planned.

Start with simple changes.

Nothing guarantees failure quicker than biting off more than you can chew. In the

world of self-discipline this becomes an especially important point. Self-discipline is already challenging when you are first starting out so do not make things that much more difficult for yourself.

Start in small ways. Choose a goal you can attain fairly easily or do not choose too many goals at one time. This will help self-esteem and confidence. It will set you up for success with bigger or more goals in the future. Just keep taking things one step at a time.

Know what you want to do that is different from what you have done before.

The very definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results.

Obviously, something was not working in the way you were doing things before or you would not have made the goal to change things. What are some things that have derailed you in the past? Are there certain trigger points or situations that sent you down the wrong path? Decide now what you can do differently before you are confronted with those situations again.

For example: Maybe you always wound up drinking or using drugs whenever you went out with your old friends from college. What will you need to do to avoid doing this in the future?

Maybe you need to have a healthy drink like seltzer with lemon or water instead. Or consider not hanging out with these people entirely. Only you know the pressures and temptations you are facing when you do not stay focused on your goal. Stay determined to change what you used to do so things turn out differently.

Make lists.

By making lists of what you want to do, and of the steps you need to take along the way, you will know what you need to do to stay focused. This will allow you

to have your areas of self-discipline all mapped out nice and clear.

Accept that it's going to be different or challenging.

Self-discipline is going to take some adjusting. You are doing things in new ways and your brain may rebel against you. That is because habits are ingrained in one part of your brain, and when you do something new, that activates another part of the brain entirely.

This means that new things may feel uncomfortable at first. The answer is to keep doing it. Eventually you will begin building new neural pathways as you create the new habit of self-discipline. By then you will not have to think about it at all as it becomes your more natural way of being.

Take an active part in the self-discipline process.

In other words, do not wait around for inspiration to happen or for someone to tell you what to do. It is up to you to make things happen.

Ask yourself what are the areas you are trying to manage more effectively? Then do something. Take action to help you manage your circumstances more effectively and this will give you the momentum to keep it going.

Use your timer, your clock, and your calendar.

Perhaps the areas that you are trying to use self-discipline in seem a little overwhelming. If that is the case try breaking things up into smaller time increments.

If thinking about abstaining from alcohol and/or drug use for a longer period than usual for you seems impossible start with one step at a time. For example, start with the idea of just for this morning and then maybe just for today. Taking small steps one day at a time can help you achieve your goal.

Work out a system of rewards.

To focus endlessly on a goal with no reward can be discouraging and become so

tedious that you may want to give up. Self-discipline is no different. When you have a goal that you are working toward over a long period of time you might feel like you are not making any progress.

That is why it is important to reward yourself along the way. Allow yourself to recognize your step by step successes and celebrate them. Reward yourself in some way. Think of the rewards as a way of reminding yourself that you are making progress.

Use your tech.

Smartphones provide many opportunities to use technology to help you with your self-discipline goals. For example, you have the basic tools that are already on your phone that can help to guide you towards your goals.

By setting reminders you will be alerted automatically when it is time to meditate, do relaxing breathing techniques, go to a meeting, do yoga or exercise, drink water or do anything else that will help you remain in and benefit from recovery.

Your calendar will help you to stay on track of the bigger goals by reminding you of events that pertain to them and also gives you a place to monitor your milestones.

You can even take things to the next level by downloading specific apps that will...

- Track your goals
- Create reports regarding your progress
- Guide practices of meditation and relaxing breathing techniques

Decide what kind of app you would find helpful. You will find apps geared toward recovery goals. And others that are more general and let you customize your goals. A quick search should yield exactly what you need to get started.

Week Three: Self-discipline tips part 2

Eat consistently – probably more often than you think.

Willpower goes right out the window when your blood sugar is low. That is because your brain needs glucose to process information and to work properly.

If you are having a hard time staying on track and getting things done then it might be because you need a snack.

For the best-staying power have a snack that involves both protein and carbs. A handful of almonds paired with some low sugar fruit might make an easy snack for on the go. Hummus or almond butter without added sugar or hydrogenated fats would be a great thing to keep in the fridge at work. You could put either on Simple Mills Almond Flour crackers or lettuce. You could also put the almond butter on a granny smith apple or a celery stalk.

While you're at it, drink water.

A lack of water will slow down brain processes and could make you foggy and unable to remember the very things that you are trying to accomplish.

How do you know if you're dehydrated? Most likely if you are feeling thirsty at all you are probably already there. Most people need about 1 ounce of water for every 2 pounds they weigh every day. If you weigh 140 pounds you want to drink 70 ounces of water. It is also important to remember that although coffee is a liquid, the caffeine dehydrates, so you are not really getting the benefit of the water in your cup of coffee.

Get rid of temptations

Getting rid of the junk food, alcohol and any drugs or drug paraphernalia you have stashed somewhere can be an effective, proactive step you can take to assure your success.

Temptations will derail self-discipline quicker than you can say the word, especially at the start of your self-improvement journey. In addition, do other things that can help you to remain abstinent from either alcohol and/or drugs. For example, go to self-help meetings, get a sponsor, identify strategies for managing your relapse triggers.

Do everything possible to set yourself up for success right from the start. The fewer temptations you have around you the quicker you will be able to establish the practice of self-discipline.

Understand what may sabotage your recovery efforts.

What may have prevented you from remaining abstinent in the past does not have to stop you now. For example, if you wanted to stop drinking or using drugs and either purposely or unwittingly kept a “just in case” supply you now know this is not a good idea.

By learning from the past and having a plan you will be giving yourself the best chance of remaining abstinent. You can let your past and your thoughts about the past impede or derail your success or you can use them to give you a strong foundation for your recovery.

Please remember that change does not usually occur immediately. Be patient, caring and gentle with yourself! Knowing your goal(s) and your past experiences and having strategies to manage them will help you to maintain self-discipline and to ensure the outcome you are seeking.

Know how to fail.

A common meaning of the word fail is “to be unsuccessful at achieving one’s goal”. What do you think about this definition: “first attempt at learning”? When you are just starting out trying to do a new thing and/or change a behavior or habit you may feel challenged.

The way you think about the change will affect the time it takes you to accomplish your goal and, perhaps, even temporarily interfere with you achieving it.

Are you someone who looks for excuses or someone else to blame? Or do you get curious and think about what happened?

Do you get angry and then shut down? Or do you learn from your first attempt at learning so that you can do better next time?

Accepting the challenge as nothing more than a learning experience will go a long way toward helping you in your future success. The next time you begin to feel frustrated take a deep breath and allow yourself to feel whatever you feel. And then assess the situation. Determine what prevented you from achieving your first attempt at learning and identify any strategy that could change the outcome.

Connect with friends and any support group that will understand you and what you want.

Your true friends and support group will understand you. If you get pushback from some people it will be because either they do not understand you or they are not comfortable with the idea of you becoming a different version of yourself.

By surrounding yourself with likeminded people you gain the experience of others that will help bolster you when things are not going as planned.

While it may not be necessary to stop associating with all your old friends it is probably a good idea to gain some new ones. Seek out people who will understand and support you. Look for a sponsor or a self-help group and attend meetings as regularly as possible. Ask for help when you need it and then be ready to accept the suggestions given to you and learn.

Remember to consider the role of others in your recovery journey.

Remember that your goals do not only affect you. The self-discipline you are in the process of developing will be noticed by the other people in your life. Some will be comfortable with it and some will not be willing to accept it.

However, it is essential that your decision to be abstinent and to be in recovery is for you. Doing it mainly for someone else can sabotage your efforts. It is important to remember that it is helpful to benefit from the support of others as this can motivate you to keep going and to maintain your self-discipline practices.

By engaging in recovery for you it will be easier to push on and challenge yourself when you need to do it.

After you know the people who will understand and support you consider putting a picture of them somewhere you can see it might be helpful. Make them part of this process by staying in touch with them and letting them know what you are doing and allowing them to be your accountability partners.

Do it – or do something.

Remember the quote that “Rome wasn’t built in a day”? By the same token complete change does not happen overnight. Be gentle and forgiving with yourself. If something does not happen when or how you wanted it to happen it is ok. Really! It is not the end of the world. All you have to do is to continue from where you left off and continue moving forward.

Once you start something new it is not usually as bad as you anticipated. Especially as you recognize and accept your progress without judgement or expectation. As consistently as possible maintain your focus on your goal and recognize your accomplishments as they occur. As you practice self-discipline seek progress not perfection!

Make it measurable.

In order for you to achieve your goal it needs to be measurable and specific. Resolving to be abstinent or to be in recovery is too general and does not allow you to develop a plan that will help you achieve your goal. Identifying a goal is the first step, formulating a plan is the second step and using self-discipline to achieve that goal is the third step.

Using measurable goals along with self-discipline helps set the habits you are capable of developing.

Beginning can be challenging.

The freedom of self-discipline is yours for the taking. The more you think about starting the longer it will take you to get going. Take a breath or two and start with the first step and the other steps will follow.

By following these tips, you will be able to put self-discipline into practice quicker than you think you can.

The key is to stay steady. Keep at it. The more you practice the techniques the easier they will become. Do not let disappointment or discouraging feedback from others stop you. Jump back in where you were and keep going. It is not necessary to start over. Remember to just pick up from where you were and continue moving forward.

Week Four: Self-discipline in all areas of your life

An additional motivating factor for your continuing use of self-discipline in recovery is how all areas of your life will benefit and contribute to your ongoing accomplishment as you incorporate the following tips and self-care habits.

Health

- **Establish a morning routine:** Start the day right with your clothes laid out with your exercise gear already at the door and a clear idea what you will eat for breakfast. Add in some affirmations or other positive thinking techniques to give the day a real positive boost.
- **Exercise:** Decide how often you want to exercise and what that looks like then commit to carrying out the plan.
- **Eating well:** Eating Paleo, Keto, Mediterranean Plan or any other way all have one thing in common – you become mindful of your food. Find the plan that works best for you and then stick to it. Do not forget to remove any temptations in the form of junk food or ‘treats.’
- **Snack:** A lot of people’s blood sugar drops in the afternoon and that leads to less productivity. Have a healthy snack on hand (e.g., raw nuts and some low sugar fruit) to give yourself that added boost.
- **Take the stairs or park further from the door:** It may seem like a small thing, but by climbing stairs instead of taking the elevator you give yourself a great aerobic workout every time you go into work. Even just walking across the width of the parking lot is going to have a positive benefit when you do it every day.
- **Attack those personal hygiene issues.** Do you stop taking care of yourself because you work from home? What about that nail-biting habit? Self-discipline means you take care of yourself even in the small ways because the small ways result in big gains.

- **Establish a before-bed routine:** Setting a bedtime and a bedtime ritual will ensure that you get enough rest every night and helps to assure you have energy the next day.

Finances

- **Spending within your budget:** Spend less than you take in. Buying on credit can have a negative effect on your finances.
- **Pay down those credit cards:** If you are already in debt then make a specific plan to whittle it away.
- **Using cash on purchases instead of a credit card:** It is so easy to spend money you do not see. By using cash you are very aware of just where the money goes – and how much of it you are spending.
- **Give:** Remember to give back to the world around you. If you do not have the extra cash to be generous then you can think about giving your time through volunteering.
- **Introduce a cool-down purchase waiting period.** Rather than buy on impulse walk away and look at it again the next day or even an hour later. Once the initial attraction has passed decide if it is something you “want” or really “need”.

Personal attitudes

- **Embrace gratitude.** Taking the time to be grateful each day makes your own day go better. You will be calmer and have more peace of mind.
- **Have an open-mind:** By mindfully practicing a habit of trying to look at both sides of an argument, or in practicing empathy, you discover things you never knew about yourself and alternative solutions to the situation.
- **Be someone that you can admire.** Showing integrity in all things you do helps you to have peace of mind and be a person others want to be around.
- **Own up to your integrity:** When you do not live up to your integrity apologize when you can, make amends when reasonable and move forward. By doing that you reaffirm your integrity.

Workplace

- **Stretch and take a break.** Before a meeting or when attacking a project for the day, get up and stretch, take a short walk or just take a breath. Clear your mind for the task ahead. Making stretching a habit leads to better circulation and helps restore energy, especially during those long afternoons when you find yourself falling into the doldrums.
- **Put away the cell phone.** It can be quite annoying seeing someone on their phone at the workplace. Even when you are only checking email once in a while it can be seen as unprofessional. By disciplining yourself to stay off your phone at work, you not only free yourself from distraction, but the bosses may notice.
- **Get that certificate.** Or that degree. There is a great deal of self-discipline involved in spending your off-hours in class or doing homework when you are already working that full-time job. And there can be tangible rewards. Some companies offer promotions more readily to the person who has the requisite degree or certificate.
- **Managing yourself.** It is a true statement that in order to manage others you first have to manage yourself. Self-discipline shows and it becomes obvious to those above you. When there is an opening in management one of the first questions asked will be “can this person manage themselves”?

Communication

- **Speaking in a positive manner:** Drop the negativity, cattiness, gossip, and other unpleasant speech from your lips. It actually affects your mood more than you realize.
- **Say no:** Take the reins by losing the doormat quality of saying yes to every single thing that comes along. Cultivate the habit of saying 'no.'
- **Say yes:** Find the worthwhile things that are worth saying 'yes' to and embrace them.

Consider these tips as you get started developing your practice of self-discipline in recovery along with your other life areas. You know what you need the most. The easiest way to find what you want to change is to ask yourself who it is and what it is you want to be. Then take the time to create that image very fully in your mind.

By understanding the traits and characteristics of your future self you are better able to choose the things you need to change in order to reach your goals.

From there it is just a matter of setting the self-discipline in place to achieve those goals.

Conclusion

While the world of self-discipline might have made you initially think of a self-imposed prison you have probably realized that change of this nature does not have to be a bad or even a scary thing.

Instead you can embrace the freedom and the benefits that is found when you are effectively managing your circumstances.

Remember: *self-discipline means that you are effectively managing the circumstances of your life which contributes to your destiny. You decide where you are going and then you decide how you are going to get there.*

Self-Discipline is going to surprise you by just how freeing it is. Imagine yourself calm, relaxed and having peace of mind. You are doing well at work, you look and feel healthy and strong. You are confident and self-assured, and you truly are the best version of yourself on every level. That person, the one you just imagined is going to be you molded and shaped through self-discipline.

No one else made you this way.

No one tried to fit you into their own mold.

This is you. The best you. Created and shaped by your decisions. By your goals. This is the person that you want to be.

You have a lot to offer, but until you let go of other people's rules and expectations you are never going to be more than you are now.

Seize the day! Embrace self-discipline!

It is time for you to live the life you deserve. Free from the effects of alcohol and/or drugs. Free from guilt and shame.