

THE CONSISTENCY MANUAL: THE KEYS TO BUILDING HABITS THAT LAST



OVERVIEW

When it comes to achieving most things worth striving for, the difference between success and a lifetime spent wondering “what if” is consistency. Reaching the pinnacle of your profession, creating your masterpiece, or shedding a few stubborn pounds isn’t a matter of flipping a switch or catching a lucky break. It’s about putting in sustained, disciplined effort over time so you can succeed when it counts.

Though it’s easy to understand consistency on a basic level, applying a consistent effort day in and day out can feel daunting. Just look at the fact that 80% of people who set New Year’s resolutions give up by the start of February. You know what you need to do. You know why it matters to you. What you don’t always know is how to keep doing what it takes long enough to see the results you want.

So what’s the reason for this consistency conundrum? Whether on TV or social media, you don’t have to look hard for examples of people pushing fast results for minimal effort. Even if you see through the fad diets, miracle cures, or wacky exercise gadgets, it’s still all too easy to absorb the belief that any plan that doesn’t deliver visible results in weeks or even days isn’t worth your time.

While it’s obviously important to make sure any program is properly oriented toward your goals, the harsh truth is that most of the time, it’s not the plan that fails—it’s the person who fails to adhere to the plan. There’s often more than one contributing factor to inconsistency, and sometimes one issue can lead to another. It may start as impatience with slow progress, but without the right frame of mind, a good support system, and the flexibility to push past excuses, it’s all too easy to feel like putting in consistent effort is more trouble than it’s worth.

So what does it take to make steady progress toward your goals? What does real consistency look like? And how can you create the right set of circumstances to set yourself up for sustainable success? Those are all questions I’ll answer below as I dissect all things consistency. With this manual, you’ll understand not only the benefits of a consistent approach to health, performance, and longevity, but some of the subtle ways you can break down bad habits, excise your excuses, and put your mind on a consistent path to wherever you want to go.

EXPLORE YOUR PATH TO VITALITY

THE CONSISTENCY MANUAL: THE KEYS TO BUILDING HABITS THAT LAST



AVOIDING THE INPUTS FOR INCONSISTENCY

Before we dive into the keys of consistency, it's worth exploring some of the ways people can fall short. The most important thing to remember is that inconsistency isn't a character flaw or a fixed state. Often, it's just a product of poor planning or an unhelpful frame of mind. And as you'll see, a few subtle tweaks to your approach or your mindset can be all it takes to cultivate sustainable health and wellness habits you can be proud of.

EXPLORE YOUR PATH TO VITALITY

THE CONSISTENCY MANUAL: THE KEYS TO BUILDING HABITS THAT LAST



AVOIDING THE INPUTS FOR INCONSISTENCY

- **Don't want too much too fast:** Meaningful success almost never happens overnight. If it only took days for everyone to achieve their health and wellness goals, gyms wouldn't sell monthly memberships. Don't look for the mirror or scale to validate your efforts just days after you've begun. Instead, celebrate little milestones along the way and know that the results will eventually follow if you accept and embrace consistency.
- **Avoid instant gratification:** As Isaac Newton famously declared, an object at rest tends to remain at rest. Your brain has a tendency to lead you toward simpler, more immediate pleasures and away from harder work whose rewards are often more distant and abstract. Staying consistent means keeping that desire for instant gratification in check by keeping longer-term rewards in mind. You don't have to sacrifice everything you enjoy in service of your health and wellness routines but you also can't indulge your every whim. When you keep your eyes on the bigger prize—and responsibly celebrate small victories along the way—it's easier to become an object in motion that stays in motion.
- **Choose a direction you can focus on:** Moving consistently without any kind of direction or specific destination in mind might make for a fun road trip, but it's not a formula for turning your daily efforts into something greater. Even with a deep reserve of willpower, not knowing what you want to achieve or what you should do to get there will eventually wear anyone down. Why put in a sustained effort if you don't know how to define success? Why keep working toward a far-off goal if you don't have a reliable map for how to get there? Yes, flexibility is a component of consistency on a day-to-day basis. But that flexibility has to exist within the framework of what you want to achieve paired with your plan for arriving at that goal over time.
- **It's not all about "all or nothing.":** Enthusiasm is the fuel that can help kick-start a consistent habit. But staying in overdrive twenty-four seven won't propel you to your goals faster. In fact, it'll put you on a fast track to crash and burn. Don't just think about it in terms of putting in regular work. Think about moving forward at a pace that you can realistically maintain over time. Listen to what your body's telling you, especially as you're starting a new routine, and know that pushing too hard too quickly can only lead to diminishing returns over time. Know that making consistent progress means regularly making time for proper rest and recovery, too.
- **Don't go it alone:** Starting something new on your own and sticking to it can be tough. Who do you turn to for advice or motivation? Who's keeping you accountable? Who will help you celebrate your wins? While no one can do the work for you, sticking with a habit and making steady progress is a whole lot easier with someone in your corner who can talk you out of giving up.
- **Take away your temptations:** Just as you can benefit from the right kind of support, the wrong kind of influences can knock you off your stride. Beyond letting people in your life know about your goals and spending your time with people who understand what your goals mean to you, think about the temptations you keep around. What short-term pleasures can you live without to make long-term gains?
- **Don't make your mind your enemy:** The surest way to fail to achieve something is to tell yourself you can't do it. With a negative frame of mind, you end up diminishing your accomplishments as you get going. You can even stop yourself before you start. Counter your negative assumptions about health and wellness by giving things a try and seeing what actually happens. Celebrate even the smallest moments of progress. By getting your mind on your side, you'll start to believe in ways that power consistent action.

EXPLORE YOUR PATH TO VITALITY

THE CONSISTENCY MANUAL: THE KEYS TO BUILDING HABITS THAT LAST



TAKE YOUR FIRST STEPS TOWARD CONSISTENCY

Every successful quest for consistency has one thing in common: action. You could spend all the time in the world setting yourself up for success and getting into the right frame of mind. But without taking action, your habits aren't habits: they're just ideas, or empty promises.

That can seem daunting, but the thing to remember is that action isn't all or nothing. You shouldn't feel like you have to achieve the ultimate result with your first step, and you shouldn't spring into action without a plan. Think of developing consistency as strengthening a muscle. You (probably) can't curl a hundred pounds if you've never picked up a dumbbell before, and feeling like you need to lift that much weight right away will set you up for failure. But by choosing a goal, breaking it into smaller steps, and keeping at it over time, you'll eventually reach a point where what once seemed difficult suddenly feels a whole lot easier.

While taking action may be the first visible step toward establishing consistency, it will be more meaningful—and ultimately lead to success—if you lay the groundwork first. Use the Ideas to Action Framework below to get you started. There will never be a perfect time to do this, but checking a few of these things off the list will make the leap from idea to action a little less daunting.

The Idea to Action Framework

- **Identify the behavior or habit worth performing consistently:** What is it you want to repeatedly do, and why? Put that commitment in writing, and think it through as specifically as possible. Give your actions a meaning and a purpose that's attached to something greater, and it's easier to feel like you aren't just checking some task off your to-do list.
- **Break it down:** Once you've identified that behavior or habit, think about what it will realistically take to sustain it in the context of your daily life. What obstacles, distractions, or temptations do you expect to face? What milestones will tell you you're headed in the right direction? By breaking that bigger goal into smaller, digestible chunks, taking that first action will feel less daunting, and you'll be less likely to lose momentum by wondering what's next.
- **Make a commitment:** Accountability and action go hand in hand. It's a lot easier to take the steps we know we need to take once we've made a commitment to ourselves — or a declaration to others — about what it is we intend to do. By starting with an intention and identifying what it will take to get there, it's easier for us to make a commitment that sticks.
- **Take Action — again and again:** Now, it's time to act. But not just once — take big or small actions every day that can move you even just a little bit closer to your goal. Keep a clear picture of your destination in mind throughout, but be flexible in terms of how you'll get there. Adjust as needed but keep the momentum moving forward. Remember: an object in motion stays in motion.

EXPLORE YOUR PATH TO VITALITY

THE CONSISTENCY MANUAL: THE KEYS TO BUILDING HABITS THAT LAST



EXPLORING THE KEYS TO CONSISTENCY

Action is one part of the equation for consistency, but repetition is the multiplier. When you repeat a single action dozens or hundreds of times, the product of that action is much greater. Here are some smart steps you can take to start turning a single act into an easy-to-follow habit.

EXPLORE YOUR PATH TO VITALITY

THE CONSISTENCY MANUAL: THE KEYS TO BUILDING HABITS THAT LAST



EXPLORING THE KEYS TO CONSISTENCY

- **Build your willpower muscles to exercise self-control:** Willpower is a muscle. Every time you do hard things you know you need to do, that muscle gets a little bit stronger. Over time, you'll gradually feel more comfortable being uncomfortable, and you'll develop a sense of internal motivation that reframes how you think about the actions you once wanted to avoid. This will not only help you keep your eyes on the prize when obstacles are in your path; it will help you develop a sense of resilience that will serve you well in other areas of life.
- **Become a product of the right environment:** There's immense value in surrounding yourself with the right people, places, things, and information that can make being consistent a frictionless experience. Connecting with a group of like-minded people can boost motivation and keep you accountable. Scanning your environment to eliminate bad influences and add in good ones can reduce the mental effort it takes to pursue your goals. Consuming the right information helps guide you while avoiding distractions helps you stay focused. All these things help in making something a consistent part of your life.
- **Prioritize progress over perfection:** Consistency is about the unwavering pursuit of your goals through persistent, repeated action. However, it's unrealistic—not to mention undesirable—to expect that you'll complete the exact same action in the exact same way every single day. Once you acknowledge that obstacles and setbacks are part of your journey, you will free your mind to think more flexibly about what you can do to keep moving forward. Ask yourself: Given my present circumstances, what's the next right thing to do? It's easier to find a way to do something that creates or sustains momentum, rather than waiting around for the perfect set of circumstances.
- **Spot your roadblocks and move around or through them:** Flexibility helps you deal with things you can't control, but a little foresight and planning can go a long way toward avoiding some of the obstacles that might derail you. For example, do you have any upcoming travel that would force you to change your choices? Successfully working around less-than-ideal circumstances can actually strengthen your commitment to consistency by showing you how adaptable your habit is in a variety of challenging situations.
- **Control what you can control: your effort:** While the goal that inspired your consistent habit should be defined by measurable results, that doesn't mean that you will see results after every action. In fact, sometimes the lack of outcome after an action can feel discouraging if it's the only way to judge success. Unfortunately, you can't control whether an action creates an immediate, positive result. To counter this feeling, you should control and measure your effort. It sounds cliché, but trusting the process will serve you well. Consistently put one foot in front of the other. Even if your path involves an occasional detour, you'll be surprised at where you end up.
- **Celebrate your success the right way:** Consistency requires certain sacrifices, but your journey shouldn't feel like a long slog to some distant goal. To stay motivated, take honest stock of your progress. If you've hit some of the milestones you laid out when you formed your plan, don't be afraid to celebrate them, as long as your reward doesn't undo your progress. Sometimes, that extra bit of short-term motivation can make all the difference when the going gets tough, or when that bigger goal starts to feel out of reach.
- **Have a short memory for your setbacks:** No matter how much you plan ahead, some obstacles will inevitably sneak up on you. Unexpected setbacks happen. When they do, the best way forward is to learn from them without dwelling on them. One mistake or one bad day won't define you. It's how you bounce back from it that will.

EXPLORE YOUR PATH TO VITALITY

THE CONSISTENCY MANUAL: THE KEYS TO BUILDING HABITS THAT LAST



Now that you have some practical tools to get started, avoid drop-off, and stay consistent, the only thing left to do is to put them to use. Whether it's getting more steps in, eating less junk food, or getting eight hours of sleep, set yourself up for success by following the key steps above. Whatever it is you want to achieve, remember that oftentimes, the difference between success and failure is consistency. If you start thinking about the downside of action, think about the cost of inaction. No first step is too small, as long as it's a step forward. Pick a direction, keep showing up one day at a time, and you'll start to pick up the momentum that will help you create sustainable, lasting changes.

EXPLORE YOUR PATH TO VITALITY