

It's Not Magic, It's Your Brain: Willpower

Dieting, running a marathon, accomplishing a strongly desired goal are some of the things we associate with the need for this thing called willpower. But when we fall back to old habits or fall short of a goal, the idea that there may not have been enough willpower comes into play for many folks and brings people down.

But what is this power of the will that perhaps only a few have persistent command? The idea of anything requiring power implies that it needs a source of power. And if something is pulling power from a source it only follows that that source is being depleted. And that idea calls into play the amount of how much of that resource is there before it's all gone.

Fortunately, the idea of willpower is exactly that --an idea--a thought. And our big brain with its wonderful Neocortex (NC) has no shortage of them. The neocortex is the part of our brain that enables us to have a will which enables us to direct our thoughts toward long-term goals and allows us to achieve what no one before us has.

But it is the quality of those thoughts that strengthen this thing we term will. Negative thoughts can weaken the will and positive can strengthen it. Our "self-talk" is that internal voice bantering around our thoughts and helping us make choices. Unfortunately, negative self talk can be such a part of us that we may be unable to recognize it. And to make things even more challenging, our negative thoughts can be useful, helping us develop realistic and back up plans as well as sense danger.

We have millions of cells in our brains dedicated to powering our will. But just like an engine with old dirty oil, too much negative thinking may be gumming up the works.

If you find yourself feeling down or anxious (or both) over the same issues time and time again because you think you don't have enough willpower, challenge that thought. Investigate what you say to yourself every day. That self-talk is a component of what we call willpower.

Some examples of negative self talk: I'll never do that. I'm so stupid. I always do that wrong. I'm no good at that. I've never been good at that. Everyone else can do that, but me.