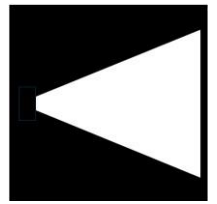


# Will Power



## Research Papers

Baumeister, R. F., André, N., Southwick, D. A., & Tice, D. M. (2024). Self-control and limited willpower: Current status of ego depletion theory and research. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 101882.

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## Overview

Behaviour change often starts with enthusiasm but falters as weeks progress. Research on ego depletion provides critical insights into why this happens and how to sustain resolutions throughout the year. Ego depletion theory suggests that self-control relies on a finite resource, akin to willpower, which can become depleted through exertion. Understanding this phenomenon allows us to align our goals with the realities of how willpower functions.

## Ego Depletion

**Energy Drain:** early efforts to stick to resolutions consume mental energy, leaving less for subsequent tasks. Overcommitment (e.g., resolving to exercise daily, quit sugar, and sleep earlier all at once) accelerates depletion.

**Decision Fatigue:** the multitude of daily decisions, what to eat, when to exercise, how to budget, wears down self-control. By evening, depleted mental reserves lead to lapses like skipping the gym or indulging in unhealthy snacks.

**External Stressors:** work deadlines, family obligations, and interpersonal conflicts deplete energy reserves, impacting the ability to stay consistent with resolutions.



## Strategies:

**Prioritize One Resolution at a Time:** focus on a single goal to avoid spreading willpower thin. For example, commit to improving sleep habits before adding dietary changes.

**Break Goals Into Manageable Steps:** replace vague resolutions (e.g., “get fit”) with specific, achievable actions like “walk for 20 minutes three times a week.”

**Plan Recovery Periods:** schedule breaks and moments of relaxation to replenish mental energy. For instance, allow a cheat day or take time off from intensive tasks.

**Leverage Circadian Rhythms:** tackle challenging tasks like exercising or meal prepping during energy peaks (e.g., mornings for many people).

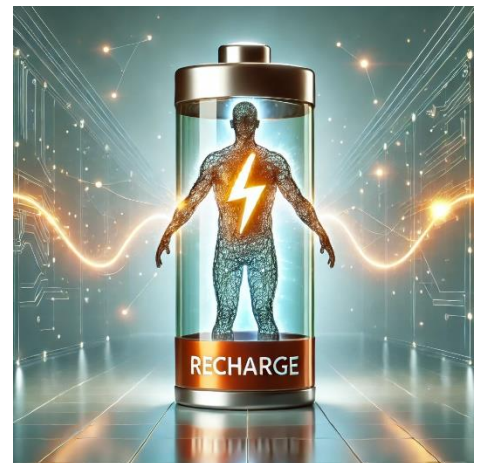
**Create Environmental Support:** reduce reliance on willpower by shaping your environment; remove unhealthy snacks, set reminders, and prepare gym clothes in advance.

**Mindfulness Practices:** incorporate daily meditation or breathing exercises to reduce stress and recharge.

**Sleep Hygiene:** protect mental energy by maintaining a consistent sleep schedule.

**Physical Fitness:** regular exercise boosts self-control and reduces vulnerability to depletion.

**Motivation Boosters:** celebrate small wins to reinforce commitment and counteract fatigue.



## Insight

Ego depletion reminds us that willpower is limited but renewable. Resolutions are most sustainable when approached strategically, balancing effort with recovery. Rather than relying on sheer determination, align goals with natural energy cycles, simplify decision-making, and build supportive habits.

This year, make your resolutions stick by working smarter, not harder; a strategy that lasts far beyond January.