

“The modern classic
on willpower. A sharp
and applicable user’s
guide on being better.”

—Graham Allen, MP

WILLPOWER

DISCOVER IT,
USE IT
AND GET WHAT
YOU WANT

ROS TAYLOR



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“As a GB rowing coach, I have seen countless young rowers use willpower to overcome physical disadvantages and achieve success. This book promotes the benefits of willpower for everyone, while providing the tools you need to acquire it.”

Iain Somerside, GB Rowing Coach

“I used to believe that willpower was in the genes; you either had it or you hadn’t. This book has changed my mind and convinced me that willpower is a learnable skill.”

Gordon Baker, CEO, JMT Consultants

Willpower

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Ros Taylor



CAPSTONE

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Preface

Willpower is a series of recipes for willpower success seasoned with some inspirational case studies from adventurers, athletes, Paralympians, CEOs, teenagers and those who have struggled with addiction and adversity. *Willpower* is dissected and served up in bite-sized pieces so that you can use these tips in your own life for immediate effect.

Willpower is for everyone who wants to be successful in life and work: the unemployed person who wants a job, the graduate setting out on their career, the woman returner, the writer of their first book, the manager desiring to become a leader, the leader wanting to get to the board, the parent wanting to teach willpower to their children, the coach encouraging willpower in their clients

If you think willpower is a Victorian out-of-date concept, think again. Researchers have found that willpower is a better predictor of life and work success than IQ. Children with low willpower are four times more likely to have low-paying jobs, be overweight, have drug and alcohol problems, have short-rather than long-term relationships and have a criminal conviction.

So willpower is the very heartbeat of a successful, engaged and fulfilling life, and is not down to an accident of birth but a series of skills you can put into practice immediately with the help of this practical book.

This book is based on techniques that are known to work, so simply choose which relate to you and put them into practice. There is a three-week rule:

try a new skill every day for three weeks and repeat for nine to turn it into a habit.

This book is self-help for self-control.

QUESTIONNAIRES

I have included in each part of the book a number of questionnaires and checklists to gauge how much willpower you have, how you utilise goals, whether you are an optimist or pessimist, or even knowing if you could have the willpower to become an entrepreneur.

Where some established measures have been lengthy, I have shortened them. There is nothing worse than wading through 370 questions when you get the same result with a dozen. Where there is nothing on the market, I have conceived the questionnaires myself and tested them on my clients before you. No person was harmed in this endeavour.

My rationale for these tests is that I want you to become an expert in your own willpower: understanding your strengths and willpower glitches. With that knowledge, you will be that much more successful in negotiating the ups and downs of getting to where you want to be. Knowing when you generally give in to temptation gives you advance warning to initiate your “plan to fail plan”.

THE STORIES

A major part of this book is the stories we collected from a diverse group of people selected for their willpower and remarkable achievements.

Judy Murray talks about her sons’ willpower to become winners and her own to continue to coach women’s tennis with few resources.

Jamie Andrew, quadruple amputee, tells us about returning to challenges like the London Marathon and climbing Kilimanjaro.

Phil Howard, Michelin star chef, discusses the pressures of the job, his drug addiction and how an exercise habit replaced his drug habit.

Neil Fachie, gold medal-winning Paralympian cyclist, tells about his preparations for the Rio Olympics.

Justine Roberts, founder and CEO of Mumsnet, talks about the delayed gratification of running your own business.

Julie Ashmore, business woman and mother of two, shares her adventuring stories of going to both North and South Poles.

Gordon Baker, CEO of JMT Consultants, discusses the limitations of willpower at work and what you need to be successful. His son Jamie also recounts his story about the power of visualisation.

Sir Richard Greenbury, former Chairman and CEO of Marks and Spencer, advises what will help you get to the top of an organisation.

Julian Richer, CEO of Richer Sounds, really grasps the nature of motivation at work and shares his methods.

Dame Stella Rimington, former Director General of MI5, discusses confidence and its place in getting to the top.

Charlie Mullins, plumber extraordinaire, shares his joy in owning his own business and the willpower it takes to be successful.

Mark Masson, specialist recruiter, recounts his fight with cancer and the part willpower played in his recovery.

Todd Whiteford, who had testicular cancer but decided to run in the Marathon des Sables between his surgery and chemotherapy, provides us with the story and the outcome.

Abby, a social phobic who had to be schooled at home, tells us what prised her from the house and how willpower helped her get her life back.

Grace Boyle, an alcoholic, describes how the help of Alcoholics Anonymous and willpower brought her back from the brink.

Iain Somerside, GB rowing coach, talks about the willpower mindset which creates Olympian winners.

Turly Humphrey, founder and CEO of Circle Sports, talks about her organisation which helps unemployed young people achieve jobs.

Graham Allen, Member of Parliament for Nottingham North, tells us about his work on the "Early Years" project and the difference interventions can make to generations of lives.

YOUR WILLPOWER CHALLENGE

I would like you to take the opportunity to pursue a Willpower Challenge or indeed Challenges of your own as you read the book. Your Challenge may be:

- A *dream* you might have had for some time but may have lacked confidence or time to pursue. It might be skydiving, parachute jumping,

adventuring to unusual places or going to university or college to pursue further education.

- Something *meaningful* in your life, like raising money for a charitable cause, a test of endurance or “staying alive” – as one of our willpower interviewees admitted as he coped with a terminal disease.
- A *habit you want to break* – smoking, alcohol, drugs or overeating. You may have tried before to overcome a behaviour and even been partially successful, then returned to your old ways. Make this the time to be successful for all time.
- A *habit you want to establish* – for example, healthy eating, an exercise regime, a better sleep pattern, a calmer demeanour, an interest in people around you.
- A *desire to win* in a sport of your choice, perhaps to Olympic standard or for social and personal enjoyment. We certainly meet a plethora of impressive sports personalities and coaches in succeeding pages.
- *Promotion at work* demands willpower and a variety of skills. Learn the leadership skills suggested by top CEOs and start to become more successful at work.
- *Start your own business*. Discover if you have the willpower necessary to be an entrepreneur and hear from others who have made that leap and their journey to success.

WHAT'S INSIDE

Part One: The Essence of Willpower

This title sounds a bit like a scent – but willpower can't be sprayed on, inhaled or handed to someone else to do it for you. It is you in charge of you.

Part One reviews willpower research and comes to the conclusion that the “muscle” analogy, much utilised by researchers and psychologists in the past, does not fit with recent experiments. So I re-examine the latest thinking to help you achieve willpower.

There are inspirational stories from a young girl who had been confined to her house for four years before emerging using amazing willpower, amputees who are back adventuring, the ill or damaged who have willed themselves back to life. If they can do that, what could you do?

So, the essence of willpower is about how you harness your self-control to get where you want to go, and this part of the book helps you start to understand how to do that.

Part Two: Goals and Vision

Goals and Vision will help you address your own Willpower Challenges, working out what is meaningful for you to achieve, turning your dreams into goals. How you do that with goal planning, as well as how you implement these goals, is assessed and discussed.

Working on the steps to your goals and visualising them have been shown to increase positive outcomes, so there are some great stories around the power of visualisation with instructions for you to gain the same outcomes.

How you like to learn should guide you in choosing the “how” of pursuing your goals: should that be in a group with others, by reading and understanding, by practical steps or by experimentation? Understanding your learning preferences increases the likelihood of willpower success.

Part Three: New Habits for Old

At least 50% of what we do is down to habit. And our habits are established early on in our lives, copied from our parents or parent substitutes. If that knowledge fills you with dread, as the way your parents behaved is not how you want to be, help is at hand. I outline how habits are established and how bad ones can be changed and replaced with better versions. The purpose of willpower is a drive towards useful habits so that you achieve long-term success with your Willpower Challenge.

If you want to become the best in class for a skill, there is advice on how to achieve that as well as establishing some generic good habits that will prolong your life on earth.

When things go belly up with your own Willpower Challenges, because life is rarely plain sailing, we discuss how you can get over a glitch and move on instead of indulging in self-castigation.

Part Four: The Willpower Mindset

Willpower is a mindset and gaining that mindset is important to get those willpower ducks in a row. If you tell yourself it will never work then ... it won't.

Just knowing about a willpower mindset doesn't, of course, mean you will have one. It takes a bit of work to achieve, so this part of the book explores how to achieve a relentlessly positive mindset. You can't leap from negative to positive thinking overnight. That would be the stuff of delusion. There are easy steps presented here that will progress your

thinking: understanding your negative thoughts and where they come from, exploring the evidence for their existence, trying out useful thinking before finally achieving a positive willpower mindset.

Learn here about the power of externalisation to remain cool in a crisis, how to have a growth mindset and achieve the same mental strength of winners like Wimbledon tennis players and Olympic rowers. All to help with your Willpower Challenge.

Part Five: Willpower and Work

If your Willpower Challenge is about success at work and getting to the top, then focus on Part Five of the book.

Willpower at Work is not just about you but the motivation of others around you, so Part Five presents the three S's of Willpower at work: Self-Awareness, Skills and Self-Preservation.

You get the chance to complete the Willpower at Work scale to rate your abilities before plugging the gaps with the skills suggested. I interviewed 80 CEOs and asked them to rate what made them successful so others could follow in their footsteps. Six of the skills they suggested are outlined here with tips on how to achieve mastery.

We hear from corporate greats as well as entrepreneurs about their views about willpower and how they came to be top of their game.

Stress at work is prevalent nowadays, with more demands and fewer resources, but a job shouldn't shorten your existence. Strategies to be fit for the fray are proposed so you will be around for many more Willpower Challenges.

FINAL THOUGHTS

I would love you to share your Willpower Challenges with me, warts and all: what worked for you and what was less successful. Your stories will help others face their dreams, goals, desires – and perhaps demons.

Share your willpower stories on my website (www.rostaylorcompany.com), Twitter (@Ros_Taylor_Co), and Facebook (www.facebook.com/RosTaylorCompany).

PART ONE

The Essence of Willpower

Abby became a volunteer at Canal College, which is part of the Scottish Waterways Trust and helps young people like Abby acquire job experience to go on to further education or employment. Canal College also helps the environment by improving British canals and the surrounding areas. I'll let her tell you her story.

"I'd left school in my second year to be home schooled. A mixture of health problems and anxiety had led me to be unable to cope in school anymore. I still finished all my exams and stuff, completed my education, just not in school. So because of that I wasn't socialising. I had almost three years of no socialising with people my own age. And that led to my anxiety getting worse. I never went out, never had any friends, so I became the ultimate recluse. I just could not talk to people. The only person I spoke to was my mum, that was it, I didn't have anyone else.

Well once I'd finished with the home schooling, Canal College was suggested to me because I like nature and it was outdoors. At first I refused. I'm not doing that, no chance, no! I will admit just the thought of it gave me a few panic attacks, but I eventually I said, yeah ok, I'll sign up for that, but I won't get the placement. And then it turned out I did get the placement and then oh no, I don't want to do this. I went to the interview and although I was very quiet, they were willing to give me a chance, so I took it and I went and it was terrifying.

I felt a mixture of fear and excitement. I was happy that I'd got something and I was determined to get over my anxiety. I was working through it, but I was also really nervous about how I'd cope because I hadn't ever been in a group of people my age. So it was a huge step.

Just having to look someone in the eye was a big thing for me. I couldn't talk to people. I remember when I first got to college. It was the first day; I just sat in the corner and didn't talk to anyone. The only people who tried to talk to me were the mentors, the adults who are there to try and help the young people.

Some nights I just couldn't sleep. Even though I was literally trembling, I forced myself to go, no matter how uncomfortable I felt. I never missed a day. There was one day where I was genuinely sick, but no matter how nervous I felt, I always made myself go. This was my chance, I kept telling myself.

During those first two or three weeks, people talked to me and I found that helpful because I definitely wasn't going to talk to them. But about three weeks in, I started talking back to the people who were trying to talk to me. I really didn't know how to interact with people, so sometimes I would sit and watch to see what they did, how people interacted with each other, to work out what was normal. Kind of looking for tips.

When I was working at Canal College, I also started attending group meetings for young people. So I ended up having two new things at the same time and I went from having nothing in my life to having no time to myself. That happened in the span of a couple of weeks. So it was a really big change and although it was really uncomfortable, I don't know, it's weird, I kind of got this pleasure out of it; like I don't really like it, but I'm doing it, if that makes sense? One thing I could never ever do was talk in front of people, and now I do it in college all the time, so that's something I never thought I'd be good at.

Before Canal College, I think I was getting to the point where I was going to give up, depression was getting hold of me and I just wasn't coping. I really do not ever want to relive those couple of years. Don't get me wrong, when I first started Canal College, I did have relapses of panic attacks, but I did eventually overcome them. I actually went on a skiing holiday with some of the people from my meeting group and I never would have done that before.