

## One Brain, Two Minds

Our brain uses two different and often conflicting systems to process information, drive our choices, and behaviors.

Mind #1: The logical mind: "I'll stick to my diet because it is healthy and will help me lose weight." The challenge with the logic based mind is the fact that it is much harder to exercise willpower when fatigued or stressed. You may start the day with good intentions but end the day in a very different place. It is much easier to keep your long term goals in mind when making decisions when you are well rested.

Mind #2: The impulsive, emotional mind: The emotion-based mind is experiential and often automatic. It motivates us based on how we feel and is often outside our awareness. Logic is screaming at you to avoid the cookies. Before you know it, half the box is gone!



This phenomenon goes beyond diet and very much applies to exercise and other health behaviors. When we are in the moment, our choices are often driven by emotion especially when willpower is low. It is much harder to think about long-term goals and our future-self when we are low on energy.

Understanding the science of willpower can help you plan for the times you know you will be energy depleted. For most, it tends to be afternoon and evening.

For example, If you are exhausted after work and you are finding it challenging to stick with your goal of going to the gym how can you make it easier to follow through? Set yourself up for success by eliminating any barriers, real or perceived. Go right to the gym after work instead of going home first. Keep your workout clothes in your car. Logically we know we have more energy after exercising. But when you are tired after a long day, you are likely operating from your emotional, impulsive mind.

Understanding the science of motivation can help you tie positive emotions to your health habits by engaging in activities you enjoy and building awareness around how our health habits add to our daily quality of life. Focusing on how your daily walk improves your mood and energy level vs. thinking of your walk as something you have to do to lose weight.

Lastly, do you look at your health habits like a chore or a gift? When your health habits feel like a chore, the likelihood of continuing is slim. If you find yourself saying "I should" when talking about your health goals they probably feel more like a chore. When you can find the gift in what you are doing, you are more likely to continue.

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