

Ep #14: Commitment Vs Willpower Vs Discipline



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Tobi Fairley

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You are listening to *The Design You Podcast* with Tobi Fairley, episode number 14.

Welcome to *The Design You Podcast*, a show where interior designers and creatives learn to say no to busy and say yes to more health, wealth, and joy. Here is your host, Tobi Fairley.

Hello gorgeous friends, what is the best thing that's happened to you this week? What is it? Well, the best thing that's happened to me is that while you're listening to this episode, I am sitting poolside in Aruba with my people. And I'm sure I'm so happy about it because you know, it's fabulous and beautiful there.

So hi from Aruba, and I love vacation. Do you love vacation? I love that I give myself permission to make vacation a priority. We vacation at least two full weeks of the year and we have a lot of what I call mini trips and excursions several other times of the year. And it's one of the things that my husband and I prioritize. It's what we believe really that we work for, to give ourselves and our daughter these experiences.

And I love teaching my daughter actually that she deserves time off and that she deserves to say yes to herself and that there's more to life than just work, which is a lesson I've had to learn the hard way, and that spending money on experience is one of the beautiful things about money. So yeah, travel takes money, right? And in a few weeks on the podcast, I'm even going to talk about money mindset because it's really important and a lot of us hold ourselves back with our money mindsets that we don't even know we have.

But today, I want to talk about commitment versus willpower versus discipline because these are things we really may need more of if we want to make the money to help us travel or to live a great life or to do something else. So have you ever looked at other people who go after what they want and they get it, and you thought, "Man, I wish I could do that?"

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Well, you can. And on last week's podcast, we worked on part of this actually. We learned how to get rid of indulgent emotions and outdated belief systems, or what we call our own BS to move us in the direction of our dreams.

But that's not all it takes to get big results in our lives. It takes massive action, which very few people actually take. And you need to know the difference in commitment versus willpower versus discipline to ensure that you take massive action and get massive results.

So if you were thinking earlier when I was talking about being in Aruba and you're imagining me sitting poolside with my people and you're wishing you could take vacations two or even four weeks a year, well, you can if you take massive action towards that goal.

Now, the way to make things that you want actually happen in your life is to be committed to them at such a level that you don't settle for any other option than achieving them. So let's dig into this idea a bit more because commitment to something is not necessarily the same thing as having discipline or willpower.

So let's start with commitment. It's the most important ingredient for achieving your goals and your dreams. And if you are not 100% committed to something, there is no amount of willpower in the world that can help you make it happen day in and day out. 80% commitment to something doesn't equal the result you want, and that's hard for us to really take sometimes.

We're like, "Well, I'm 80% committed, that should be enough." But think about it. If you want, say, total time freedom and you only get 80% time freedom, then you may be way better off than you used to be, but you still aren't at your goal. You still have 20% of your time that you're obligated to something that you don't want to be doing, right? And 20% is quite a bit.

You know, I think about this a lot in weight loss because an 80% commitment to weight loss might mean that you're still carrying around 20% of the weight that you want to lose, which can be quite a bit of weight,

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right? Or you know, even if you're thinking about it with what you eat, 80% commitment to eating clean leaves you 20% of the time that you could truly undermine all the good work you've done. And I've done this so many times. Literally eat 80% clean and then say, just on the weekend, undo the whole thing and maybe even gain weight.

So an 80% commitment or even maybe a 90% commitment might not be enough. So the only way to ensure that you get to your goal is having 100% commitment. Now, let's clarify real quick that 100% commitment is not the same thing as being a perfectionist.

I can be 100% committed to something like an email campaign in my business and that I want to send an email every single week to potential customers. But that doesn't mean that I'm a perfectionist about the email and it being the perfectly chosen words and the perfectly recorded video to include and absolutely no typos or mistakes ever. Those are two different things.

100% commitment to something often means that done is better than perfect. And this is where a lot of us fail. We don't complete things, or at least we don't complete them in the time frame we said we would because our version of good enough is never good enough.

You know, in the book that I talk about so often, Essentialism, and I'm going to talk about another one later that's equally great, but in Essentialism, Greg McKeown talks about how sending out the draft version of a client proposal may be good enough. It may be good enough to get them to commit and to pay the retainer and to move forward. And why would you waste time revising that proposal 10 times or even really just once if good enough is good enough to get the result that you're looking for?

So I think we're getting clear that 100% commitment does not mean 100% perfect. So what do we need to do to be 100% committed to our goal? Well, we need to identify what we call our compelling reason, and that is a

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reason that is so compelling, it is so important to us that it won't allow us to not make our goal happen.

So compelling reason is really a powerful thought is what it is. It's a thought that creates an equally powerful feeling in us that makes us take action 100% of the time no matter what happens. So let me give you an example of this. For a person who has smoked for 40 years and tried everything in the world to quit smoking, to give up cigarettes, getting a cancer diagnosis, as horrible as that may be, might be the compelling reason that they need to finally give up cigarettes and to give them up cold turkey all of a sudden.

So you see that they tried and they tried and they tried for years to give up cigarettes, but their reason was not compelling enough. And then all of a sudden, they get a life or death diagnosis and they're like, that's it, I'm done, stopping today, and they never pick up another cigarette again, okay?

So that's what we have to create for ourselves. Not life or death, but a reason in just everyday life when we're working on our goals, that reason that is powerful enough that no matter what obstacles or what fears or what competing desires come up, there is no chance of us wavering in our commitments to reaching our desired outcome. So that's commitment and compelling reason, which really go hand in hand, they're the same thing.

So what is willpower? Well, in the book, *The One Thing* by Gary Keller, which is also a phenomenal book about being ultra focused, similar to *Essentialism* but very different in the approach, he says that willpower is something that we have a limited supply of, that we can run out of it really on any given day. In fact, that we do every day pretty much because we don't spend it wisely.

And that's such a great insight, that's such great information to realize. Like, who knew that every day you have a little set of willpower and depending on what you use it on, frivolous decisions or whatever you use it on, like, you're going to run out of it, and you're going to have to replenish it.

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So he says think about willpower as a renewable resource. It's like the bars on our cellphone. And it can be recharged with down time, but believing that willpower is always on will call, he says, is a lie. So I think of it this way. I think of using up all our willpower like decision fatigue. And if we waste it on a lot of unnecessary trivial stuff that really doesn't require willpower or that's not important to us, then we don't have any left when we really need it. So our willpower is really a personal resource that needs to be managed.

So what does willpower have to do with commitment? Well, first of all, if your compelling reason isn't compelling enough and you encounter a competing desire, something that you also want or that you maybe want more and that desire is stronger than your compelling reason, and it goes against your goal, then you're going to want that willpower to kick in.

And Gary Keller says in the book that many people bring won't power to their important decisions, and one way to avoid this is to do your most important task that move you closer to that goal you want, move those things to the very first thing in the morning after you have a good night's rest when your willpower is at its highest. And to make sure your willpower gets renewed every day, it's really important to do things to take care of ourselves like eat right and exercise and relax and play and get lots of good deep sleep.

So all of those things we know we should be doing, maybe this is our compelling reason to actually do them because we know if we don't, then we won't have willpower when we need it the most, right? So when we're at our best, so is our willpower.

Now, what about discipline? Because we've talked about commitment, we've talked about willpower. But where does discipline come in? Well, the same book, *The One Way* by Gary Keller also has a great explanation of discipline that I really, really love. And I always thought discipline was something that people either had or they didn't.

Like, I've always talked about, thought about in my family, we kind of even like, make jokes about and give my dad a hard time because he's such a

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disciplined person, or so I thought, especially in his physical fitness and his diet. But really in every way, like, in flossing his teeth and polishing his shoes, you know, all the stuff that you think a disciplines person would do.

And I didn't always think of myself in that same way. I knew I was really powerful and I could make things happen, but I didn't believe I was really disciplined. Well, I love what Gary Keller says about discipline because he said that what he discovered about it is that we all have it, and we don't even need more of it than we have. But like willpower, we need to manage it and direct it better than we typically do.

So what does that mean? Well, first we need to understand that achievement, being an achiever, reaching your goals, reaching success does not require you to be full time disciplined. Like, you don't have to be a disciplined person 24/7 like I've always thought about my dad being.

And this is great news for those of you and us and me who don't think we're disciplined really all the time, or maybe those of you who think disciplined is boring. You're like, "No way do I want to be structured and disciplined," but you don't have to be disciplined all the time to use discipline in a way that really gets you to your goal.

So Gary says we only have to be disciplined long enough for a habit to kick in in any given area of our life or our business that we're working on. So great news, right? So for example, research shows that it takes an average of 66 days for something to become a habit. Not the 21 or 28 days that a lot of us have heard from other self-help sources.

I think this is a really important piece of information also because it may and often on average, take 66 days. That's a little over two months. And it can even take longer. It can take up to 254 days, depending on how difficult the task is that we're trying to turn into a habit.

But don't panic because it can also take as few as 18 days on something simple to create a habit. So let's stick with this number of 66 or this idea of two months because that's twice as long as a lot of us were thinking that it

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took to create a habit, and we tried something for three weeks or four weeks and then we just didn't understand why it didn't stick.

So here's the point. If you can understand that you need to direct your discipline to something for about two months to turn it into a habit, and then after that you can essentially release the discipline in that area and let the habit take over, that's really exciting, right? And you don't have to be disciplined or focusing your discipline in every single area of your life all at once to get big results.

You focus it in one spot until it becomes a habit and then you focus it somewhere else. So it's like a laser pointer to me. I can envision that focus until it's a habit. And I really love this idea of channeling your discipline into something until it sticks and then moving on to the rest of the stuff you want to improve.

And while that previous area that you made a habit in, it's still running in the background automatically then and you can stop thinking about it all the time because it's just going to be something that you just do if you created a habit.

So I really have found this to be true in my own life already when I think about it. One habit that I created really sort of recently, believe it or not, is getting up at 5:30am every day. Now, I've always been on and off as a morning person, but if I stayed up too late or I had competing desires like we talked about over in commitment to watch a movie or read a book or hang out with my family or do something social, then I would make the choice to not go to bed on time and to not be able to get up early.

So I had to channel my discipline for a while and actually, when I think about it, it was almost exactly two months that it took me to do this and I put my discipline there that I went to bed early, around nine or nine thirty every single night for about two months, no matter whether I was traveling or at home or wanted to be doing something else, and then I would get up early even if I was still tired.

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I would just make myself be disciplined and get up early because I knew the payoff of getting up early was that I would get so much more done each day because I had experience with that, I had seen what it's like when I get up early and how much better my days go. So that was really sort of my compelling reason. I wanted the payoff of getting up early.

And at first it was hard, especially when I had the competing desire in the winter to stay in my warm cozy bed with my husband and sleep instead. But I was disciplined for several months, or really about two months, and then it got a whole lot easier. And now it's just what I do. In fact, my husband even gets up with me now. He's always been a fairly early riser too, maybe around six or six thirty, and he moved it to five thirty.

So we're up at five thirty and we start our day, and it's wonderful. And the payoff is huge, and it never enters my mind to change that now. So that habit is running in the background while I move on to something else. So I believe - I tested it, and it really, really works.

So now how do we bring commitment and willpower and discipline together for that winning combination? Well, if your desire and your beliefs are aligned with your goal, meaning you want it and you believe that you can get it, then that's a good place to start. So both of those are important. But both of those things, desire and belief can also wane at times.

And that's why it's important to have 100% commitment, or more specifically, to have that compelling reason that keeps you focused on your outcome. But I love to really stack discipline and willpower on top of that compelling reason really to hedge my bets so that I'm sure to reach the outcome I want.

So I layer those on top and I really created what I call a seven-step plan for success that combines commitment, willpower, and discipline. So let me tell you what those steps are.

So number one, decide what you want to accomplish first. So that's the desire part. So what do you desire? Number two, check your belief system

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about it, and clear out any thoughts that may hold you back from your efforts. Any thoughts or beliefs like you don't believe it can happen or all of those things we talked about on podcast episode number 13. So listen to that if you need to, but this is the part in step number two that we call getting rid of the BS, the belief system.

Number three is that next you want to identify your compelling reason for your goal. And it's the reason that no other result but total success in this area is an option for you. It's truly the only option, that's how compelling your reason is. But to check this because it's so important that you get the right reason, step number four is actually to check in and test your compelling reason before you move forward.

So for example, ask yourself, would you really rather lose weight or is the competing desire to indulge in sweets still too strong and it's going to pull you off of losing weight? Many of us have done this for years, right? And we're like, "This time I'm really committed," and then the next time we see chocolate cake we're like, "Never mind, just kidding, I'm going to eat the cake."

So our compelling reason was not enough. And here's the way that you know if you're fully committed to something, and I learned this from my mentor, Brooke, which I love. She said, if you're fully committed, then you will sign an agreement to pay someone \$50,000 if you don't hit your goal by your goal date.

So think about that. That's how sure you are that it's absolutely going to happen. So think back to that smoker who now has cancer. They'll sign that paper all day long because they're certain, they're 100% sure that they're never ever ever going to pick up another cigarette.

Now, if you get to testing your compelling reason part and you ask yourself, am I so sure that I'm going to do this when I say I am that I would agree to pay somebody 50 grand? And you think to yourself, heck no I wouldn't sign that agreement, are you nuts? That is your evidence that you don't have

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the right compelling reason yet. So give yourself the \$50,000 test on your compelling reason as step number four.

Step number five. Once your compelling reason is solid, you schedule out all the steps to achieve your goal and put all the important steps as we learned, in your calendar in the morning when your willpower is at its highest most refreshed point. So what I do is I pick three key things a day and I put them in my calendar and I do them before noon each day.

So yeah, if your compelling reason is strong enough, you don't technically need willpower, but I prefer to hedge my bets just in case and knock out those three steps towards my goal before noon every single day so I know that they're going to get done.

Step number six is you use your discipline to take on only one key goal at a time and to stay focused only on it until the habits that you need to accomplish it really take root. So most people don't have the discipline to take on only one goal at a time, they're taking on multiple goals. And most people who take on multiple goals don't have the discipline to not let trivial tasks and obstacles creep into their life and derail their progress.

So it's really important that we use our discipline here really as an extension of that compelling reason to stay single focused for best results until those habits we need to get stuff done kick in.

And then number seven, make sure you've set appropriate time expectations. So goals take time and habits take time. So all the steps to a goal can take weeks or months or even years sometimes, right? And we just established that most habits take at least two months on average to stick. So I want you to expect and plan for settling in with your goal for a while and really settling into creating those habits one at a time that are going to help you reach your goal.

So let me give you an example of what the whole process looks like when you have all seven steps. So let's say my goal is to launch a new website in the next 90 days, and my compelling reason to launch it is that I'm sick and

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tired of being the best kept secret in my industry. Like, nobody knows me, they don't know what I do, I have an old outdated website, it's not converting any sales, and it's really not even aligned with like, say, my new philosophy and really where I'm going in my business.

So I'm the best kept secret and I'm constantly frustrated because nobody is buying my services. So I firmly believe in this example that if I create the right kind of website that I can then use it to convert sales into more profits. So I'm 100% committed and certain that come hell or high water, this site will be live in 90 days. And I would even be willing to sign that big expensive 50k contract that if it's not, I'll pay that ridiculous sum of money to someone. That's how important this website and this deadline is to me in this example.

So next, I create the list of every single step that has to be done to create the site by me or someone else, and I set deadlines for each step and I put them into my calendar. And then I start immediately knocking off those steps three at a time each morning before noon when I'm rested and before I get into my email and get distracted and start all the decision fatigue that's going to zap my willpower.

So then I'm using both discipline and willpower to make this happen, that even on days when I'm traveling or I stayed up too late or I don't feel like sticking to my commitment and waking up and working on my website, I do it anyway. And through this process, I create a habit that actually is going to pay off in a lot of other ways but I create that habit of starting my day with my most important task for this website completed by noon, and really again, that's a habit that you could carry on indefinitely that achieving all your other goals after your website is done.

And in that 90 day period, my website is launched with a combination of willpower and discipline and commitment and I will no longer be the best kept secret in my industry. Wahoo! Yippee! See? Got it? It works.

Okay, so grab a pen, grab a piece of paper, and start those seven action steps to reaching your goal, whatever it is, whether it's travel to Aruba or

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create a website, or lose weight or something else, start them right now and I'll see you next week with another episode of the Design You Podcast to help you create a business and a life that you absolutely love. So bye from Aruba, friends. See you soon.

Thank you so much for joining me for this episode of *The Design You Podcast*. And if you'd like even more support for designing a business and a life that you love, then check out my exclusive monthly coaching program Design You at tobifairley.com.