



📖 Finding pleasure in chores may boost self-control

📁 Psychology / Psychiatry

📁 Nutrition / Diet

Productivity can easily escape us after a tiring day at work. At times, it is easier to chill out in front of the TV and order a pizza, rather than go to the gym before cooking a healthy dinner. But new research suggests that if we can find pleasure in necessary tasks, our self-control can be boosted, regardless of how tired we feel.

The team of researchers, including Michael Inzlicht, professor in the Department of Psychology at the University of Toronto Scarborough in Canada, published their findings in the journal *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*.

Self-control is defined by Inzlicht as "the mental processes that allow people to override thoughts and emotions in order to adapt their behavior from one moment to the next."

Inzlicht believes that although people can lack self-control when they are tired, this does not necessarily mean their willpower is exhausted.

He notes that in the field of psychology, self-control is seen as a "limited resource" that can be exhausted if a person keeps using it, meaning a person is left with little or no willpower.

'Convert have-to's to want-to's to boost self-control'

However, Inzlicht says that although many people can lose willpower after repeating tasks time and time again, this is not because people have no self-control, but because they are experiencing a change in priorities.

He explains:

"When people are fatigued they experience a change in motivational priorities, such that they are less willing to work for the things they feel obliged to do and more willing to work for things they like to do."

Inzlicht says by converting "have-to's" into "want-to's," people can boost their self-control,

even when they are feeling fatigued.

He notes that if this attitude fails, avoiding temptations and taking mental breaks can help a person feel refreshed and ready to tackle necessary tasks.

Inzlicht adds that individuals with hectic personal and professional lives may find this more challenging, but it can work.

"If someone wants to eat healthier they should think of the enjoyment they can get from eating delicious nutritious foods. They should not frame their eating goal as something they feel obliged to do because their doctor or spouse told them to do so," he says.

"The key is finding a way to want and like the goal you are chasing, just like the person who loves to jog as a way to relax or take a break."

Medical News Today recently reported on another study detailing how scientists have discovered a [way to enhance self-control](#) - but this time, through electrical brain stimulation.

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No motivation to do the housework? Researchers say focusing on the pleasures of these tasks may stop us avoiding them.

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References

Why self-control seems (but may not be) limited, Michael Inzlicht, Brandon J. Schmeichel, C. Neil Macrae, published in Trends in Cognitive Sciences, 15 January 2014. [Abstract](#)

[Finding pleasure in productive activities the key to boosting self-control](#), news release from the University of Toronto, accessed 17 January 2014.

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