

## What is the Willpower?



According to [www.merriam-webster.com](http://www.merriam-webster.com), “it is the ability to control one’s own actions, emotions, or urges, especially in difficult situations. It involves delaying gratification and resisting short-term temptations to achieve long-term goals. It is a marker for self-control and self-determination”.

### **Why speak about the Willpower in today’s world?**

As a professional life coach with 36 years of working experience, I feel that it is imperative to spend reasonable time to understand what willpower is and how each person can develop a stronger willpower to achieve more in life. One of the biggest challenges in life is having control of one’s actions on a daily basis. My personal experience in the corporate world is that if I was equipped with this knowledge and awareness on time, I could have employed my willpower better than I did.

### **What is the objective and the aim of this article?**

My hope is that the readers of this article will now do further personal and individual research and deeper self-introspection in order to start a new journey towards a better version of themselves. This article will not be able to cover every aspect about willpower, in fact, I would invite the readers to research more on the topic and share the different experiences in order to help all our people to achieve success quicker and faster when they gain the control of their own actions. I believe that if we all learn how to use our willpowers as individuals, the entire country issues may be shifted to a positive trajectory, e.g., unemployment, poverty, education levels, ethical conduct across the board, corruption, etc. Therefore, the article is a call for action to every reader to transform and be better in controlling their actions going forward.

For this reason, I am only going to focus on the first part of the definition given above, "**the ability to control one's own actions**".

### **The ability to control one's own actions**

What does the word **action** mean?

Oxford dictionary definition, "the fact or process of doing something, typically to achieve an aim"

One example relevant to me as I write this article is, if I say to my colleagues at the SABPP Ethics Committee, I am going to write the article on the willpower topic in a month and do it on the correct promised date. It means that I do indeed have control of my actions during the period of month to make time for relevant research and write the article.

#### **- What does the word inaction mean?**

Oxford dictionary, "lack of action where some is expected or appropriate. Future generations will condemn us for inaction"

Opposite example, if I am unable to write the article in the promised period and it takes me six months instead, that simply means that I don't have the stronger control of my actions. I need to really work on my willpower in order to deliver and be productive in my work.

#### **- Why is the meaning of these words important?**

It is because the brain needs to understand them first and absorb them to the unconscious mind so that a **new instruction is given to the brain to always act on our goals**. My life coaching training at the Transformation Academy, refers to the brain as a "**Super Computer**" (the Human Mind Owner's Manual - Joeel A. Revira and Natalie Revira). If the brain is trained correctly, everything can be done and achieved without any struggles over a period of time.

#### **- What does research say on this topic?**

Walter Mischel - the psychologist, did a famous study called, "the marshmallow test". The outcome was that children who were tested at primary school level, some showed stronger control of the temptation to eat the marshmallows, they demonstrated higher self-esteem and performed better even at the tertiary level later in their education journey. Those who could not hold the temptation at the younger age, did not do so well at the tertiary education level and self-esteem was lower, etc. **This is good scientific evidence to support the need for us to invest on improving our willpower on time**. There is more research by other social

psychologist and other scientist indicating similar evidence to encourage every person **to pay attention to this brain power tool** that is not used enough by many of us. The brain comes with the willpower as part of the package, we just need to be aware and use it or learn how to use to benefit us at the individual levels.

#### **- Why is the willpower important for us as people?**

According to [www.verywellmind.com](http://www.verywellmind.com) willpower is crucial for achieving our goals in life. Both at the personal and professional levels. E.g., sports, health, financial aspects, studies, career, etc.

#### **- Can willpower be improved?**

The answer is **yes** and supported by research ([www.verywellmind.com](http://www.verywellmind.com))

**§ Suggested ways and techniques to apply when improving your willpower are the following: -**

**Work on it as a muscle** - with time and effort, it will grow stronger. Its like going to the gym to have physical exercises.

**Get enough sleep** - to protect both your mental and physical energy sources.

**Meditate** - considered to be the most powerful tool to increase willpower.

**Avoid temptation** - remember the classic marshmallow test by Walter Mischel to young kids and later when they older. The research revealed that some of those kids closed their eyes in order not to see the marshmallows. Others looked away. Those who kept looking at the bowl with the sweets, they were unable to resist the temptation and continued to eat the sweets from the bowl.

### **Conclusion**

**South African view and my desire for every person and professionals**

I am writing this article wearing two hats,

1. I am writing as a member of the SABPP Ethics committee whose main aim is to help our HR Professionals and employees in general to remain ethical in everything they do to protect our economy in the country and attract investments from local investors and foreign investors to create more jobs in order to reduce poverty in our communities.

2. **Secondly**, I am writing to fulfill a personal purpose in life of seeing everyone who has a goal in their lives succeeding quicker and early enough to make the meaningful impact on self and others. In that way, **plant the seed of hope vs gloom and despair** in their profession and the societies where they come from.

Resources

[www.merriam-webster.com](http://www.merriam-webster.com)

The Human Mind - Owner's Manual, Joeel. A Rivera & Natalie Rivera

Transformation Academy training

Walter Mischel - The Marshmallow Test

[www.verywellmind.com](http://www.verywellmind.com)