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Motivation and Performance, Blog 8

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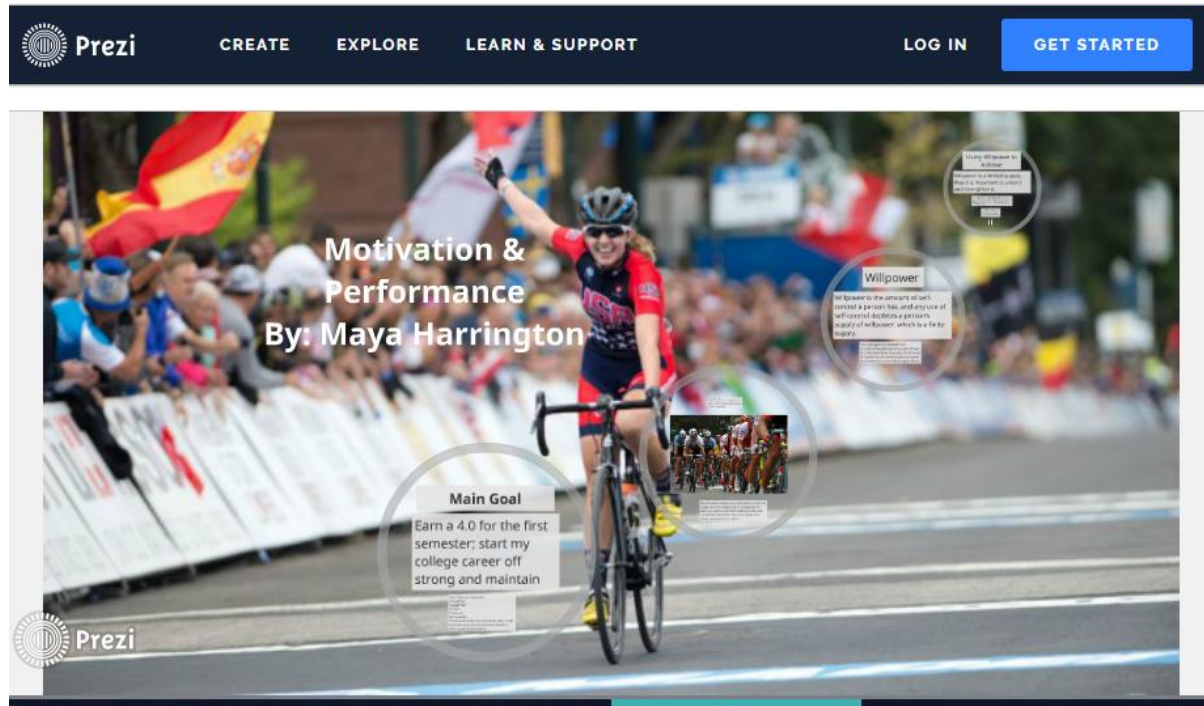
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Motivation & Performance with Maya

<https://rampages.us/mayaharrington/>

Maya Harrington



FINAL PROJECT, UNIV291-035

FINAL PROJECT

OCTOBER 3, 2015 [LEAVE A COMMENT](#)

Below is the link to my final project Prezi! I hope everyone is successful in everything you put your mind to.

http://prezi.com/8fyjq_iep1dd/?utm_campaign=share&utm_medium=copy&rc=ex0share

DAY10

FINAL PROJECT IDEA

SEPTEMBER 28, 2015 [4 COMMENTS](#)

Hi, my name is Maya and my two main goals are to complete my first semester of college with a 4.0 GPA and to lose 10 pounds by the end of this school year.

For my final project, I plan on creating a Prezi. I will begin my presentation with the introduction of my two main goals, and then touching on my top five personality traits. Then, I will give a short comment on the bike races and how the cyclist taught me about competition and cooperation, and how I will be able to translate that new knowledge into achieving my own goals. After that, I will introduce the concept of willpower and provide a definition along with the four main categories of willpower. The next slide will then discuss how even though willpower may be at a limited supply, there are many methods to extend and strengthen it, and then provide examples. I will tie those ideas back to myself, and how I can use those methods to help me achieve my own goals.

Many of the ideas and concepts that I will be putting on the slides of the Prezi will stem from content from many of my blog posts. I will also try to include multiple pictures and videos from the actual UCI bike race along with other material that could support my ideas. The Prezi will include over ten slides, but it will not include very in-depth since this is basically a summary of what I learned throughout the course.

DAY9

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

SEPTEMBER 27, 2015 3 COMMENTS

Hi, my name is Maya and my two main goals are to complete my first semester of college with a 4.0 GPA and to lose 10 pounds by the end of this school year. Chapter 7 of *Willpower*, “Outsmarting Yourself in the Heart of Darkness” gave many interesting insights on how to overcome the rocky parts of working towards tough goals.

The “hot-cold empathy gap” is the inability for a person in a cool, rational, peaceful moment to appreciate how we will behave during the heat of passion and temptation. This refers to how you don’t really know what you’re putting yourself into until you are actually doing it. At first, losing a few pounds seems like a simple task, but I am already struggling to find the motivation to go the gym daily.

The chapter then offers some techniques that can help overcome or even totally avoid this block; social networking can be used as a way to keep you on track of your goals. For example, the “Public Humiliation Diet” was taken upon by Drew Magary, who posted his weight on Twitter every day for five months. Another method is a “Commitment Contract,” created by stickK.com, which allows the person signing it to pick a goal along with a penalty that will be imposed automatically if you don’t reach your goal. These two methods use fear of embarrassment and punishment in order to motivate the person to achieve.

Another topic of the chapter was the description of the brain on autopilot with Henry Stanley and how he shaved every morning despite the starvation and overall extreme situation of he was in. It shows how consistency and orderliness is important in our lives, and how important it is to create a schedule that I can follow in order to work towards my goal. I plan on creating a strict, but reasonable schedule to follow that will allow me time to study, go to the gym, and eat full meals daily.

DAY8

PERSONAL INFLUENCES

SEPTEMBER 26, 2015 6 COMMENTS

Hi, my name is Maya and my two main goals are to complete my first semester of college with a 4.0 GPA and to lose 10 pounds by the end of this school year. I have not necessarily told my family these two goals, but they are somewhat understood and expected of me. My parents and siblings will do everything they can to support me, but since I am no longer living at home, their influence will not nearly be a significant impact on me. Instead, close friends that I have here at VCU will be my most immediate influence and will make or break my quest to accomplish my two main goals.

Many of my friends are very supportive of my goal to earn a 4.0 GPA and are understanding when I place academics in front of social activities. If I ever need help on my homework, it is reassuring to know that there will always be someone available and willing to help me. The amount of positive influence I get out of my friends is determined by how much I reach out for the help. On the other hand, when I told my friends about my goal to lose weight, many of them scoffed at the idea and said that it was not necessary for me to do so. While I appreciate their insistence that I do not need to lose weight, I would appreciate their support for my goal more. Even if other people may think that my body is fit, I personally know that it could be better, so they should support me regardless. My friends are definitely a negative influence on my second goal because they constantly treat me to unhealthy foods, which I do not have the self-control to decline. My best bet to minimize the negative influences would be to not eat meals with the friends that will support my instinctive cravings for sweets and junk food until I can strengthen my willpower enough to only eat healthy foods.

DAY7

COMPETITION & COOPERATION

SEPTEMBER 25, 2015 2 COMMENTS

The athletes in the UCI Road World Championships are the best of the best and they know how to cycle better than anyone else. These skills do not just come from talent and pure athleticism, but also technique, strategy, and lots of practice. Competition and cooperation are key elements for team racers to improve during their training and their races. Competition is the major drive for most athletes to train and race harder, and thus try reach their maximum potential in order to win. Cooperation is necessary for team sports in order for a whole team to win a competition.

For cycling teams, competition and cooperation play key roles in a race. Many top teams will have 20 or more cyclists, where one member is selected as the “team leader” and all the other cyclists will do everything they can to help him win the race. These cyclists will help by cycling in the front so that the team leader can draft off of them. Drafting means that the person in front cuts/breaks the wind so that there is less wind resistance for the person behind, thus saving the energy of the person in the back. The team will also cooperate in helping the team leader win by blocking off any competitors that may try to pass or take the burden of speeding up in order to pass a competitor.

Competition and cooperation can also help me in reaching my goals of completing my first semester of college with a 4.0 GPA and losing 10 pounds by the end of this school year. Receiving high grades is always a competition of getting better scores on tests and quizzes than the rest of the class in order to beat the curve, but sometimes it requires the cooperation of multiple students to study together in order to learn the material. The best way to lose weight could be by creating a friendly competition with someone with a similar goal, but this could also be considered cooperation because we would actually be helping each other reach our end goal.

DAY6

STRENGTHENING WILLPOWER

SEPTEMBER 24, 2015 2 COMMENTS

Hi, my name is Maya and my two main goals are to complete my first semester of college with a 4.0 GPA and to lose 10 pounds by the end of this school year. In chapter 6 of *Willpower*, “Can Willpower Be Strengthened? (Preferably Without Feeling David Blaine’s Pain),” Baumeister and Tierney describe Blaine’s incredible feats such as holding his breath under water for over seventeen minutes by using his willpower. While Blaine improved and strengthened his willpower to complete these amazing accomplishments through tough training and practice, these methods are not always the best or easiest way for everyone to strengthen their willpower. One way the book offers as a way to strengthen your willpower is to set lots of little goals and do them in order to lead up to one larger goal. Blaine also uses this technique; for example, when he is running, he is OCD about making his foot hit exact spots on the pavement, and he makes sure that he does it every time. By practicing making things harder than necessary, but still completing them, it allows you to believe that you have an extra reserve of strength to reach your ultimate goal.

In order to achieve my two main goals, I will need to increase my self-control by setting these smaller goals that I know I can achieve, and they will in the end help me reach my GPA and weight goals. Since I have a bad habit of looking at my phone when I need to study or do homework, I plan on setting goals that I will not look at my phone while doing homework for at least one hour. This will allow me to devote more attention towards my studies and also save time because I will not be wasting it by looking at my phone or getting distracted. This will also then finish all my work in a timely manner, which allow me to get more sleep and thus live a healthier life style.

DAY5

OVERCOMING EGO DEPLETION

SEPTEMBER 23, 2015 2 COMMENTS

Hi, my name is Maya and my two main goals are to complete my first semester of college with a 4.0 GPA and to lose 10 pounds by the end of this school year. The book *Willpower* first mentions ego depletion in chapter one and two, where Baumeister and Tierney define it as the diminished capacity of a person to regulate thoughts, feelings, and actions. Not only does ego depletion diminish willpower, but it also makes feelings and emotions stronger. Willpower is basically defined as the amount of self-control a person has, and any use of self-control depletes a person’s

supply of willpower, which is a finite supply. The four broad categories of willpower are control thoughts (ignoring something), control emotions (avoiding a bad mood), impulse control (resisting temptations), and performance control (managing effort).

I have experienced ego depletion nearly every day after school. Having back-to-back classes and sometimes not even having enough time to eat a meal can be very strenuous on my mind and body. My willpower supply is quickly depleted during classes, eventually leading to ego depletion for later in the day because I must ignore many distractions from classmates (control thoughts), make sure I am never obviously moody to my peers or professors (control emotions), try not to sleep during lecture despite my tiredness (impulse control), and take notes and answer questions accurately (performance control).

In order to be able to achieve my goals of a high GPA and healthy weight, I will definitely need to find a way to solve my ego depletion problem by finding ways to recover and reduce/prevent it. Currently, the ego depletion always makes me too tired to decide to do my homework early, so I end up procrastinating, leading to late nights and ultimately lack of sleep, which is unhealthy and can lead to weight gain. I think my main problem is that I do not have enough time to eat or take in glucose in order to replenish my willpower during my classes throughout the day. In order to recover from it, I should eat food directly after classes. I should also try to carry around and eat snacks to keep me going during the day to prevent a major ego depletion, until I can get a decent meal later that day.

Glucose is so important in replenishing willpower and reducing/preventing ego depletion because it is converted into neurotransmitters, which are chemicals in the brain cells used for sending signals, allowing us to be able to think. This may explain my cravings for sugary foods at the end of a long day: my body is craving glucose in order to replenish my very much depleted willpower supply. Hopefully my plan to eat more consistent, healthy meals will not conflict with my goal to lose weight because of the influx in calories that I will be taking in. I hope that the amount I work out and my increased sleep will help counteract the increase in the amount of food I eat throughout the day.

DAY4

DECISION FATIGUE

SEPTEMBER 22, 2015 1 COMMENT

My name is Maya, and my two main goals are to complete my first semester of college with a 4.0 GPA and to lose 10 pounds by the end of this school year. Chapter 4 in *Willpower*, "Decision Fatigue," describes how making decisions can quickly deplete our willpower to make more smart decisions throughout the day. Baumeister and Tierney use decision fatigue to explain the mistakes that eventually lead to the downfall of important politicians and celebrities because they must constantly make large decisions and so when they are faced with obvious decisions, they cannot always make the right choice. It was also explained that actually making the decisions, even if they are enjoyable for the person, for example buying wedding items, are what cause fatigue rather than just looking through catalogs for things to possibly buy. This may explain why I personally do not like to make small decisions such as choosing a specific color of paint

because I subconsciously know that it would cause mental fatigue and I will need my willpower to make more important decisions later.

I was most surprised by the wide variance in the judges' decisions on cases just because of the time of the case in relation to their meals, in the example given in this chapter. This phenomenon was explained with the depletion of glucose rapidly in the brain and body because judging is hard mental work. While this makes sense, it still surprises me with how much the decisions changed just because the judges had not eaten in a while or they had just eaten a healthy meal. Since glucose and food is such a large factor in replenishing our willpower to make decisions, one would think that we would eat more often than three meals a day in order to maintain a high state of decision willpower. One would even begin to think that perhaps light snacks all throughout the day would be a better option.

DAY3

MAKING TO-DO LISTS

SEPTEMBER 21, 2015 [LEAVE A COMMENT](#)

My name is Maya Harrington, and my two goals are to complete my first semester of college with a 4.0 GPA and to lose 10 pounds. Within the third chapter of *Willpower*, "A Brief History of the To-Do List, From God to Drew Carey," I found the advice on what type of content to put into a list to be the most helpful. When making lists, Dean Acheson claimed on the importance of the Next Action, or NA, where the to-do list has items that specify the very next action. For example, in the case of my own goal to maintain a 4.0 GPA, rather than just writing in my agenda to complete the homework for my chemistry class, I would write that I need to print out the next lab procedure and complete the previous lab report.

Another insight Baumeister and Tierney presented was that the problem with people and their inability to reach their goals is not because of the lacking of goals, but rather having too many. People make to-do lists that are far too long to complete in one day, making the goal very unrealistic. Therefore, it is important to focus on less than three main goals and less than three items on a to-do list at a time. That way, one will be able to succeed in completing those goals and events and eventually lead to larger achievements. Thus, I only have my two main goals in which I am focusing on currently, and short to-do lists do go with each goal.

Sometimes goals can also be conflicting, which can lead to stressing, worrying, suffering health, and lower productivity. Fortunately, my two goals are not very conflicting, rather, they are supportive of each other, other than in the realm of time commitment, because by exercising my body, I will improve its physical health which in turn will benefit mental health as well.

DAY2

MOTIVATION AND FLOW

SEPTEMBER 20, 2015 [LEAVE A COMMENT](#)

Deci and Ryan claim that the most central distinction of the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) is between autonomous and controlled motivation. Autonomous motivation is self-endorsed while controlled motivation is driven by factors such as self-esteem and peer approval. I believe that my two goals represent one of each of these motivation types: My goal for achieving a 4.0 after

my first semester of college is driven by autonomous motivation while my goal for losing 10 pounds is driven by controlled motivation. My GPA is only my concern, and I am willing to take many strides to maintain it despite what others may say. My weight is a major concern for my mother and my self-esteem in my bathing suit as a competitive swimmer. Also, both goals include the fundamental needs of autonomy, relatedness, and competence.

Flow is defined as the emergent teleonomy self, with the basic model as pleasure, power, and participation. Basically, a person is trying to reach a certain goal in order to obtain a joyful state of “flow.” For myself, physical activities, especially swimming, are flow experiences. When I am in the pool doing a tough set, I tend to lose track of time, and I totally engage my body and mind into the activity; I am constantly trying to improve and refine my techniques. When I compete at meets, and I see the results of my hard work through achieving short term goals, I am filled with thrill and excitement.

My flow experiences can also translate over to my two goals that I have set for myself. The ability for me to concentrate on one activity for long periods of time can help my studying habits by decreasing the amount of time I may lose due to distractions, and thus maintaining a high GPA. Also, since swimming is such a vigorous sport, by doing it daily, it should be fairly easy to sustain a healthy weight.

DAY1

GOALS AND INSPIRATION

SEPTEMBER 19, 2015 LEAVE A COMMENT

After completing the *Personality Assessment*, I was not completely surprised with the results: in order, my top five personality traits are prudence, judgment, hope, honesty, and perspective. Overall, these traits define me as someone who thinks about her actions and how those actions may affect other people and my future. I believe that these traits are what make my goals reasonable and eventually attainable. Once I set goals, I have a constant focus on the end result, which serves as a significant driving force and motivation.

One of my goals for the next few months is to complete my first semester here at VCU with a 4.0 GPA. As a pre-medicine student who is hoping to apply for the Preferred Applicant track, my GPA is a very important factor that I must maintain despite everything else I have balancing on my plate. It is also my first semester of college, so it is a difficult transition from high school, so I feel that if I can complete this fall semester with good grades, I should be able to complete future semesters successfully as well. Using prudence, I will be cautious of any decisions and actions that I may think may put my grades at risk, and using my judgment trait, I will make a final decision. I have a constant hope for medical school in the future that continues to motivate to study, and I am honest with people about my goals and if they ever conflict with other events, but I always look from their perspective in order to explain my situation more clearly.

Another goal of mine is to lose ten pounds. With the constant threat of the ominous “freshman-15” I have been trying to eat healthy and work out often, but I have not seemed to see any improvements; if anything, I have already gained five pounds from when I first moved onto

campus. I want to maintain the shape that I was in when I was a competitive swimmer, but cut a few pounds because I know I will not be able to have nearly as much muscle as I did before. I like to be realistic with my goals, but also optimistic that I can achieve whatever I put my mind towards.

I have been inspired to accomplish my most difficult goals by watching professional athletes such as Michael Phelps compete in their sport. As a swimmer myself, I understand the difficulties of completing long, hard practices every single day, and to see these athletes push through those challenges and other significant pressures is what inspires me and makes me believe in myself to accomplish things I might have initially thought impossible. When I watch them compete, I feel like that since they always do their best, I should try to do my best as well, even if it is not just limited to a sport.