



Willpower Isn't the Problem— Relying on it is

Trying to cut back on sugar? Walk more? Cook at home? You're not alone—and you're not broken if it's been hard to stick with it.

Research shows that most habits don't fail because people aren't motivated. They fail because the behavior depends too much on willpower. And willpower is limited. According to psychologist Roy Baumeister, self-control works like a muscle—it gets tired with use. The more decisions you make in a day, the harder it becomes to resist old patterns later on.

The solution isn't more discipline. It's better design. Here's how to build habits that don't rely on willpower alone:

1. Redesign your environment.

We like to think we're making conscious choices all day, but research shows up to 90% of what we do is automatic. That's why your surroundings matter. In one study, placing water at eye level in a cafeteria led to a 25% increase in water purchases.

- Keep fruit on the counter or cut veggies in the front of the fridge.
- Store less-healthy foods out of sight (or don't buy them in the first place).
- Set out workout clothes / walking shoes or prep meals ahead so they're ready when you are.

2. Use "if-then" plans.

Broad goals like "eat better" are hard to act on in the moment. But specific "if-then" plans give your brain a script to follow.

- "If I want dessert, then I'll make something with fruit and yogurt."
- "If I feel stressed, then I'll take a short walk before reaching for a snack."
- "If I skip breakfast, then I'll have something ready mid-morning so I don't end up grabbing whatever's around."

These simple plans—known as "implementation intentions"—have been shown to significantly increase follow-through in behavior change studies.

3. Start small.

You don't need a full meal plan or a 30-minute workout to build a healthy habit. You just need something you'll actually repeat.

- Chop one vegetable instead of prepping the whole meal.
- Stretch for one minute instead of committing to a full workout.
- Take a short walk after lunch instead of aiming for 10,000 steps.

Stanford behavior scientist BJ Fogg has shown that small, low-effort actions are more likely to turn into habits, and that's because they feel doable, not overwhelming.

4. Remove friction.

Friction is anything that makes a healthy choice feel harder to follow through on—too many steps, too much time, or too much thinking. The more you reduce that friction, the easier it is to follow through.

- Keep a filled water bottle in the places you actually spend time: your desk, your bag, your car—not just the kitchen.
- Prep snacks in bulk once, so you're not starting from scratch every time you're hungry. For example, assemble a few bags of trail mix or cut up veggies you can grab without effort.
- Choose go-to meals that require almost no prep or decision-making, like a soup you batch-cook on Sunday or a salad you can assemble from a few staples (see below!).

Research from psychologist Wendy Wood shows that habits stick best when they require the least effort. You don't need to overhaul your routine—you just need to make the better option easier than the alternative.

A Meal-Sized Salad You Love... That Loves You Back



Maybe you're missing an ingredient, or the flavor isn't quite right, or the steps just feel like too much. A simple formula gives you more flexibility. It helps you make a healthy meal with what you already have, in a way that fits your taste and your routine.

When we say a salad that “loves you back,” we mean it gives something in return. It fuels your body, supports your energy, and delivers the nutrients your brain, gut, and heart need to function well. It's not just about eating more greens. It's about building meals that taste amazing and help your body feel great.

This is the kind of habit that doesn't need to be perfect. It just needs to work for you. (And look at this as another powerful “if-then”: “If I need a quick, nourishing meal, then I'll build a salad I actually want to eat.”)

Use this simple salad formula:

1. **Start with a leafy base.** Spinach, arugula, romaine, kale, cabbage, etc.
2. **Add at least 2 veggies.** Raw or cooked—cucumbers, tomatoes, carrots, bell peppers, onions, fresh peas, radishes, zucchini, mushrooms, grilled asparagus, roasted brussel sprouts, beets, etc.
3. **Pick a protein-rich ingredient.** Beans, lentils, tofu, tempeh, eggs, tuna, grilled chicken, or a scoop of hummus
4. **Optional: add a grain or starchy veg.** Quinoa, farro, brown rice, sweet potato, corn
5. **Finish with healthy plant fats + flavor.** Avocado, olives, nuts, seeds, tahini, olive oil, lemon juice, vinegar, or your favorite healthy dressing

Go heavy on the veggies, moderate on the protein-y add-ons and starch, and light on the fats (be more liberal with whole foods, like nuts and seeds, than fatty dressings). This allows you to truly personalize your plate so you get not only great nutrition, but joy out of your meals.