

If you're relying solely on your motivation to reach a goal...

You're in for a rude awakening.

Sure motivation helps, especially with getting started, taking initial action, and building emotion...

But motivation is an emotion.

It doesn't last forever.

And any meaningful goal, takes a long time to achieve.

If you rely solely on your motivation, you'll get burned out before you reach your goal.

What's far more important than motivation, is shaping your environment and habits to aid your success...

Neil calls this *"creating systems that protect us from our lower selves."*

It's normal for us to believe all of our habits are a product of motivation, talent, and effort.

And don't get me wrong, those things definitely matter.

The thing is...

Over time, especially a long period of time...

Your "motivation" and even your "will power" tend to get overpowered by distractions, procrastination, unconscious fears, bad habits, fake "busy work", and what Neil calls "reactive" behavior.

That's why it's extremely important, if you want to reach your highest potential, to develop systems that protect you from your lower self.

For example, I find that in the morning on an empty stomach is my best time for writing, and when I can do my best writing.

So, I created a winning morning routine, and don't open any distracting social media or even my emails until my writing is done for the day.

This is usually 2-3 uninterrupted hours in the morning - just me, my coffee, and a blank word document.

I literally don't allow myself to eat until the writing is complete - a delicious breakfast is my reward and really forces me to write - even when *I don't feel like it.*

This system has created a habit, which means, my work gets done, regardless of motivation.

Here are three ways to develop successful environmental systems:

Automate Good Decisions

Design an environment that automatically makes good decisions for you.

For example, buying smaller plates can help you lose weight by automatically setting your portion size. A study from Cornell showed that people eat 22% less food by switching from a 12 inch to a 6 inch plate.

For productivity, plan your day out in the evening, follow a morning routine, and execute on your most important tasks first thing in the morning - before allowing the interruptions of the day to take hold of you.

Use software like SelfControl or Freedom to block out social media sites and kill your procrastination.

Design Habits That Support Your Current Patterns

You'll want to create an environment where good habits are "in the way" of your normal behaviors.

For example, you are more likely to go to the gym if it's part of your commute. You can plan to go to the gym either before work, or after work, on your way home.

Kill The Negative Influences

Get rid of things that distract you from your goals.

If you're trying to get in shape, keep junk food out of your house.

If you're trying to get things done, block out social media, and find a dedicated and uninterrupted workspace.

Understand Yourself and Your Patterns

Like all advice here, everything is completely subjective.

What works best all depends on you.

And it all starts with getting clarity into yourself.

For example, I work best early in the morning, after a solid night of sleep, and fresh cup of coffee.

Neil produces some of his best writing late into the night.

It's all a personal preference and takes a bit of experimentation to find out what works for you.

I asked Neil what the best advice I could conclude with would be, and he said this:

"The most important thing is that you know the areas in your life where your will power fails you, and you set up a system to succeed in those areas that you are unable to get around or over-ride, even if you want to."