



Hi graduate friends,

With all the distractions around you and so much work you have to do, you constantly have to use willpower and make tough decisions. For example, if you're spending too much time on social media or reading news, you have to decide to close the app and study instead, many times a day. Exhausting, right?



Research previously showed that using your willpower would use up your limited energy (Baumeister et al., 1998) and leave you with less strength for other demanding tasks you have to do like information processing (Fischer et al., 2008) and intellectual work like reasoning and thoughtful reading comprehension (Schmeichel et al., 2003). Research also showed though, that if you were motivated to do the demanding task, you could potentially overcome that lost strength barrier more easily (Baumeister & Vohs, 2007).

With or without motivation, it still sounds disheartening to think you have limited willpower. Thankfully, newer research finds you have more power. A study by Job et al. (2010) showed that after using their willpower, participants who believed that their willpower was limited, performed worse on tough mental tasks, while those who believed their willpower was not limited, performed about the same, or even better.

Ok so this can be wonderful news because now we know that with the right mindset, you'll have the ability to do good work even after showing willpower. But it's still not *easy* work. You may be happy to hear that people who are good at reaching their goals practice much less willpower than others. In fact, they avoid tempting situations in the first place, which means they also avoid having to constantly resist things and use willpower (Hofmann et al., 2012). How? With the help of good habits and routines (Galla & Duckworth, 2015). For example, if you make sure to start working in the morning for 1 hour before you check any social media, you may see that over time you don't need to use so much willpower anymore as morning work will turn into a habit. If you need help setting up your habits, consider watching our [creating effective learning habits video series](#).



Best,



Najmeh Keyhani (she/her/hers), PhD, from your [Learning Development & Success team!](#)

Reference:

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