

We make millions of little decisions all the time, and the result of each one is either net positive, net negative, or neutral. The more net positive decisions we can make (and the fewer net negative ones), the better. Net positive decisions—brushing your teeth before bed, eating [healthy meals](#), and regularly going to the gym—help you feel good and bring you one step closer to your goals despite the effort they entail.

Net negative decisions, such as filling up on food that doesn't make you feel good, skipping the nightly teeth-brushing, letting that downer friend cramp your style, or forgoing the gym—make it difficult to reach your goals because your decisions don't make you feel good, empowered, or confident. They take more out of you than they give, interfering with your energy levels, sapping your motivation, and clouding your focus.

Let go of all the stuff you can't control and start using your time to master what you can control.

While the healthier choice may seem harder, it pays off bigger. And you'll be surprised by just how easy these choices can be once you make the effort. By learning how to master the **seven things that are within our control**, you will start to make more net positive decisions, fewer net negative ones, and find that empowering, positive behaviors become second nature. So let go of all the stuff you can't control and start using your time to master what you can control. Before you know it, you'll be living your best life ever!

1. Your Breath

Most people don't even think about their breathing (I myself used to talk for many seconds at a time and forget to breathe!). Breathing is obviously important, but so is the ability to focus on it. Can you feel your chest expand when you inhale, and get softer when you exhale? Where do you feel the rise and fall most? Breathing is the ultimate hack to relax and slow racing thoughts. As soon as you experience something unpleasant, just take a few deep breaths and focus not on how horrible the situation was, but on your breathing. When you focus on your breath, you can count "one" as you inhale, "two" as you exhale. When you get to 10, start over. I bet you'll start to feel better and more grounded immediately.

2. Your Self-Talk

We all have a voice in our heads. That voice can often be critical and get in the way of our happiness and success. Try to count the times you engage in negative self-talk each day. It may surprise you how often you criticize yourself. If you can learn to recognize this Debbie Downer of an inner voice and replace it with encouraging statements, your attitude will start to change. Try talking to yourself with compassion. For example, instead of telling yourself you're not good enough, remind yourself that you are worthy of love and attention, or that it's okay to make mistakes—we all do!

3. Your Gratitude

If you can practice being grateful on a daily basis, your happiness and productivity will increase. Cultivating gratitude trains us to focus on hope, to remain inspired, and to be optimistic, lending us the courage and resilience to persevere in the face of setbacks (on top of giving us a mood boost that keeps us coasting).

4. Your Body Language

According to social psychologist Amy Cuddy, you can demonstrate power and confidence simply by changing the way you hold your body. For example, adopting a powerful stance—arms on your hips and feet planted wide, causing you to take up more space—increases testosterone and decreases the stress hormone cortisol. The result? This “power posing” will make you feel more confident.

5. Your Mental and Physical Fitness

I don't know about you, but I come up with my best ideas while I'm on the elliptical. Exercising is a chance to just listen to my music and think about nothing. It's glorious. You don't have to go to the gym, but we all ought to take 20 minutes out of our days to get up and move. Motion helps free your mind and body to better tap into your creative potential. Walking has literally been found to increase creativity. Getting in some movement will help creativity and also focus. Giving your brain a workout is as easy as it is important for you to do. Whether you play Sudoku, do crossword puzzles, or read non-fiction books, your brain will feel the difference. You can get a similar benefit from meditation. Just 20 to 30 minutes has been shown to increase focus, reduce stress and anxiety, and even dial down physical pain.

6. Your Diet

Even though it might taste great, junk food is a net negative. It makes your brain and body slow and sad. Consuming too much sugar has been linked to all kinds of medical conditions (including metabolic syndrome and cardiovascular disease), not to mention mood swings and crashes that kill productivity. Plus, processed foods have been proven to exacerbate, if not cause, chronic diseases like diabetes and obesity.

7. Your Sleep

Sleep is critical for focus, concentration, job and academic performance, keeping your appetite under control, and a host of other positive health outcomes. In order to hack sleep, you have to set a routine. I'm asleep by 9 p.m. and I wake up to watch the sun rise. Watching the sun rise is beautiful, and it's a net positive that I'm grateful for. If your brain can't calm down while you're trying to fall asleep, tell yourself, “I'm proud of the work I accomplished today, I'm going to let my brain and body rest now.”