

### Quick Bio

- Faribault Allina Clinic
- I became interested in a dietetics career as a freshman in college d/t my mom's dietary struggles with ulcerative colitis as well as a desire to improve my own disordered eating patterns
- RDN since 1996
- Master's degree 2000
- University of Minnesota, Ski U Mah!

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### "I know what to do, I just need to do it"

- "I need to eat less"
- "I need to exercise more"
- "I need to quit eating carbs" (sugar, snacking, fat, bread...)
- "I need to eat out less"
- "I need to stop eating after dinner"
- "I need to \_\_\_\_\_"

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## Willpower: How to get more ...and need less

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### Objectives: Today we will


- Define willpower.
- Identify the long term effectiveness of willpower as a weight management strategy.
- Identify 5 strategies to increase willpower.
- Define neuroplasticity and how to create health habits that don't require willpower.

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### Willpower

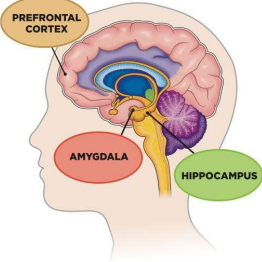
- Willpower is our capacity to resist short-term temptations to achieve our long-term goals. Willpower allows us to exert conscious control over our emotions and behaviors, especially when faced with obstacles or distractions.



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### Thinking Brain Vs Emotional Brain



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## 6 Ways To Strengthen Your Willpower

- Optimize sleep
- Meditate/Pray daily
- Remove yourself from temptations
- Exercise regularly
- Eat a healthy diet
- Work it like a muscle, give it tasks to complete daily

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## Why Willpower Alone Won't Work

- Willpower Is Finite
- Willpower Is Unreliable
- Willpower Encourages Shame & Self-Blame, (the enemies of progress)
- Willpower Gives You An Excuse Not To Try

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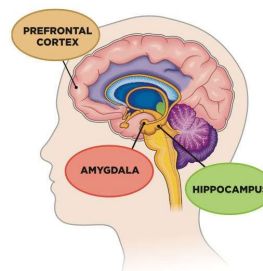
## 4 signs willpower alone is not enough

- 1) You spend way too much time thinking about food, your body, or your weight and think "I hate this, I don't want to do this anymore".
- 2) You don't trust yourself to stick with a balanced eating plan long-term
- 3) You set dates to get yourself back on track.
- 4) You engage in "all or nothing thinking", you're either all in, or not in at all.

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## Thinking Brain Vs Emotional Brain



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## An Alternative to Willpower

- Think about what habits are: Habits are unconscious things that we do without really stopping to think a lot about them.
- When you engage in an activity, the brain creates a synapse, ie, the point at which a nervous impulse passes from one neuron to another.
- Each time you repeat the activity, the synapse reacts faster and becomes more automated.



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## Neuroplasticity: an alternative to willpower

- Neuroplasticity refers to the ability of the brain to rewire itself through the practice of a desired skill
- When fresh nerve cells are trained through specific learning exercises, they make new connections
- This allows your brain and body to heal from old habits and thrive with new habits
- Every time you think about something in a new way you empower yourself by changing the structure of your brain

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### Ditch the negative self-talk...ALL of it!

- Don't be your worst enemy, speak to yourself as you would a beloved friend.
- When you engage in negative self-talk you are wiring in synapses that take away your power to change.
- We need 5 positive thoughts to overcome each negative.
- Find ways to put positivity into your life. Surround yourself with people, books, quotes, podcasts that are positive. Engrave positive thoughts into your head and your heart to fall back on during difficult times.
- Engage in exercise and meditation daily. These activities naturally build positivity through accomplishment and chemical changes.

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### Believe that feelings are not facts

- Feelings are chemical events in the brain which can be changed with a fresh perspective on the situation.
- Not every thought that pops into your head is true.
- Pause for a moment, be curious, question your thoughts.
- Thoughts become our actions, behaviors, habits.
- Am I hungry?
- Identify the feeling or reason behind the craving.
- **Thinking novel thoughts are a first step in creating new brain wiring.**

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### The enemy of progress

- Shame, feelings of unworthiness, negative self-talk, defeating thoughts, all-or-nothing-thinking
- We all have medicated negative feelings with food. Give yourself grace. It was intended as self-care. It doesn't make you a failure, just a person who is trying to feel better in a bad situation.
- **Giving yourself grace is a first step in creating new brain wiring!**

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### Love tomorrow more than you hate how you're feeling right now

- When we numb negative feelings with food, shopping, alcohol, social media, ect, we reinforce wiring in our brain that perpetuates the behavior.
- We don't feel better the next day, in fact we feel worse. We don't think to ourselves "I wish I had eaten more."
- Create a "go-to" list of distractions that will help you heal and refresh your spirit. Phone a friend, take up new hobby, keep a thought diary, take a walk, organize a closet, play with a child, brush a pet.
- It's not food we're craving, it's peace of mind, connection with others, sleep, security.

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### Let's face it, we all need a plan.

- Food is not going away. There will always be holidays, vacations, a box of donuts in the breakroom, food focused events, birthday parties.
- Life is going to hand us lemons. Sometimes it's a serious loss, sometimes it's just the drip, drip, drip water torture of daily stresses, unwanted change, and annoyances. None of us escapes these things.
- When willpower is high, build systems to create an environment that makes it harder to default into old brain wiring.
- Create a mantra "I want to be happy and healthy anyway"
- Remember your "why".

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questions

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