

FROM THE FOUNDER OF THE INSECURITY PROJECT

# THE SELF-PERMISSION METHOD

How to succeed at life without  
using self-discipline.

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**(SAMPLE CHAPTER)**

## 2.

### **The great misunderstanding**

Although self-discipline is culturally celebrated as the most important resource for successful humans, it is also the only tool in the shed for most people. Having a bunch of ultra-masculine, ex-military, hard asses preaching self-discipline or die, is only making it harder for the average person to genuinely improve their life.

The underpinning logic of self-discipline is that there is an inherently unmotivated, lazy, weak, or bad part of you that will ruin everything if given half a chance. This belief makes it impossible to rest. If you snooze, you lose. If you are not driving things forward, you are being sucked backwards.

The worst part of the self-discipline strategy is that due to this presupposition about your corrupt nature you must use your best energy against yourself to stay in the game. Parts of you are now at war. War means one side is winning while the other side is losing with inevitable collateral damage for both parties. Therefore, self-discipline is incredibly inefficient. It is a young person's game because it requires you to have energy to waste.

Self-discipline works when you are young because you do have an abundance of energy. You have more than you need. You can afford to be wasteful. You can get away with system inefficiencies. You can steal from Peter to pay Paul and get away with it. However, as you enter the mid-life season, you'll notice you no longer have energy to waste which means you must learn to be much more efficient.

Mid-life success always comes from optimisation and increasing the efficiency of your system. The logic demands that working with yourself instead must be a better way. In fact, until you understand exactly how to do this, the adversarial internal relationship will lead to sabotage and your goals will always be blocked.

#### **The mid-life pinch point**

The motivation and performance problem you are trying to solve is not due to a lack of discipline. In fact, at this point, more discipline does more damage than good. Your real problem is a lack of permission – from yourself.

The best thing about getting to midlife is that most people are exhausted by the rhetoric of 'try harder' and 'be better' and ready for an alternative. Because self-discipline is so widely celebrated as best practice for internal motivation, and the costs of this approach appear to be negligible, rarely is there a reason to question this method until it all comes crashing down in the mid-life season.

For those who have not already completely suppressed their humanity and shut off all possibility of an integrated relationship with themselves, here's what typically happens.

The part of you that has been suppressed, accused, mistrusted, dominated and feared has had enough of being treated this way. The deep love and wisdom that resides in your being has now seized the opportunity your exhaustion has provided to demand a conversation about the state of your relationship. While this part of you has suffered in silence for many years, the maximum tolerance level has been reached and the game has now changed for good.

This threshold moment shows up as some kind of increased internal resistance manifesting as a loss of energy, drop in motivation, procrastination, lack of clarity, brain fog, or self-sabotage (at best) or some kind of major injury, chronic illness, severe physical pain, or autoimmune disorder (at worst) depending on how much fight you have left in you before you are ready to listen.

It is as though fuses are being pulled out of the power box and electricity has been cut off to previously high functioning applications. (The exact symptoms Stuart described in the opening story.)

### **The safety officer**

Another way of conceptualising what is going on, is to imagine your unconscious mind is like the safety officer in charge of workplace health and safety and has stepped on site to demand all work to stop. Clipboard in hand, there are a list of severe safety breaches requiring urgent attention before production can resume. While it may appear that you are being thwarted by your inner 'bitch' who hates the idea of things going well for you, considering the importance of safety in your life will give you cause to reconsider.

Whether you like it or not, every cell in your body is hardwired for self-protection. When in danger (real or perceived) we instinctively activate full defence protocols as part of the nervous system's flight / fight response. We only protect that which we value, so self-preservation is evidence of genuine self-love. The safety officer is your friend. They want productivity and success as much as every other part of you, it's just that your operations must be safe. You can't just turn off your need for safety.

### **Permission denied**

The central dilemma you now face is that whether you like it or not, **you do NOT have permission from yourself to move forward in life under these current arrangements.** As a result, all progress and production is being actively resisted. The handbrake is firmly on and

no matter how hard you try to forge on, you cannot. This is not because there is anything wrong with you, it is simply a loving restriction from your unconscious mind because certain aspects of your current set up are not safe.

More courage and less fear is yesterday's game. That logic may work while you are young, but good luck running that strategy now your unconscious has found its voice.

If you were to have permission to fully show up and maximise your energy and focus without addressing the safety concerns, that would be reckless and lead to certain calamity. However, once you address the necessary requirements to make your life safe again, then the handbrake is released, and you are free to power-up!

### **Leverage against yourself**

The message of my last book, *Leverage*, was that there comes a time when the space between two people has become so polluted that change must happen. The issue is that two people are never ready for change at the same time. Someone must go first. It falls to the person with a clearer grasp of their desired future or the greater felt pain of the present state of affairs to do something about it. It is only when one party feels the current situation is untenable, reaches a limit and then reluctantly demands an honest conversation to sort things out that the relationship can be improved.

When it comes to marriage, there is no reliable way to predict which partner will be the one to lead the change conversation, but in your own relationship with yourself, I can guarantee that in the mid-life motivation pinch point, it will always be your unconscious mind to demand the change.

The airing of grievances will quite predicably be some version of this spray below:

*"OK can you stop being such a jerk please?"*

*Yeah, I know Goggins is a freakin' legend and Willink is a beast. Yes, I know Pressfield has been on the Joe Rogan show and Tim Ferriss says his book is a must read. I get that you've been able to dominate me through the strength of your will and get shit done even when you don't feel like it. That's all great. Really impressive stuff. But can you see that you've treated me like your enemy this whole time using your will power to dominate, force and fight against me? I've been gracious knowing its only out of fear and ignorance that you think this way, but I can't keep going like this. I'm not prepared to be seen as your enemy for a moment longer. That's bullshit. It's unfair. I'm not OK with it anymore!*

*And here's the thing...I've been playing along and tolerating your leadership because you just weren't ready to stop and change. You were doing too well with your 'dominate and conquer' strategy to listen to an alternative. But now things have changed. You are tired and worn down from the battle. Now is my chance. If you'd like to continue treating me poorly and perpetuating the misunderstanding any further, then I'll actually be your enemy. I will dial up the resistance with greater intensity,*

*resourcefulness, and power. I will get in your way. I will thwart all your plans and remove all my support from your goals. I'm stronger than you. I will beat you. You don't actually want to go to war with me no matter how convincing Pressfield may seem."*

As Carl Jung says "If we understand anything of the unconscious, we know that it cannot be swallowed. We also know that it is dangerous to suppress it, because the unconscious is life, and this life turns against us if suppressed, as happens in neurosis."<sup>1</sup>

Your unconscious mind now has leverage to MAKE you do what you wouldn't or couldn't do otherwise. This is a pure example of 'changing the people you love for all the right reasons to get the relationships you deserve'. (The subtitle of the Leverage book if you are not familiar with my work on relationships)

### 3. Self-permission

If self-discipline is energy against yourself, then self-permission is the complete opposite. It is to work with yourself and have all your thoughts, emotion and energy pointed in the same direction.

Self-discipline is a limited resource dependant on poor self-awareness and a terrible relationship with yourself. Self-permission is a limitless resource based on a repaired and fully functional relationship with yourself.

Here is a summary of some of the key differences between the two self-motivation strategies from my book, *Unhindered*.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://artsofthought.com/2020/11/17/carl-jung-and-the-shadow-a-guide-to-the-dark-side-of-the-mind/>

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## SELF DISCIPLINE

A behaviour management strategy. It only deals with the end product never the production line. Therefore, it will only produce short-term gains.

A childish form of motivation. It requires no self-awareness or maturity and works only because you have energy to waste. It is the kindergarten version of trying to do your best work.

Based on the fear that you are weaker than you think.

Driven from the conscious mind. It pays no attention to the realm of the subconscious.

Requires you to fight, dominate and control yourself to win. It feels like you must climb the snow-capped mountain to capture the flag.

Cruel and unnecessary. It ultimately violates your relationship with yourself and can lead to trauma.

**MASSIVELY OVERRATED**

## SELF PERMISSON

Focuses on changed beliefs which then automatically change the behaviour. It deals with the production line, not the end product.

The adult form of motivation. As such, it allows you to access the best of who you really are and what you're capable of. It's an incredibly efficient and effective use of energy.

Demonstrates that you are far stronger than you imagined.

Accesses unconscious wisdom, intuition and knowing. It aligns your whole being to be pointed in the same direction.

Requires you to listen, trust, forgive, and accept yourself. It's releasing the handbrake to allow yourself to flourish and naturally move towards your goals.

It is 10 times more powerful and a sustainable form of motivation. It is a kind and loving way to access the best of you.

**ALWAYS WINS**