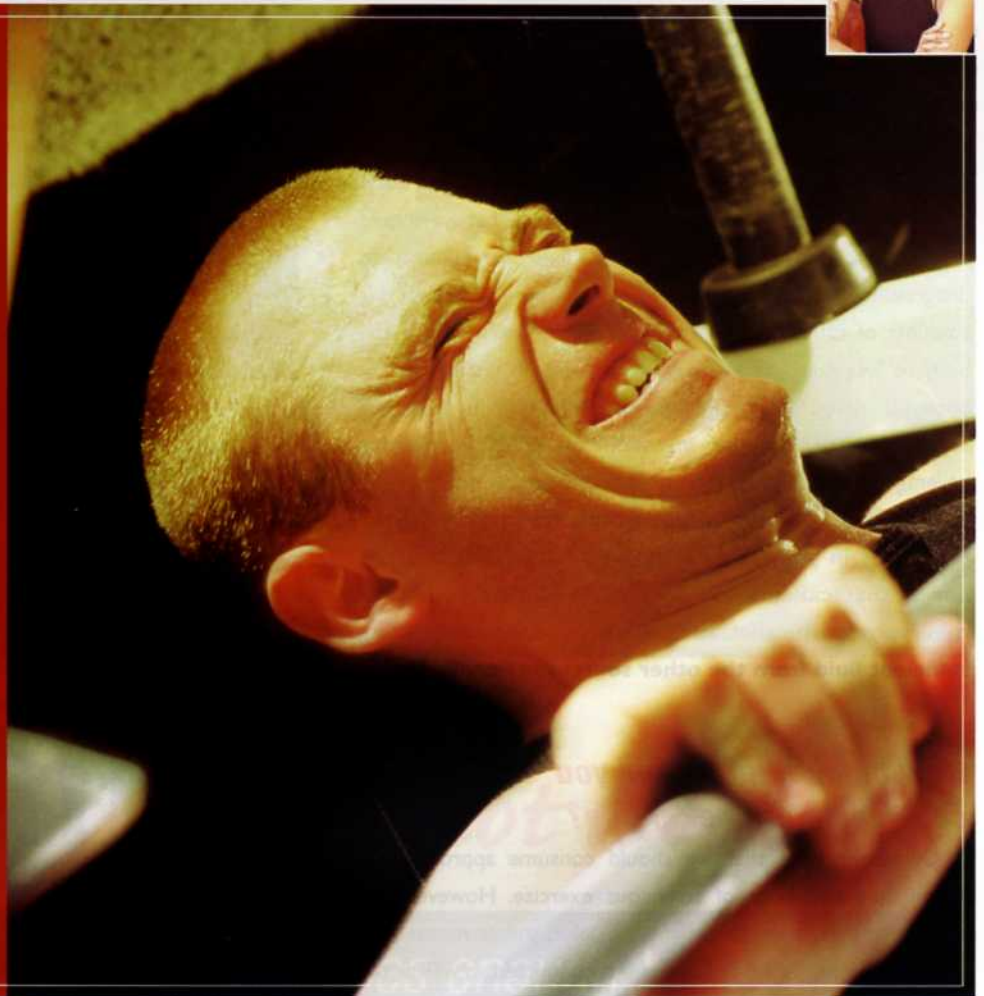




Are you waiting for the willpower it takes to transform your health and fitness to another level? The thing is, writes **NALISHA PATEL**, you can't wait for willpower to happen before you take action.



WILLPOWER WORKOUT

You have to take the right action and then willpower will automatically follow. If you are lacking in willpower in relation to exercise and your eating habits, then a few mind set changes and simple exercises can be used to combat this ongoing problem.

It pays to look over your past and to see where you have achieved your goals and had great willpower. Realise also that just because you have had little willpower in the past or even presently, does not mean you will never have enough willpower to achieve your goals. Choose to focus on what goals you want

to achieve rather than just telling yourself that you can't do "this" or "that". The biggest motivator to having great willpower is to have a big enough "why". If you have a strong desire to have a healthier and fitter lifestyle, with the added benefit of looking fantastic, then willpower will flow naturally!

Willpower can be increased with a few simple and realistic strategies.

Create a visualisation chart of the ideal you

Collate images of yourself looking your best and healthiest.

Alternately if your last best picture was 15 years ago, collect pictures of people that are realistically close to your ideal you. Glue the pictures onto an A4 sheet and place in a location that you will see it and frequently.

When you are feeling lethargic or unmotivated to exercise or you are tempted to devour a whole packet of biscuits, focus on your visualisation chart and imagine to yourself the body and health you will create if you were to exercise instead or forgo the biscuits. Create a big enough "why" in the visual collage and this will be a step in the right direction to creating willpower.

Past willpower

Look over your history in relation to your health and well being or any goal for that matter and realise that you have had willpower and it has taken you towards your goals. Look for evidence of willpower in any area of your life. Did you have the willpower to stay up late to study for a big exam or resist the temptations of alcohol while you were pregnant for nine months?

Write down some of these achievements and realise the extent of your capabilities. Try and pinpoint why these events were easier to stick to and how you can translate this into exercise and health. When the stakes are high, such as having to abstain from alcohol during pregnancy, you are more likely to stick to something. Unfortunately, most people think they are immune to health ailments and don't make the necessary healthy lifestyle changes until they have the heart attack or get overweight and their favourite pants don't fit anymore!

Tomorrow is not a day of the week

"Don't put off what you can do today for tomorrow". How many times have you heard this saying and disregarded it? How many times have you said "I will start on Monday" after a binge session all weekend?

If this is the way you have been delaying starting a healthier and fitter lifestyle, then this indicates you view the actions required for this lifestyle as unpleasant. We naturally move towards pleasure and away from perceived displeasure. If doing exercise is perceived as displeasure, then you are not going to do it. Full Stop! Experiment and find different exercises that you find enjoyable. If weights are not your thing, try kick boxing and pilates!

With practice, you can create the willpower to achieve all goals!

Temptation testers

If you are a chocolate lover, try a little experiment of bribing and tempting yourself. Go buy the object of your affections such as a chocolate bar. If you work at your desk all day, leave the bar on your desk all day long without eating it. You will be testing your willpower and strengthening it with practice.

Bribe and tell yourself that you will treat yourself to a massage or a similar favourite treat if you do not eat that chocolate bar all day long. If you're gutsy, you can keep this up for a week and increase the reward!

The "why" needs to be big enough to actually increase your willpower. Focus on your visualisation chart. The act of sustaining from eating the chocolate bar will prove to you that you can use willpower to do as you choose. Most people accept that they are at the mercy of their emotions and if they are craving a certain food or don't "feel" like exercising, then that is the way it is. This is not so. We are in control and with practice, you can create the willpower to achieve all goals! Take control of your actions and you will no longer be at the mercy of cravings or emotions.

For veteran temptation testers, another test to try is eating only one piece of chocolate or one biscuit. We too often fall into the mindless eating trap, where before we know it we have demolished a whole bar of chocolate or biscuit packet! Practice the art of eating only one piece of the food item and stopping. Enjoy that one piece or portion and eat in silence and without distraction.

Willpower is all about self control. Once you have mastered this, then health and well being is all yours!

▲ *Nalisha Patel of HealthMastery offers mobile 12 week challenges and personal training in your home, along with life-coaching. www.healthmastery.co.nz*