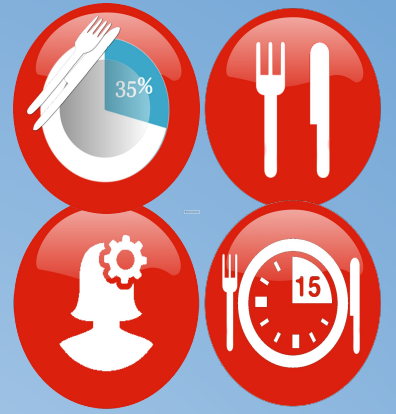


# *Moral Licensing*

## *How being good can make you bad*



**You're so good  
you deserve a  
treat**

**I have been  
good ... maybe  
you're right?**





# Moral Licensing:

## How Being Good Can Make You Bad

Two little words destroy many a day's health choices, Making progress on your habit, or just getting things done: *I deserve*.

"I pushed hard in the workout  
and even went back for seconds"

"I've finished the shopping,  
got a load of tasty healthy stuff"

I've written out everything  
i need to do today...

"Yeah . I've lost inches  
I've hit my target"

"I did the double last workout,  
I deserve a lie in"

"I deserve a coffee...  
and an extra big slice of cake!"

"I've got my plan now  
I deserve a break.... What's on TV?"

"I've done well, let's celebrate...I deserve to  
indulge tonight, let's enjoy myself"

Psychologists call this self-sabotaging behavior moral licensing: you give yourself permission to do something "bad" because you've been "good".

Not only do you indulge in actions that aren't aligned with your goals, but you also felt you deserved them, so you didn't feel bad at the time.

It doesn't have to be anything you've actually done either; even thinking about a good thing you've done or even, get this, going to do! can get you to fall into this mindset trap..

But when you looked back at what you rewarded yourself with, you're left with the awful aftertaste of regret. What was I thinking? How did I end up ditching Friday's session and overindulging with that food....it started out so well?

Or maybe worse through autopilot you mindlessly miss some of those negative actions and wonder "why you're not getting anywhere"

This down feeling lights up a few cognitive distortions... The defeatist mindset comes into play i.e. "I give up, why bother!" . which can lead to the What the hell effect!



# How To Revoke your Licence!



We are quick to beat ourselves up for our apparent lack of willpower; However, the reason why we struggle so much with self-control is often not some innate weakness of our characters, but just a little lack of understanding of how our minds work.

Gretchen Rubin, the author of "The Happiness Project," says "Moral licensing acts like a loophole, letting us wriggle out of establishing new habits like working out, eating healthy, or getting a side project off the ground.

"Loopholes matter, because when we try to form and keep habits, we often search for loopholes," she says. "We look for justifications that will excuse us from keeping this particular habit in this particular situation.

Gaining a little insight, added with a touch of mindfulness you'll begin to catch yourself in the act of Moral licensing and thus be able to make a choice and avoid employing the loophole.

To help you with making a better choice on the next page I've laid out a few key perspective to help you not so easily succumb

It's all supported by research cited in the book The Willpower Instinct by Kelly McGonigal:

## Food for Thought

Rewarding yourself with food is common with moral licensing and it's never with a plate of broccoli either... Yes, it's not a great idea to constantly indulge in this way; however, occasionally if you do, follow the B.A.S.I.C.S of mindful eating: slow down, savor and enjoy .... You can still have your cake but you won't feel the need to overindulge and better yet you'll lose that bitter aftertaste of REGRET..



# Revoke your Licence!



Remember getting yourself in the best shape means training the brain...

So take your time, read, learn and commit this to memory... and if it helps print out this page to refer to while you are learning these invaluable insights

1. Remember that choosing certain actions is about **commitment** to your underlying goals, not about being "good" or "bad." In the case of the healthier eating & more exercise, you need to see both actions as independent steps that are necessary to achieve your weight loss goal i.e **you can't out train a bad diet/ relationship with food**. They are not different sides of a scale but steps on a journey. Your goal isn't to achieve balance but to keep moving forward. You need to see both as essential parts of meeting your fitness goals.
2. Don't ask yourself "How good have I been?" or "How much progress have I made?" when you're deciding whether or not to give in to doing something not aligned with your goals. Instead, ask yourself "**How committed do I feel to my goal?**" and "**Why am I choosing to resist temptation?**" According to *The Willpower Instinct*, people asked the first set of questions are more likely to act in conflict with their goals, while those asked the second set aren't tempted to do so.
3. Act as if and decide you are the type of person who *wants* to do the actions aligned with your goals. If you go around thinking you're a bad, lazy, and self-indulgent person who just occasionally can muster up the motivation to fake good actions, consistent change will be a frustrating struggle and you'll constantly look for ways to undermine or to "get away with" something. Make your goal part of your **Identity**, even if it feels uncomfortable.

But when you realise that you **ARE** the type of person who wants what's best for yourself and to live in line with your values and goals, taking actions that undermine your goals will no longer seem like a treat, it will be a betrayal of who you are. Working on your fitness, Practicing your mindfulness, or making head way on your personal projects won't be something that you *have* to do, but something you *want* to do because you're a strong, independent person who is committed to being healthier, happier in both body and mind.