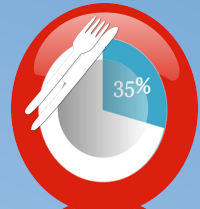


The "What the Hell" effect Escaping Self Sabotage





The What the Hell Effect Escaping Self Sabotage

The What-the-hell effect occurs when we break our habits a tiny bit, so we seemly decide "What the hell?" and go completely nuts ruining those habits. In particular this happens when we are feeling stressed, depressed, angry or just about any negative emotion...

You swore you were not going to eat that slice of cake but you had a bad day at work and felt helpless to resist a slither, which turned into eating a huge chunk..

You snoozed your alarm & missed working out on Wednesday, you then beat yourself up about having no willpower, next workout & you decide "I've already messed this week up... I'll start back next week..

You were not going to drink wine tonight but your partner was drinking so you thought "I'll just have one glass", pee'd off with yourself you decide well if i've had one might as well have another... and another?

We figure if we screwed up already, we might as well keep screwing up. That thinking, however, is a trap:



I've experienced this myself before but i first read about in the willpower Instinct by Kelly McGonigal (if you haven't read it, READ IT)

She writes about the effect saying "Giving in makes you feel bad about yourself, which motivates you to do something to feel better. And what's the cheapest, fastest strategy for feeling better? Often the very thing you feel bad about ... It's not the first giving-in that guarantees the bigger relapse. It's the feelings of shame, guilt, loss of control and loss of hope that follow the first relapse."



The What the Hell Effect

So how do you break the what-the-hell cycle and regain a measure of control over your goals? The most important thing is to recognize how you respond when you realise that you've let yourself down. Do you automatically shift into self-criticism and beat yourself up over losing control? Most people do, which only fuels the feelings of guilt and shame. The trick is to shift into a mindset of self-compassion instead.



In one study, researchers asked a group of women to eat a doughnut within four minutes, then drink a glass of water so they would feel full. After eating the doughnut, some of the women received a message of self-compassion encouraging them to not be so hard on themselves for indulging. The other group did not receive this message. In the second part of the study, the women were presented with bowls of sweets and were invited to eat as little or as much of the Sweet as they wanted. The women who had received the self-forgiveness message ate only 28 grams in sweets compared to the 70 grams consumed by the group that didn't get the message. That's a big difference.

As it turned out, self-forgiveness didn't give these women a license to eat more; rather, it turned off the pipeline of guilt and prevented them from overeating during the sweets challenge.



The What the Hell Effect

How To Stop the Cycle



When you experience a setback, you can harness these perspectives to avoid the downward spiral of shame, regret and loss of power..

So take your time, read, learn and commit this to memory...

1. When you've failed, take a moment to describe the emotions you're feeling. Do you feel self-critical? If so, what do you say to yourself? Slowing down to check in with yourself about this perspective helps you understand what you're feeling before you rush to escape.
2. Normalise the setback. "I'm not the only person who has polished off half a pan of dessert, and it probably won't be the last time."
3. What would you say to a friend who experienced the same setback? We beat ourselves up tremendously when we fail, but would you be just as harsh if your friend approached you with the same setback?
4. Build your stress resilience on the fly with this powerful question: "Where do I have a measure of control, influence, or leverage in this situation?" This question lessens the sting of hopelessness you might feel if you've fallen off the wagon with your goals, because it activates a "can-control" mindset. A can-control mindset has been associated with higher levels of well-being, physical health, and performance at work.
5. If that goal of yours is too long away, focusing on long term goals can weigh down willpower. By breaking them into smaller specific chunks you give your willpower the best chance for success. The idea here is to create small wins that help you build emotional momentum, which helps you overcome those small "hiccups" that often occur with a major habit change.

Setbacks are a part of life. Whether your goals involve eating better, quitting smoking, reducing the amount of wine you drink each night, sleeping earlier, minimizing the what-the-hell effect will help you slow the downward spiral of shame and guilt and activate more of a self-compassionate, can-control mindset.