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Goal setting is easy.

Developing a plan to achieve goals is also easy.

Gaining the momentum to turn an aspiration into action—that's the hard part.

In his book *Good to Great*, Jim Collins compared this challenge to moving a flywheel. A flywheel is a heavy wheel that takes a huge effort to push. But as you keep pushing, the wheel eventually gains momentum and begins moving at a high rate of speed effortlessly.

So how do we get our own flywheels moving and start taking the steps towards achieving

our goals? Below are three strategies that I've found to be successful over the last several years. These strategies helped me increase my level of fitness, increase the number of books I read, and turn [From the Green Notebook](#) into a widely read professional development resource.

DON'T BREAK THE CHAIN

In a 2007 [blog post](#), comedian Brad Isaac shared advice he received from Jerry Seinfeld.

He said the way to be a better comic was to create better jokes and the way to create better jokes was to write every day. But his advice was better than that. He had a gem of a leverage technique he used on himself and you can use it to motivate yourself—even when you don't feel like it.

He revealed a unique calendar system he uses to pressure himself to write. Here's how it works.

He told me to get a big wall calendar that has a whole year on one page and hang it on a prominent wall. The next step was to get a big red magic marker.

He said for each day that I do my task of writing, I get to put a big red X over that day. "After a few days you'll have a chain. Just keep at it and the chain will grow longer every day. You'll like seeing that chain, especially when you get a few weeks under your belt. Your only job next is to not break the chain."

"Don't break the chain," he said again for emphasis.

To get my flywheel moving, I focus on remaining consistent. I know that if I can get a couple of days into an activity it's much easier to stick with it. This is especially true of getting back into working out. Even when my muscles are sore, I keep at it. For example, if I'm extremely

sore a day or two after my first workout back in the saddle, I still focus on doing something. This could be stretching or going for a recovery run. Eventually I get to a point, where if I have to skip a day of working out or miss a morning of reading, it doesn't feel right.

TELL SOMEBODY

In *The Laws of Human Nature*, Robert Greene describes how Thomas Edison held himself accountable. Edison realized that he would take too long to get an invention from the idea stage to reality, so he would talk about how great his idea was to a journalist. In doing so, his ideas started generating publicity. Once people started talking about it, Edison had to complete it; otherwise he would be ridiculed. Did this approach work? I think so. He received 1093 patents, more than any single person in U.S. history.

When I'm worried that I'm not going to follow through with a goal, I take a similar approach and tell someone. I find that having outside accountability makes me more likely to finish the task. For example, for the last couple of years I've set a goal to read between 40-50 books a year. In 2017 I started a [monthly email](#) in which I promise subscribers that I will share 2-4 books I'm reading that month. This email has held me accountable to achieving my reading goals. The psychological accountability I get from writing the monthly email list has been instrumental in helping me achieve my reading goals.

Research from The American Society of Training and Development (ASTD) supports this practice. They did a study on accountability and found that when you commit to someone and have a specific accountability appointment with them, you will increase your chance of completing your goal by up to 95%.

HOLD YOURSELF ACCOUNTABLE

I have a favorite passage from philosopher Seneca that Ryan Holiday highlighted on his site [The Daily Stoic](#)

I will keep constant watch over myself and — most usefully — will put each day up for review. For this is what makes us evil — that none of us looks back upon our own lives. We reflect upon only that which we are about to do. And yet our plans for the future descend from the past

Each night I reflect on my day, making sure that I actually took steps required to move me closer towards my goal. I've found that this is a great practice for making that sure that I'm not developing habits I shouldn't. In my reflection, if I see that I wasn't as productive as I wanted to be, I make plans to adjust for the next day or the rest of the week.

GET THE FLYWHEEL SPINNING


There's a name for what makes the flywheel hard to push. In his book the *War of Art*, Steven Pressfield argues that the force that keeps us from reaching our goals and our full potential is called *Resistance*. He writes, "The more important a call or action is to our soul's evolution, the more Resistance we will feel toward pursuing it."

So how do we combat Resistance? We put our heads down and keep pushing the flywheel.

Whether you adopt the Seinfeld method, tell someone else about your goal like Edison, or reflect on your day like Seneca: Don't let yourself off the hook. Keep pushing the flywheel and eventually it will get much easier to turn.

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