DAILYGOOD
News that Inspires

Turn Inspiration Into Action
by Leo Babauta

How many times have you read a great article, or had an idea, or wanted to make a change … but then didn't?

It's one of the biggest frustrations for people who read this site: people blame themselves for not implementing a plan to change habits.

It takes a switch in gears.

I remember a boatload of times when I've been really inspired by something, but then didn't take action. I wanted to run a marathon, do a triathlon, write a book, start a blog, lose weight, get out of debt, start waking early, simplify my life. But I didn't actually do anything about it.

I was busy. I was tired. I had other things to do. But those were just excuses.

I learned a few things that worked for me, and within a year or so, I'd done all those things I mentioned above. I took action and made them happen. The excuses got beat.

Here's what works for me:

Tell someone you're going to do it. If you just think it in your head, you're not committed. It won't happen. Start by getting up and telling someone near you, right now. Or email someone.

Now carve out time. Lots of people actually do step 1 but not this step. You have to make the time. Even if it's just 10 minutes a day — when will you do it? After what part of your regular routine? Even if you don't have a routine, there are things you do every day: wake up, maybe shower and/or brush your teeth, eat breakfast or lunch, open your computer, get off work or school, go to bed, etc. Put it on your calendar, right away.

Start as small as you can. Most people make the mistake of overcommitting, because they're so inspired. But you're less likely to succeed if you say that you're going to work out an hour a day, or learn a new skill for 2 hours a day. Even 30 minutes a day is too much. Start with 10. Or 5. Or 2, if you're really busy. You have time for 2 minutes a day.

Really commit. The biggest reason most people fail is they're not really committed. You tell someone, and you think you're committed, but you're not. If you're really committed, write it on your blog (or start one). Post it on Facebook or Twitter. Tell 100 people about it. Put money on it. Say that you'll sing in public if you fail. Make people hold you accountable.

Have reminders. It’s easy to forget when you start out. If you want to go for a 10-minute run after you wake up, you need something to make sure you don’t forget: put your running shoes next to your bed or in your doorway, laid out with running clothes. Or sleep in your running clothes. Put up a big sign somewhere you won’t miss it. Use sticky notes, stuck to your computer. Computer and phone reminders are good too.

At the moment when you want to avoid it, pause. There will be a moment (or a bunch of moments) when you think, “Oh, I’ll do it tomorrow.” That’s the moment you have to not let pass idly by. Stop yourself, and just sit there for a moment, not going on your computer, just turning inward. What are you afraid of? What’s stopping you? There is a discomfort you’re trying to avoid. Instead, smile, and start. Do it and enjoy it in the moment. You’ll love it.