Submit to the Pain of Discipline

In the world of body building there is a simple maxim for bulking up or improving muscle definition - no pain, no gain. Most things worth getting in life require some sacrifice to obtain them. One could even argue that the achievement is made all the sweeter because of the effort required to obtain it.

Now lets translate this idea from the world of brute force to the subtlety of what it takes to be successful both personally and professionally. Normally this pain is not physical, but it's just as real.

The pain one must endure for success is the pain of discipline. You must be willing to submit to the pain of doing things you don't like to do and may well not be very good at doing. You must go beyond your comfort zone and submit to the perils of undertaking new activities, techniques and approaches. You must overcome the fear of the unknown, or perhaps the fear of the known.

The pain of discipline can be severe and acute, some may even find it debilitating. Or, it may be an anxious lump in your throat or knot in your stomach. The good news about the pain of discipline is its duration - SHORT. Because once you submit to the pain of discipline and do the activity you've been avoiding, it's finished and the pain quickly passes.

One example that always immediately comes to mind regarding the pain of discipline is cold calling. While certainly not the preferred way to build a business, nor typically a high return on time and effort invested, it is a tried and true technique for getting in front of prospects. Appointments lead to presentations, and presentations closed become sales. It's an undeniable fact that sales success is always to some degree a numbers game.

There must be a million techniques for overcoming call reluctance and making the telephone your friend and ally. But ultimately you have to pick up that 200 pound phone handset and dial the numbers. It takes discipline not to get sidetracked into opening the mail, answering memos, getting another cup of coffee, or just calling a business acquaintance to chat. You must submit to the pain of discipline in order to obtain the appointments with qualified prospects that are essential to your success.

What's the worst thing that can happen? You can get hung up on, sworn at, or maybe berated as unworthy. But you don't even know these people, so why should these responses be painful? They're not really rejecting you because they don't even know who you are or how good you are. OK, so your pride is bruised a bit. Maybe your confidence and self esteem is temporarily knocked down a peg. The key word here is temporarily. This pain is short term, and it will soon be forgotten once you've successfully scheduled some appointments.

If you're unwilling to submit to the pain of discipline, you're destined to experience the pain of regret - and the pain of regret lasts FOREVER. It may only be a dull throbbing or an uncomfortable twinge, but it never truly goes away because you'll always know that it could have been avoided.
The pain of regret is frequently accompanied by phrases like, "If I only had done......" or "I wish I would have.....". Unfortunately, most of our lives are replete with examples. How about the prospect you finally get around to following up with who says they placed a big order last week. Or the accounting final exam you never quite got around to studying for that cost you your scholarship. Or the parking tickets that you were going to get around to paying but ended up costing an additional $500 in fines. And the list goes on.

You'll be far more likely to submit to the pain of discipline once you recognize the rewards you'll receive as a consequence of your efforts. My discipline is regularly reinforced when I cross over Rt. 3 during morning rush hour. I spent nearly 9 years commuting into Boston. Seeing the bumper to bumper traffic is a powerful reminder that if I don't submit to the pain of discipline I may well have to experience the pain of regret 2 hours a day for the next 20 years.

The next time you find yourself avoiding some unsavory task that in your heart of hearts you know must be done to ensure your success, remember the old Fram oil filter ad - You can pay me now or you can pay me later. By submitting to the short term pain of discipline and avoid the life long pain of regret.

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