



**PRIMAL**  

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**POTENTIAL**

▶ **4-STEP PROCESS**  
**TO UPGRADE YOUR THOUGHTS**  
**AND**  
**OVERCOME YOUR EXCUSES**

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You know what to do. You have amazing intentions. You want that goal and feel like you'd do anything to achieve it!

... except, it seems, the work required.

You know what you should be doing it, but you don't hold your own feet to the fire to get it done. What is holding you back? Your excuses.

The reality is, it doesn't matter how great (or how poor) your plan is if you continue to submit to excuses, exceptions and delay.

Excuses block results and foster frustration and self-doubt.

It's easy to feel trapped by the cycle of making a plan, gearing up to crush it, starting strong and then talking yourself into an excuse or exception... again.

I want to help you end that that cycle. You don't need a better plan and you don't need more motivation. You have to overcome the allure of your most familiar and practiced excuses.

## Why Do You Make Excuses?

**Excuses are simple stories.** They are the way by which you talk yourself out of the work.

The only reason they have power in your life is because you submit to them. You agree with them. You tell the story and accept it as true.

The excuses feel easy, sometimes even automatic, because they are familiar. Rehearsed. Practiced. You've put in a lot of repetitions telling this same story and agreeing with it.

Ultimately, excuses are the permission slip you write yourself to do (or not do) whatever it is you want in that moment.

You are the excuse-maker and the excuse-taker.

You are also the only one who can be the excuse-breaker.

As I'm sure you've realized, knowing that isn't the same as doing something about it.

**So:** how do you break this pattern? How do you notice the excuse as an excuse and rally to go in a different direction?

How do you become someone who doesn't continuously submit to the excuses and exceptions? To change the excuse-making pattern, you need to see it more clearly.

## Incomplete Thoughts

### Excuses represent incomplete thoughts.

When you create an excuse, you give yourself just enough information to support the decision you want to make.

- o I'm too tired.
- o I don't feel like it.
- o It was a hard day. I'll start tomorrow.

Those stories represent just one small piece of the story, but certainly not the entire picture.

Let's say you decided ahead of time to go to the gym but after work, you're not feeling it and you think, *"I'm too tired. I just want to go home and rest."*

You've told just enough of the truth to make a case for what you want in a moment.

### Excuses are less about lack of discipline or desire and far more about how much of the truth you demand from yourself.

- o You didn't take into account why working out is important to you.
- o You didn't factor in how you'll feel if you break this promise.
- o You didn't include a consideration of your desire to stop making excuses.
- o You omitted the fact that working out is a way by which you increase energy.

Maybe you told yourself you were going to avoid sugar or indulgences today but soon find yourself telling a story about how this one thing won't hurt and you've been so good all day.

Again, you're serving up just one slice of the truth.

You left out the important fact that these are the exact stories holding you back from your goals.

You're missing that piece of the truth you know to be true: that it's not the one thing that hurts, but the pattern of continuing to tell this story and submit to it as truth. You've conveniently disregarded the fact that eating well isn't a justification for not eating well.

Excuses are less about lack of discipline or desire and far more about how much of the truth you demand from yourself.

As you recognize familiar excuses, ask yourself if you're oversimplifying the truth. In what ways?

- o Are you looking at a convenient corner of the truth?
- o An emotional sliver of the truth?
- o A manipulated version of the truth?

**How much** of the truth do you demand from yourself?

Never lose sight of this powerful mantra:

***The answer isn't always the truth.***

In fact, some of your excuses are outright lies. Be willing to be honest about which of your excuses are entirely untrue.

How many times have you played the "I don't even care" card to justify what you want in a moment when you know full well that you actually care a lot?

If you've told yourself that you're going to eat better and you desperately want to lose weight but you come home after a tough day and start drafting the "I don't even care" excuse, you're straight up lying to yourself.

- o Is that true?
- o Is it true that I don't care?
- o What am I saying I don't care about?
- o Really?
- o Is this true or is it convenient?

Is it just a rational lie I'm using to rationalize? (More on that in [episode 557](#) of the Primal Potential podcast) Think of your excuses as answers and decide that you will practice **questioning your answers**.

Don't reserve your practice for the area of your struggle. Practice on every answer you come up with.

Perhaps in a personal conflict you conclude, "He's a jerk!" That's your answer. Question it.

- o What else is true?
- o How might he be right?
- o How are my emotions influencing my thoughts?
- o In what way I am wrong in that?
- o What's the whole story?
- o What am I leaving out or not considering?

The next time your answer to yourself is, "I'll do better tomorrow", question it.

- o What does tomorrow have to do with today?
- o Is that a pattern that has worked for me before?
- o Might this be an opportunity to create a new pattern?
- o How will I feel about that choice tomorrow?
- o If I were acting as the version of me I want to be, would I put it off?

## Consider the Middle

Excuses often arise from a tendency to think in extremes or in an all-or-nothing context.

You either go to the gym or you skip your workout.  
You either eat super clean or you eat whatever you want.  
You either meditate for 10 minutes or there's just no time.

Overcoming excuses gets easier when you build in a practice of acknowledging the vast sea of options between your binary thoughts. Challenge yourself to identify as many "middle ground" options as you can.

It's not *either* that you go to the gym or you skip the workout.  
You could go to the gym for less time.  
You could workout at home.  
You could do 50 burpees where you are right now.

There are always more options you aren't considering. Create a practice of considering all the other options.

When you recognize an excuse or an all-or-nothing pattern of thought, take that as an opportunity to ask and answer, "What options am I not considering? What else is possible?"

Remember: the efficacy and value of these strategies depends on how often you use them. Don't reserve them for the areas of your life in which you struggle.

When you're in a meeting thinking, "That's a bad idea. They don't know what they're talking about." Challenge it.

- o What else might be true? What are you overlooking?
- o What's good about it?
- o What are all the options, beyond simply right and wrong or yes and no?
- o What are other pieces of the truth?

This might seem like a big shift in your thinking but we can simplify it down to a 4-step process.

- o Identify.
- o Question.
- o Pause.
- o Decide.

**Identify:** What are your most common excuses? What are cards you play - the ones that work best in your own life - to let yourself off the hook?

You can do this both in the moment and as a standalone exercise. If you're doing this as a standalone exercise, make a list of excuses you submit to. Be completely honest. This isn't a test and no one is judging you. They are there whether you acknowledge them or not, so let's just get them on paper.

If you're doing it in the moment, this step simply requires that you acknowledge you're in the process of talking yourself out of a promise you made or that you're in the process of using one of those excuses you had previously identified.

You're not trying to change your mind in the identify step, you're only increasing awareness.

**Question:** Is this the complete truth? Is it a corner of the truth? What else is true? Is this who and how I want to be?

There are no right or wrong questions to ask in the questioning stage. Try all sorts of questions and learn from the ones that help you the most. What you're trying to do in this stage is connect to the complete version of the story, versus the fraction of reality you were considering.

**Pause:** Whether you pause for 5 seconds or for 5 days, build in a non-acting habit.

You had your initial thought. You expanded your thoughts. Pause. Let it be. Break the habit of needing to immediately act.

**Decide:** So what, now what?

Now that you have a more complete version of the truth, what will you do about it? This isn't a forever decision, it's a right now decision. Do I have one more good choice in me?

Let's use a specific excuse as an example:

You promised yourself you were going to start eating better today. You wake up and think, "I don't have time!" as you justify going through the drive-thru for a breakfast sandwich on the way to work.

**Identify:** "I don't have time" is one of my excuses I put on that list.

**Question:** Time is short - how is that related to a breakfast sandwich? Does being in a rush in any way relate to the quality of my food choices? Would it be possible to make a good choice and be in a rush? Does it have to be either or? Either I eat a "healthy" breakfast or I don't? What does the middle ground look like? Could I find a way to make this excuse untrue by being in a rush AND making a good choice? What would that look like?

**Pause:** Let it rest. Stop thinking. Don't react. Give yourself a few seconds, a few minutes or maybe even a few hours.

**Decide:** Now that I have a more complete version of the truth, what will I choose to do with it? What will move me forward?

Let's look at one more example.

You told yourself you were going to cut back on spending this week. No unnecessary purchases. But then you get that sale email in your inbox and you think, "I deserve it!"

**Identify:** "I deserve it" is one of those cards you play to talk yourself into breaking a commitment you made.

**Question:** What is it that I deserve? Why do I think I deserve to create more stress by purchasing something I shouldn't be spending money on right now? What is it about breaking a promise to myself that I think I deserve? What do I want most? Though I might feel I deserve that thing, what else is true? What other options are there?

**Pause:** Give it a little time. Don't decide, just wait and acknowledge the more complete version of the truth you've identified.

**Decide:** This situation is a chance to practice. What response will I rehearse?

As you go into this practice, the degree to which you're willing to be honest with yourself and think outside your familiar box of common thoughts is the degree to which these steps will be effective for you.

This practice should not be limited to your excuses. Practice this 4-step framework on any of your thoughts or interactions.

If you feel frustrated by a work project, overwhelmed by your to-do list or wronged by a love one, use that moment as an opportunity to expand and upgrade your thinking by walking through the 4 steps:

**Identify** – the excuse, thought or feeling

**Question** – what else is true?

**Pause** – build a habit of not acting

**Decide** – how to move forward

The more you put into it, the more you will get out of it. Increase the returns of this process by putting in more time and more effort.

## **Every choice is a chance!**

If you want additional resources on changing the way you think so you can become a better decision maker, check out:

[\*Primal Potential podcast\*](#)

[\*Chasing Cupcakes\*](#)

[\*12 Weeks to Transformation\*](#)

[\*Breaking Barriers\*](#)