

*I Will Become the One that I Desired to Be*

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Every day is a chance to make a difference. As James Clear mentioned in his book *Atomic Habits*, “The same way that money multiplies through compound interest, the effects of your habits multiply as you repeat them. They seem to make little difference on any given day and yet the impact they deliver over the months and years can be enormous.” Clear emphasizes the significance of habits, as each of our habits could determine the type of person we are. What’s important behind building up good habits is our desire to become better. I’ve always had a blurry goal of making myself better and becoming a better person until the day I read *Atomic Habits*, and ask myself clearly: what specific type of person do I want to be? Then I came up with an answer: a person who can control over own life including but not limited to desire, verbal communication, and behavior.

The virtue of temperance could be presented by controlling one’s consumption desire. “When I was your age, our family didn’t have enough money to buy enough food for everyone. My parents and other relatives always give food to my brother and let him eat first. I can barely get the food I want. Now I have a job and can make money, I don’t want you to experience what I experienced in my childhood, so if you want something, let me know and I’ll buy it for you.” Those are the most memorable words I’ve heard from my mother, due to my curiosity about her childhood when I was a high school senior. My mother and I immigrated from China to New York for a better life, and I’m lucky to have the opportunity to be educated while she needs to be busy working every day, bearing our family’s financial burden and taking care of me. She works in a small Chinese restaurant, standing next to the two big oil stoves all the time and frying food since she didn’t know how to speak English. Her arm has various sizes of scars caused by the jumping boiling hot oil during the frequently hectic dinner time. I saw her temperance as a mother’s love to provide me with the best life that she could afford by saving money from her

own expenses and satisfying what I want. I learned to manage my desire for consumption by considering if the stuff I'm buying is worth it, so there would be no waste of the money she earned.

Verbal communication could significantly impact the relationships between people. When I was in middle school, video games became popular for entertainment purposes along with the improvement of technology. My classmates and I often played an online video game named Honor Of Kings, which was created in China, in school after classes ended. The game was competitive and fun with different players matching from the internet into two opposite teams needing to communicate with each other to better unite and win the game. However, the game could easily lead to quarrels. My classmates and I encountered some players that treat the triumph of the game as the most important thing in their life, because they would yell and taunt from the other side of the microphone if we, their teammates at the time, did something wrong in the game that might lead to failure. Some players from the other team, who would be winning, would laugh at our team which was going to lose about our gaming technique, and type some hurtful words on the screen to persuade us to quit the game. In the beginning, receiving verbal violence from other players often significantly angered and depressed me. I would quarrel with them, defending, or even uninstalling the game. However, the arguments that I made with those players never help me feel better, which meant to me that the arguments were a meaningless waste of time.

I began to look for solutions on how to manage my emotion and keep myself calm during some aggressive situations. Kelly McGonigal introduced an effective way to better manage my emotion in her book *The Willpower Instinct*, which is as simple as practicing to slow down my breathing frequency to four to six breaths per minute and that would bring up the feeling of

focus, peace, and in control. McGonigal explained, “Slowing the breath down activates the prefrontal cortex and increases heart rate variability, which helps shift the brain and body from a state of stress to self-control mode.” The science behind this action related to the prefrontal cortex. The prefrontal cortex belonged to parts of the human brain. Its function and significance had been explained by the article “You Can Grow Your Own Intelligence”, which was published by the National Association of Independence Schools that the prefrontal cortex executes our brains’ instruction and people can practice getting a stronger prefrontal cortex to make people stronger at the willpower. I found it useful to keep my emotion in control. When I encountered the same gaming situation later, I stopped arguing with those players with the mindset of don’t pay attention and wasting my time on those players. However, even though their words couldn’t affect me anymore, I quit the game and shift my focus to academics since I felt spending time playing the game with terrible online players is boring and a waste of life. Getting rid of the environment that bothers me is also important to stabilize my emotion.

One’s behavior could represent one’s image in society. Not only the social interaction requires proper behavior, but also personal growth. When I was a child attending kindergarten, I would smile if I thought that was funny and cried once I felt sad. As I attended elementary school, I knew that if I don’t do my homework, I would not get a good grade. Later I gradually knew how to maintain friendships, and how my behavior would affect surrounding people’s thoughts of me. Body language would make other people think that I’m a confident person for instance. I was aware that I had a hunchback since middle school, and most people I met would tell me to stand straight. The reason for my initial formation of hunchback was people around me in school were not as tall as me, and I felt weird and different from my classmates, so I hunchbacked to make myself seem more fit in the group of people in school while standing or

walking with them together. My hunchback existed for several years until my mind changed due to the pandemic happened. After the long isolation and quarantine at home, I started to put more attention on myself and accepted how I originally looked. I no longer wanted to pretend to be the same height as other people of similar age, accepted the fact that I'm a tall girl, tried to fix my hunchback since then, and started to enjoy the field of vision that my height brings to me. My behaviors changed as I mentally grew and my age increased.

Overall, controlling my desire, verbal communication, and behaviors help me develop a better self. Why should people control themselves? Well, to me, temperance never means to lose something, but gain something meaningful in the future instead of being greedy in the current time. Saving money helps my mother to construct a better family economy in the future.

Controlling my verbal expression teaches me to manage my emotion and improved my faculty of speech instead of being a rude person and struggling with verbal violence. The behavior of body language would portray and develop me better in society. Therefore, temperance is a great virtue that everyone should practice in life. It helps us become better people, gain control over our bodies, and so control in lives.

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