Self-Discipline is Lame

I dislike the term discipline. For this post I am not commenting on the act of punishing kids, or on the noun of speaking of a certain field. In this post I am speaking on the idea that people have a will towards rigorous action towards certain ends. Some people label this self-discipline. I think the word sucks, but all of the ideas surrounding it are also pretty lame. I'll elaborate.

When I was a kid I cut every corner I could imagine. I strategically did homework to minimize effort, I pushed stuff under my bed when forced to clean my room, and I never practiced in the fields I was focused (sports, music, etc.). No one could have ever said I strived towards excellence, I tended towards perfection, or had any concept of self-discipline. I strived constantly to play video games, and indulge my pleasure seeking. The resounding chorus of my youth was that I was wasting talent.

Let's show a contrast. As I write this, I am putting flyers on doors, on my day off, even though I have hired 12 other people to do the same work. I make enough money that I don't even have to work, but here I am putting flyers on doors Sunday morning while typing up a long post on my phone rather than playing video games.

My transition from pleasure seeker and work avoidance into a hardworking businessman did not go through an era of self-discipline. What changed was the systems I was in, and the values that I held. Any concept of excellence that I strive for today is rooted deeply in the escape from my parenting and schooling and a development and understanding of the values I hold today.

People work harder than me. People are more successful than me. I'm not trying to say I am a pillar of success and people should emulate me. I merely use myself as an example because I sat at both extremes.

I read somewhere that 98% of diets fail. I also read that it has nothing to do with which diet people engage in. Almost all diets work to reduce weight, and all diets fail to keep weight off. This is because what we eat is a reflection of incentives, culture and values. Willing yourself to engage in different behaviors can temporarily change the behaviors you are engaged in. However, usually people don't fundamentally change their incentives, cultures, and values … and I'm not exactly saying they should.

I paused my podcast of Jordan Peterson and Ben Shapiro to make this post. This is somewhere that I disagree with both of them and most people on the right. I don't think people need discipline. I don't think you need to make your bed. I think you need to contemplate why you haven't been making your bed. What people, systems, values and

ideas are you interacting with that inspire your behavior? What actions can you take and ideas/values can you adopt that will make you inspired to make your bed, in such a way that you desire to do that rather than play video games?

"Discipline" sucks because it assumes living towards wonderful values is a chore and it takes hard work. It doesn't. I woke up this morning excited to see my family and excited to start the day with 5 hours of walking. I would never use the term discipline or hard work to describe my day.