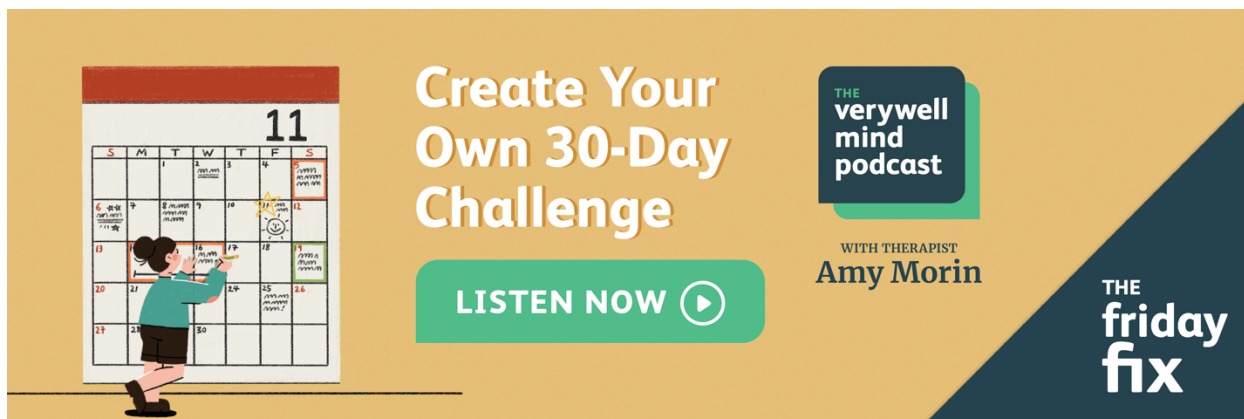




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## 210 — Friday Fix: Create Your Own 30-Day Challenge

Welcome to *The Verywell Mind Podcast*! I'm Amy Morin, editor-in-chief of Verywell Mind. I'm also a psychotherapist and a best-selling author of four books on mental strength.

And in case you haven't heard, my fifth book is hitting the shelves soon! *The 13 Things Mentally Strong People Don't Do Workbook* goes on sale in February, but you can pre-order it now.

You're listening to The Friday Fix! Every Friday, I share a quick mental strength strategy that can help fix the thoughts, feelings, and actions that can hold you back in life.

And the fun part is we record the show from a sailboat in the Florida Keys!

Don't forget to subscribe to us on your favorite platform so you can get mental strength tips delivered to you every single week.

Now let's dive into today's episode!

Today I'm talking about 30-day challenges. I'll explain why they sometimes work so well, issues that make them not work so well, and some challenges you can choose to do for yourself.

I ran a poll on Instagram to learn how many of you have tried a 30-day challenge. 44% of you had said you had tried a 30-day challenge of some type. Some of you sent me DMs to explain what your challenge was and how it worked.

One person said they tried a 30-day challenge to give up alcohol. They said they felt so good that after 30 days, they decided to give it up for a whole year.

Many of you said you tried specific 30-day diet challenges, like Whole30, but everyone who did that said that it was too tough to restrict your diet and everyone went back to their regular eating habits because of the convenience, the cost, or the program wasn't sustainable.

You've probably seen social media ads for various 30-day challenges. They're usually weight loss challenges or workout challenges of some sort.

And they usually look like a gimmick. I suspect a lot of them are.

But I also have first-hand experience in knowing that they can work.

I've talked about this on the show a little bit before—but I did a 30 day challenge to see if I could get 6-pack abs. It seemed somewhat impossible but I knew someone who did it so I wanted to try it for myself.

I called a trainer named Robert Brace who is known for getting people in shape fast.

But I warned him I don't live in NYC—so he was going to have to tell me what to do. I was in my house in Maine for the month. I offered to buy some dumbbells and a yoga mat—and promised I'd do whatever he told me to do as long as it wasn't something extreme that I thought would be unhealthy.

He suggested I increase my protein intake and gave me some exercises to get started. I started before my dumbbells could even arrive via Amazon.

I had spent most of my adult life working out to some extent. Exercising was on my priority list but it usually landed around #5 on the list. I decided for the next 30 days I was going to kick my exercise routine into high gear.

I wanted to know what would happen if I made it my number 1 priority for a month.

For 30 days, I had to make some sacrifices. I had less time to spend with friends and family, less time to do fun things, and less time to write.

In that one month I built more muscle than I had in the last 20 years of exercising.

I didn't intend to make my challenge public. But my trainer had encouraged me to take before and after pictures. He assured me I'd want them so I could see my progress.

It led to much better results than I had even imagined. I've shared my before and after on Instagram and the pictures have been shown on Good Day NY.

I discovered that it was in fact possible for me to get 6 pack abs in 30 days. And I gained a lot more muscle in my arms in the process.

In the three years since then, I've kept most of the muscle I built. And I haven't had to keep fitness or a strict diet as a top priority. Taking care of my health is still high on the priority list, but it didn't have to stay at the top of the list to keep the results.

The experience made me realize how so often when we keep something at like number 5 or 6 on our priority list, it just never really gets the attention it deserves. But if we bump it up to number one for just 30 days, we see results. And then it's much easier to

keep those results even if that thing slides back down to say number five on the priority list.

Since that time, I've worked with a lot of people who wanted to create their own 30 day challenges.

I usually suggest people pick something that feels as though it's always nagging at them. Maybe something you always feel like you "should" do but never really have time to get around to it. Like maybe you always feel like you should clean the house or you should tackle your debt.

It's likely that those things you feel you should do but never get around to doing are a little too far down on the priority list to get the attention they need. But if you bump that thing up to number 1 for one month, you might find it's easy to manage after that.

Like if you spent a month decluttering your house. After the month is over, you might find that cleaning the house is really easy and doesn't take up nearly as much time.

Here are a few more reasons why you might want to try a 30-day challenge:

1. You want to experiment with something new to see if it makes your life better, worse, or no different. Sometimes we avoid making a change because we don't think it will help. But if it's only a 30-day commitment, you might feel better about giving it a try.
2. You struggle to stay motivated with something. For my 30-day challenge, I didn't have room to make excuses. If I wanted to see results, I had to stick to the program—and it was easy to remind myself I could stick to it for 30 days.
3. You want to see how much you can accomplish. Sometimes, we underestimate how much we can do in an hour a day. Devoting a little time to something every

single day really adds up. Obviously though, you can't make yourself lose a 100 pounds in a month—so don't tempt yourself into doing anything dangerously unhealthy. But you might find you can walk 100 miles in a month if you put your mind to it.

4. You'll get moving fast. New Year's resolutions often fail because people set a goal for the year—like I want to get in better shape. But, it's easy to procrastinate when you have 365 days to work on that. You'll likely take action when you give yourself a 30-day deadline.

There are several different ways you can set your 30-day challenge. You have to decide what sort of a goal will work best for your personality.

My 30-day challenge was to see if I could get 6-pack abs. For me, that worked. But for someone else, a better goal might be to work out for 30 minutes a day. Another person might find they do best by focusing on a task, rather than a time. So they might decide they're going to do 10 exercises a day—regardless of how long that takes.

Throughout the month, your brain will try to get you to cheat. It might tell you that you've worked hard, you don't need to stick with it today. Or it will find a million excuses why you should just give up. So it's important to think ahead about the type of goal that might help you stay on track.

You might find if you have a goal to do something for an hour a day, you might waste 45 minutes of that hour just scrolling through your phone. On the other hand, if you commit to doing 10 exercises a day, you might find that you are tempted to rush through them so fast just to check them off the list that you don't actually get much out of it.

So as you design your 30 day challenge, you'll need to think about what is likely to work best for you.

Here are some examples of 30-day challenges you might try:

1. Pay off as much debt as you can in 30 days. That might involve getting a part-time job, selling things you don't need, or curbing your spending. Alternatively, you might aim for a specific goal, like saving \$500 in a month or paying down \$1000 in debt.
2. Fill a bag every day of things you can donate or throw away to clear clutter from your house.
3. Write a book. Or write 1000 words a day for a month.
4. Do full splits in 30 days. There are a lot of online stretching programs that claim they can help you become flexible enough to do splits within a month.
5. Perform an act of kindness every day. You might decide to volunteer an hour a day for 30 days or you might write a letter of gratitude to someone in your life every day for 30 days.

But it's up to you what kind of a 30-day challenge you create. Try a social experiment, pick a specific mental strength exercise to practice, learn a new skill, or try to crush a specific goal and see what happens.

I've found that whenever I'm feeling a little stuck in life, creating a new 30-day challenge for myself wakes me up and gets me moving. It reminds me that I am more capable and competent than I thought.

That's not to say they've always been successful. I've started some challenges and got derailed because something else came along—like an opportunity to write another book. And that's caused me to abandon whatever I thought I was going to accomplish in a month.

But I'm reminded I can always start another challenge at any time. I don't need to wait until the first of the month and I don't need to make it a life altering goal. But I can use it to experiment with something new.

If you know someone who could benefit from learning about a 30-day challenge, share this show with them. Simply sharing a link to this episode could help someone feel better and grow stronger.

Do you want free access to my online course? It's called "10 Mental Strength Exercises That Will Help You Reach Your Greatest Potential." To get your free pass, all you have to do is leave us a review on Apple Podcasts or Spotify. Then, send us a screenshot of your review. Our email address is [podcast@verywell.com](mailto:podcast@verywell.com). We'll reply with your all-access pass to the course.

Thank you for hanging out with me today and listening to *The Verywell Mind Podcast!* And as always, a big thank you to my show's producer (who doesn't like to set goals with numbers because he believes the sky's the limit), Nick Valentin.