Stanford | Continuing Studies

Course Title: The Science of Willpower and Change
Course Code: PSY 205 W
Instructor: Kelly McGonigal

Course Summary:

Physical health, emotional well-being, social relationships, and professional success all require the ability to regulate our thoughts, emotions, and actions. Advances in psychology, neuroscience, medicine, and mind-body research are beginning to paint a new picture of what willpower is, why it matters, and how to develop it.

Is willpower in the mind or in the body? Is it possible to run out of willpower, and how do you build a bigger reserve? What motivates people to change? Why do we talk ourselves out of things we really want or need to do? How much control over our thoughts and feelings do we really have, and what are the healthiest ways to regulate them? This course will address those questions through lectures, readings, and discussions and will give students the opportunity to apply the ideas of the course toward making an important change or pursuing a major goal in their lives.

This is an online course. For more information on the online format, please visit the FAQ page.

Grade Options and Requirements:

- No Grade Requested (NGR)
  - This is the default option. No work will be required; no credit shall be received; no proof of attendance can be provided.
- Credit/No Credit (CR/NC)
  - Students will be required to post in at least one discussion thread each week to earn Credit.
- This course is not available for a letter grade.

**Please Note: If you require proof that you completed a Continuing Studies course for any reason (for example, employer reimbursement), you must choose the Credit/No Credit option. Courses taken for NGR will not appear on official transcripts or grade reports.*

Tentative Weekly Outline:

Week One: Introduction to Willpower
Week Two: The Muscle Model of Willpower
Week Three: The Art and Science of Making a Change
Week Four: Dealing with Stress, Cravings, Anxiety and Other Inner Obstacles
Week Five: Future Self
Week Six: Make Change Social