

The Chess Game of Life



Research has found that learning how to wait to take action is a powerful way to delay gratification, build willpower, reduce the mistakes that come from impulsiveness, improve decision-making abilities, and get better results. Accordingly, it's worthwhile to map out the actions towards the accomplishment of your long-term goals as if you are a chess master looking at a chess board, and you aren't thinking about what the next move might immediately yield in terms of a pawn, a castle or another chess piece, but you are thinking about how the next move will play out across a number of potential outcomes that could occur. Chess masters have this skill and it's called "pattern recognition," while novice chess players have a more rudimentary form of strategy called "object recognition." This exercise will help you build pattern recognition on top of the other benefits already listed. Think of something you have to take action on in the near future, preferably something that is important to you, and what your desired outcome to that action would be. Write down what your instinctive action would be, and then think through what might happen after you take that step, much like you would think ahead in the game of chess. Now explore what other moves you might make, and what the reactions would be to those moves. Once you have contemplated every possible response from you and what the likely fallout might be, write down what you are going to do and why. Explain how the future outcome will be optimal if you take that move.