likely to succeed if you start out with a simple plan.

What You Can Do

- **Make a plan.** Many of the problems we face when trying to reach a goal can be solved by creating simple *if-then* plans. Whether you're trying to seize an opportunity, resist temptation, cope with anxiety and self-doubt, or persist when the going gets tough, these plans can help you do it.
- **Decide what you will do.** Start by deciding what specific actions need to be taken to reach your goal. Avoid vague statements like "eat less" and "study more"—be clear and precise. "Study for at least four hours each night" leaves no room for doubt about what you need to do and whether or not you've actually done it.
- **Decide when and where to do it.** Next, decide *when* and *where* you will take each action. Again, be as specific as possible. This will help your brain to detect and seize the opportunity when it arises, even if your conscious mind is too busy to notice.
- **Formulate your *if-then* plan.** Put it all together in an *if-then* statement. "If it is a weeknight, I will go to my room and study for at least four hours." You can write these plans down in a notebook, if you prefer, or simply repeat them to yourself a few times to let them really sink in.
- **Target the obstacles.** Think about the obstacles and temptations that are likely to arise while you are pursuing your goal. How will you deal with them? Make an *if-then* plan for each. ("If my friends call to ask me to go out on a weeknight, I'll say 'no thanks' and see them on the weekend.") This will allow you to make the best possible decisions well in advance, keeping you on track to succeed no matter what comes your way.