**Supplemental Materials**

**Experiment 1: Weight Loss**

We ran an additional analysis to better understand how the ritual was affecting participants’ eating choices throughout the week. There are two ways in which participants may have reduced their calorie intake during this experiment: either they ate less of everything or they changed their diets to be healthier (for example, eating more vegetables but fewer fats, oils, and sweets). The former strategy would require more inhibitive self-control (i.e., stopping oneself from eating) whereas the latter would require facilitative self-control (i.e., proactively seeking more vegetables in one’s diet). In order to test between these two possible accounts, we coded all of the completed food diaries (*n* = 391) for both the number of items listed and calories consumed in two categories: vegetables and “empty calories.” We used the definition of empty calories provided by the United States Department of Agriculture: the calories from solid fats and added sugars in foods and beverages that provide no vitamins or minerals (e.g., sugars or sweeteners in soft drinks, fruit punch, candies, cakes, cookies, pies, and ice cream; solid fats in cookies, cakes, pizza, cheese, sausages, fatty meats, butter, and stick margarine).

We ran a 2 (experimental condition: ritual vs. control) between-participants x 2 (food type: vegetables vs. empty calories) within-participants mixed model ANOVA on number of food items listed. There was a marginal effect of experimental condition, *F*(1, 82) = 3.35, *p* = .071, *ηp*2 = 0.04: ritual participants ate a fewer number of vegetables and empty calorie items on the average day (*M* = 4.51, *SD* = 2.18) than control participants (*M* = 5.47, *SD* = 2.58). There was also an effect of food type, *F*(1, 82) = 7.11, *p* = .009, *ηp*2 = 0.08, such that participants ate more empty calorie items (*M* = 2.79, *SD* = 1.30) than vegetables (*M* = 2.22, *SD* = 1.78). But there was no interaction, *F*(1, 82) = 0.08. The same pattern of results emerged when the analysis was repeated on the number of calories consumed: a marginal main effect of experimental condition, *F*(1, 82) = 3.47, *p* = .066, *ηp*2 = 0.04, an effect of food type, *F*(1, 82) = 93.37, *p* < .001, *ηp*2 = 0.53, but no interaction, *F*(1, 82) = 1.38, *p* = .243. These findings suggest that performing pre-eating rituals made participants eat less of everything, consistent with inhibitive self-control, rather than making them become healthier and eat more vegetables.

**Summary of experiments not included in paper**

Experiment 6 adopted a 2 (ritual: ritual vs. control) × 2 (type of self-control: action vs. inaction) between-subjects design. Two hundred sixty MTurk participants across the United States were randomly assigned to one of the four conditions. This experiment used the same prosocial decision-making scenario as in Experiment 4. To manipulate type of self-control, we presented either vice or virtue as the default option (via a drop-down menu on computer). In the inaction condition, virtue (helping with the fundraising event) was displayed as the default option so participants were able to choose the virtue without taking action (i.e., clicking on the drop-down menu). Conversely, vice (attending the party) was displayed as the default option in the action condition such that participants had to take action to choose virtue. We predicted that performing a ritual would be more likely to benefit self-control that required action than inaction. The ritual manipulation was effective. Results of a logistic regression model revealed only a significant interaction between ritual and type of self-control, *b* = 1.09, χ2(*n*=260) = 4.41, *p* = .036. As predicted, participants in the ritual condition (56.5%) were more likely to choose virtue than those in the control condition (31.3%), χ2(*n*=129) = 8.26, *p* = .004, when self-control required action. By contrast, the choice share of virtue did not vary between the ritual (35.4%) and the control (36.4%), χ2(n=131) = .01, *p* = .91, conditions when self-control required inaction. Furthermore, this effect was mediated by heightened self-discipline, 95% CI [.04 to .48].

Experiment 7 employed a 2 (ritual: ritual vs. control) × 2 (self-control conflict: absent vs. present) between-subjects design. One hundred sixty-five participants in two Chicago laboratories were randomly assigned to one of the four conditions. Each participant first drank a small glass of water. By doing so, we attempted to diminish the possibility that participants felt obligated to consume a specific food item offered in the later, focal food decision merely because they were paid for their participation. Then, all participants made a real food decision. In the self-control conflict present condition, participants were free to choose whether to eat a chocolate truffle, which was described as very tasty but not healthy. In the self-control conflict absent condition, participants were free to choose whether to eat a piece of raw kale, which was described as very healthy but not tasty. Results of a pretest revealed that it required self-control to avoid eating chocolate (*M* = 5.92 vs. scale midpoint), *p* = .028, whereas eating kale did not require self-control (*M* = 4.42 vs. scale midpoint), *p* = .273. Immediately prior to making this food choice, participants in the ritual conditions engaged in a ritual that involved performing a fixed set of gestures three times (the same ones as in Experiment 5). In contrast, participants in the control condition did not perform the ritual and directly made their food choice. We predicted enacting a ritual would promote self-control when people identified the presence of a self-control conflict (i.e., increasing the likelihood of not eating chocolate), whereas it would not affect self-control when people did not identify the presence of self-control conflict (i.e., no effect on the likelihood of whether to eat kale). In the ritual condition, participants reported the gestures performed felt like a ritual (M = 5.98 vs. scale midpoint), *p* < .001. Results of a logistic regression model revealed a main effect of ritual, *b* = .92, *p* = .05, a main effect of self-control conflict, *b* = 1.65, *p* = .001, and a marginally significant ritual x self-control conflict interaction, *b* = -1.21, *p* = .064. As predicted, when the self-control conflict was present, participants in the ritual condition (46.3%) were more likely to refrain from eating the chocolate truffle than those in the control condition (25.6%), χ2(*n*=81) = 3.94, *p* = .047). By contrast, when it came to eating a piece of raw kale in which participants did not identify the self-control conflict, ritual exerted no influence on choice (64.1% vs. 57.1%), χ2(*n*=84) = .41, *p* = .52. However, we failed to find support for the underlying mechanism: neither the main effects of ritual or self-control conflict nor their interaction predicted self-discipline, all *p*s> .16.

Experiment 8 used a single-factor (ritual vs. control) between-subjects design. Fifty MTurk participants across the United States were randomly assigned to one of the two conditions. Participants were informed that they were about to see two similar pictures and that their goal was to spot as many differences between the two pictures as possible. Participants in the ritual condition were instructed to first perform a set of gestures three times in a row before proceeding to this difficult spot-the-difference task. By contrast, participants in the control condition directly moved to the same task without enacting the ritualized gestures. All participants were free to stop search for differences whenever they wished. We predicted that enacting a ritual would increase persistence on this difficult spot-the-difference task. As predicted, participants in the ritual condition spent significantly more time on the spot-the-difference task (*M* = 103.15s, *SD* = 41.67) than those in the control condition (*M* = 79.58s, *SD* = 48.46), *F*(1, 48) = 4.10, *p* = .048.

Experiment 9 employed a single-factor (ritual vs. control) between-subjects design. One hundred nine MTurk participants across the United States were randomly assigned to one of the two conditions. This experiment followed the same procedure as in Experiment 8, except that a different set of ritualized gestures and a different spot-the-difference task were adopted. We predicted that enacting a ritual would increase persistence on this difficult spot-the-difference task. As predicted, participants in the ritual condition spent significantly more time on the spot-the-difference task (*M* = 88.71s, *SD* = 56.90) than those in the control condition (*M* = 69.55s, *SD* = 36.44) *F*(1, 107) = 5.66, *p* = .019.

Experiment 10 (pre-registered) used a single-factor (ritual vs. control) between-subjects design. One hundred thirty-one MTurk participants across the United States were randomly assigned to one of the two conditions. The procedure was the same as that in Experiment 8. We predicted that enacting a ritual would increase persistence on this difficult spot-the-difference task. However, results revealed that participants in the ritual condition did not spend more time on the spot-the-difference task (*M* = 98.14s, *SD* = 68.76) than those in the control condition (*M* = 114.11s, *SD* = 103.37), *F*(1, 129) = 1.08, *p* = .302.

Experiment 11 used a single-factor (ritual vs. control) between-subjects design. Two hundred thirty-one MTurk participants across the United States were randomly assigned to one of the two conditions. This experiment followed the same procedure as in Experiment 9, except that participants in the control condition waited for 45 seconds before proceeding to the spot-the-difference task. We predicted that enacting a ritual would increase persistence on this difficult spot-the-difference task. Removing one extreme outlier in the control condition (14.9 SD above the M), the results revealed that participants in the ritual condition did not spend more time on the spot-the-differences task (*M* = 70.20s, *SD* = 39.80) than those in the control condition (*M* = 77.02s, *SD* = 35.85), *F*(1, 228) = 1.87, *p* = .17.

Experiment 12 used a single-factor (ritual vs. control) between-subjects design. Two hundred fifty-three MTurk participants across the United States were randomly assigned to one of the two conditions. This experiment followed the same procedure as in Experiment 8, except that we added both manipulation check and process (self-discipline and goal adherence) measures, and we explicitly labeled the gestures in the ritual condition as a ritual. We predicted that ritual could boost self-control through two different pathways: first, increasing adherence to the goal and second, increasing own self-discipline. With respect to manipulation checks, compared to the scale midpoint (5), the gestures performed by participants in the ritual condition felt like a ritual (*M* = 5.7), *p* = .007, and were perceived as repetitive (*M* = 7.7), *p* < .001 and rigid (*M* = 5.6), *p* = .003. However, participants perceived the gestures to be meaningless (*M* = 3.5), *p* < .001. Participants in the ritual condition (84%) were *less* likely to adopt the goal of spotting as many differences as possible than those in the control condition (92%), *p* = .05. Participants in the ritual condition felt marginally more self-disciplined (*M* = 7.10) than those in the control condition (*M* = 6.78, *p* = .08). In contrast to our prediction, participants in the ritual condition spent marginally *less* time on the spot-the-differences task (*M* = 60.36s, *SD* = 47.14) than those in the control condition (*M* = 71.27s, *SD* = 51.09), *F*(1, 251) = 3.12, *p* = .078. This is because although enacting a ritual enhanced persistence through boosted self-discipline, 95% CI [.0008 to .0768], which is consistent with our theorizing, it actually *undermined* persistence by decreasing goal adherence (Sobel test *p* = .10), which is opposite to our prediction.

Experiment 13 used a single-factor (ritual vs. random) between-subjects design. One hundred sixty-four MTurk participants across the United States were randomly assigned to one of the two conditions. Participants were told that they were going to engage in two activities within a fixed amount of time (10 minutes), which established a procrastination paradigm. Specifically, participants were asked to complete a writing task with a performance-contingent reward and meanwhile had the opportunity to “waste” some of this time by first playing a video game (Tetris), for as long as they wanted, before they proceeded to the writing task. Participants in the ritual (random) condition performed ritualized (random) gestures before engaging in the two activities. We predicted that enacting a ritual would reduce the time spent on the Tetris game. Manipulation checks confirmed the effectiveness of the ritual manipulation and the procrastination paradigm. Results revealed that participants in the ritual condition directionally spend less time on the Tetris game (*M* = 242.61s, *SD* = 200.96) than those in the random condition (*M* = 293.63s, *SD* = 217.87), *F*(1, 161) = 2.41, *p* = .123 (*p* = .048, controlling for age).

Experiment 14 used a single-factor (ritual vs. random) between-subjects design. One hundred eighteen MTurk participants across the United States were randomly assigned to one of the two conditions. This experiment followed the same procedure as in Experiment 13, except that we predetermined to exclude those who are above 60 years old and those who did not think Tetris was more enjoyable (and less important) than the writing task. We predicted that enacting a ritual would reduce the time spent on the Tetris game. The ritual manipulation was successful. As hypothesized, participants in the ritual condition spent less time on the Tetris game (*M* = 224.65s, *SD* = 200.62) than those in the random condition (*M* = 320.15s, *SD* = 177.65), *F*(1, 116) = 7.48, *p* = .007.

Experiment 15 (pre-registered) used a single-factor (ritual vs. random) between-subjects design. Two hundred twenty-two MTurk participants across the United States were randomly assigned to one of the two conditions. This experiment followed the same procedure as in Experiment 14. We predicted that enacting a ritual would reduce the time spent on the Tetris game. The ritual manipulation worked as intended. However, results revealed that participants in the ritual condition did not spent less time on the Tetris game (*M* = 263.20s, *SD* = 185.15) than those in the random condition (*M* = 247.44s, *SD* = 188.53), *F*(1, 220) = .39, *p* = .533. This may be because some of the participants did not follow the ritual instructions. Indeed, results of a floodlight analysis indicated that enacting a ritual undermined self-control (i.e., increased procrastination) among those who spent fewer than 6.3 seconds performing the ritualized gestures in the second round, *p* = .05, whereas it boosted self-control among those who spent more than 38.3 seconds performing the gestures in the second round, *p* = .05.

Experiment 16 used a single-factor (ritual vs. random) between-subjects design. Two hundred one MTurk participants across the United States were randomly assigned to one of the two conditions. Participants were informed that they would make a series of real choices where they could get 30 cents immediately or they could get a larger amount of money (ranging from 32 cents to 60 cents) in 2 weeks. They were told that one of their choices would be randomly chosen to determine their actual payment. Participants in the ritual (random) condition performed a set of ritualized (random) gestures before proceeding to this choice task. We predicted that enacting a ritual would lead people to more frequently choose larger but delayed payments. Results confirmed the effectiveness of the ritual manipulation. However, participants in the ritual condition (*M* = 51.87%, *SD* = 36.79%) did not choose larger but delayed payments more frequently than those in the random condition (*M* = 51.16%, *SD* = 38.61%), *F*(1, 199) = .018, *p* = .894.