

Goal Setting



Revealing the Myths

Setting Goals

Revealing the myths!

Look around you – they are everywhere. You have them. The person closest to you has them. What are they? Myths! Myths are perceptions or beliefs that you and others take at face value and consider to be true.

Myths come in many shapes and sizes. Their power should not be underestimated. So hold on tight as you are about to address the ten most common myths surrounding setting goals that buzz around your head and which without a doubt shape your life as you know it, today.

Myths get in the way of progress. They stick their feet out causing you to stumble, hesitate, and sometimes retreat. After all, myths are perceptions, and if left unchallenged, perceptions become reality.

How you think about goals and success affects the conclusions you reach and determines your outcomes, your productivity, your life, and ultimately your legacy. Your thoughts can cause you to resist – even dismiss - that which can bring you closer to success.

The good news is that your thoughts can also support the behavior that helps you move confidently in the direction of your dreams. It's all a matter of perception – positive perception. And assisting you in building positive perceptions is the goal that we desire to achieve.

Where are myths born? What you think comes from a variety of sources. Each of us interprets life through available information and from our experiences, wants, needs, fears, hopes, prejudices and beliefs.

It's human nature to filter data, selectively choose, or even ignore what comes our way. You weigh information in your own way, and you size up situations by drawing conclusions that reflect your past experiences.

Too often we develop negative mindsets based solely on misinterpretations, faulty assumptions, ill motives, or negative thinking. Thus, when situations and opportunities come along, we tend to weigh situations against past experience and come to the wrong conclusions. If your thinking is blurred, if you're reading things wrong, you'll most likely react in a way that only hurts you.

The result is a collection of harmful myths that governs your ability to set specific goals and achieve success. Myths also cause unnecessary problems, stress and limited productivity overall.

Myths are like bad wiring: if the wiring in your head is faulty, you won't and can't possibly expect to be working at your full potential.

So begin challenging these damaging and oftentimes crippling misconceptions. Weigh them against the broader view of reality throughout this lesson.

Think of the man behind the curtain in *The Wizard of Oz*. Dorothy and her friends the Tin Man, the Scarecrow and the Cowardly Lion believed in his intimidating, all-knowing power – that is, until they peeked behind the curtain. Once the “myth” was pulled away, the truth of life in Oz was revealed.

As your life coach, my goal in life is to help you achieve yours, so let's get busy and pull back the curtain on the myths in your life and welcome a reality where success is yours for the taking.

Myth #1: Goal Setting Is Not That Important.

Reality: Success Requires Goals - End of Story!

Be serious. Maybe you think goal setting is not that important. Think again!

Your heart, lungs and brain are vital to your existence. Without them, you're extinct. Goals serve much the same purpose. Consider them the pulse of your life. Without goals, the possibility of a happy fulfilling future ceases to exist!

For any chance at life, plants need sunlight, fish need water, and automobiles need gas. Make no mistake: A life of meaning needs goals and specific plans to achieve them.

Goal setting is the foundation of success. A builder wouldn't construct a home without first a blueprint. A pilot can't fly a plane without first submitting a flight plan. A minister considers his message before delivering a sermon. You cannot design an extraordinary life without a solid foundation - goals.

On a scale of one to ten, goals would be an 11. So where does the myth that goal setting isn't that important come from? What's its source, its genetic makeup, its DNA?

Truth be told, few of us were taught how to set goals by our parents, teachers or friends. And of all the subjects taught in school, goal setting may only get a quick once-over. What a shame to think that one of the most important life skills gets so little playing time.

Is it any wonder then, why so many people grow up to find themselves blindsided and ill-prepared by the necessity of goal setting? Is it hard to understand why someone would overlook its importance?

Probably not, but the reality is that just because you weren't given training doesn't mean it's not important. Goals are the very fiber of existence, the stuff that life is made of.

Consider this a wake up call! Success in any endeavor does not happen by accident. It is the result of deliberate decisions, conscious efforts and immense persistence. Success requires goals - end of story!

Myth #2: You Don't Need Goals To Be Happy or Successful.

Reality: The Road to Happiness and Success is Paved With Goals.

More than anything else, people seek happiness.

While happiness itself is sought for its own sake, goals such as health, beauty, spiritual growth, money, or power are valued because we believe that these make us happy.

Can you consider yourself happy or successful without goals? Yes, however, the pursuit and achievement of a goal actually goes hand-in-hand with happiness and success. The importance of goals, purpose and meaning has passed the stress test of time with flying colors.

Neither happiness nor success happens on their own. They are not the result of good fortune or random choices. Happiness and success do not depend on events, but rather, on how we interpret them. They are not something that money can buy or power command.

Happiness and success are uniquely individual. Comparing yourself to someone else is a dead-end proposition. Think of the Wicked Witch who set herself up for failure every time she demanded: "Mirror, mirror on the wall. Who's the fairest of them all?" By comparing herself to Snow White, she guaranteed humiliation, stress and unhappiness for herself. There was no way she could measure up.

Who or what are you comparing yourself with? Happiness is a condition that must be prepared for, cultivated, and defended privately. How do you prepare for happiness? The answer is simple: Set goals that will make you happy!

Myth #3: Goal Setting is Difficult and Takes Too Much Time.

Reality: Performance is Accelerated by Time Invested in Strategy.

Time is a matter of perspective; however planning saves ten to one in execution. Time invested in strategy and planning is an ounce of prevention compared to the pounds of frustration and stress that come from having to go back and correct faulty assumptions.

Rather than focusing on how much time it takes to set goals, it is better by far to expend positive energy on concentrating on how much time it will take you to correct mistakes that come from lack of planning.

Learning to drive a standard shift is an adventure you never forget. The jerking motions, stopping and going, stalling and restarting is enough to drive you crazy. This is what lack of proper strategy does to you.

You can't talk yourself out of a problem that you behaved yourself into. Setting goals and not taking action is even more reckless than action without planning.

Understanding the nature of goal setting leads to an understanding of nature itself. Nature teaches us the best lessons about growth. Change in nature is progressive. Leaves change color, snow melts and darkness falls - all on nature's clock and without help from us. The snap of a finger will not cause these changes to occur. And it's just as impractical to think you can set a goal and achieve it automatically.

Too many people expect to arrive at success without ever having made the trip. The game of life is won behind the scenes, in time spent on preparation.

Myth #4: Goals Don't Need To Be Written. You Can Keep Them In Your Head.

Reality: Written Goals Clarify Thinking, Objectifies Their Potential, and Reinforces Commitment.

Success leaves clues, and here's an important one: Write down your goals!

Don't kid yourself: People forget things. How does such an obvious clue get overlooked? What position do goals occupy in your mind? Answering that question means recognizing that your mind is constantly under siege by many bits of information, all battling for a winning position.

But what information? Look around you. It comes from every direction. Television, radio, advertising, newspapers, the Internet. The list is endless.

The challenge? This constant bombardment of information consumes a large chunk of your mental energy. Trying to take it all in, tempting yourself to try new things, fighting fire day-to-day threatens your ability to remain focused and to remember your goals.

Thinking you can keep your goals in your head is really just an excuse for not writing them down. It is equivalent to the out-of-sight, out-of-mind philosophy. There are no exceptions.

Your mind, while blessed with permanent memory, is cursed with lousy recall. Written goals provide clarity. By documenting your dreams, you must think about the process of achieving them.

Why else don't people write their goals down?

First, writing goals down means commitment. It means you are serious. Second, written goals force you to think, to accept how realistic your goals may or may not be. Finally, writing down goals requires a time commitment, a willingness to take a moment to plan for the future rather than to revel in the pleasures of today.

The palest ink is better than the strongest memory. Your mind is like a sponge. It can only take in and remember new information at the expense of losing old, out-of-date information.

Myth #5: Long-Term Planning Is A Waste of Time.

Reality: Your Future Deserves Serious Consideration.

Long-term planning does not deal with future decisions but with the future consequences of current decisions.

If you haven't found out already, you soon will. Many of the decisions you made earlier in life are impacting you today.

Perhaps you took music lessons and gave them up, only to find yourself twenty years later wishing you hadn't. Maybe you learned a second language but chose not to practice it. Now you visit a foreign country and find yourself unable to communicate. The same can be said for education, relationships, finances, children and even tattoos.

Just as bank robbers steal money and procrastinators steal time, you steal from yourself by failing to think of the long-term consequences of decisions you make today. Call it "temporal myopia" - the tendency to focus only on the present without considering the future.

Everything counts! Everything you do today, every decision you make, every thought you have, every action engaged has a result somewhere down the line. If you do not give serious consideration to the long-term effect of these decisions, you may find yourself the odd man out when the music stops playing.

Your future will someday be your present reality. It's worth considering seriously.

Myth #6: A Good Plan Is All You Need To Be Successful.

Reality: Success is Active, Not Passive. All Plans Require Action.

Strategy never fails - only implementation does!

An effective goal is created three times. First, as an idea - you visualize your goal in your mind. Second, you must write it down in order to add clarity and dimension. Finally, you need to follow through with action in order to achieve success.

A good plan is essential to success. But a good plan isn't a license to print money. Achieving your goals takes solid execution. If you act upon a plan, you will surely make mistakes. But lessons learned are part of the journey.

Beware of the "perfection trap," where everything needs to be "just right" before you take action. Perfection is unattainable. Instead, commit to pursuing your goals relentlessly over time, and be open to adjusting your strategy.

Endless preparation only results in lost opportunities. In baseball, the on-deck circle provides the next batter with an opportunity to warm up, examine the pitcher's style and eye the position of his fellow teammates. But he can only study the evolving game for so long. The time soon comes when he has to step up to the plate and swing.

Preparation is no substitute for action. Don't sabotage yourself by hesitation. After all, a singer sings. A painter paints. A writer writes. A teacher teaches. Why? Because that is who they are, what they do. What do your actions tell the world about you?

Here's a new twist on an old exhortation: "One for the money, two for the show, three to get ready, three to get ready, three to get ready..." Sound like anyone you know?

Make your move before you're ready, because you'll never be completely ready! Implement now - perfect later. Let's go!

Myth #7: The Best Way To Achieve a Goal Is Just to Begin.

Reality: Action without Planning is The Root Cause of Failure.

When it comes to goals, an effective plan serves much the same purpose as an insurance policy. Look at the time you invest in designing your plan as an insurance policy on success.

Ready! Fire! Aim! This is the philosophy of leaping before you look. It's like playing Russian Roulette with your life. Roll the dice, and odds are they will come up "snake eyes" most of the time. Don't gamble with your destiny. It's a recipe for disaster.

Impulsiveness is the mother of regret. Launch without planning, speak without thinking, and you'll soon find yourself in a mess of your own making.

Success is a choice. All success can be traced to specific causes. With a plan to lead you, you can figure out how to get where you're going.

It doesn't matter how smart, pretty, or healthy you are, if you run west looking for the sunrise, you'll never find it. Your plan is a roadmap. It allows you to chart your course before you start out on your journey.

Myth #8: Goals Only Need to Be Reviewed Once a Year.

Reality: Inspect What You Expect. Everything Changes!

Change knocks the wind out of all good plans. Today's environment demands faster response time, better reflexes and new moves. Sticking to your old patterns and systems will bring you nothing but problems.

Danger awaits those who wait for the once-a-year performance review. In today's world, time is no longer measured by the traditional calendar year. It has been replaced by the "web year," 90-day chunks of time that reflect the fast pace of technology. Taking care of business these days means managing perpetual motion.

Your goals will keep shaping, shifting and flexing to fit these fast changing times. In this fiercely competitive environment, the only way to survive and prosper is to keep your eye on the ball, to constantly measure your progress, to question your assumptions. You must be willing to go back to ground zero or consider abandoning a dream you once held dear.

In order to stay in peak condition, your automobile requires an oil change every 3000 to 5000 miles. For your plans and dreams to stay fresh and tangible, you need to give them the same kind of frequent checkups and reviews. When was the last time you had a personal 5000-mile check up? If you're like most people, it's been too long.

Close the distance between checkups. Adopt an aggressive review process. This new habit will serve you well.

Myth #9: Never Give Up Until You Achieve Your Goal.

Reality: There Comes a Time When Walking Away is Your Best Option.

Never give up!

A seemingly endless list of factors – age, health, financial stability, the strength of your adversary – determines why you might abandon some goals.

While goals require persistence, they also need review. It's important to assess how realistic your goals are, whether they are still within reach and whether achieving them is worth the effort necessary to obtain them.

Why you do anything is important. Evaluate why you set any goal and see if your reasons still hold true. If your reason for setting the goal is strong enough, you can deal with anything.

Guard yourself against the habit of quitting. While we have physical immune systems that protect us from colds and the flu, we also have a psychological immune system that helps us deal with life's adversities. If you habitually quit when the going gets tough, you risk depressing your psychological immune system and risk constantly taking the "same old route."

Guard against pride. When you consider walking away from a goal, your own perception of failure is your greatest enemy. When we answer the question, "What does success mean to me?" we must also answer the inverse question, "What does failure mean to me?" Knowing when to walk away is not failure, for it takes courage, character and intuition to give up on something that you felt deeply about achieving.

In some cases your best option is to retreat like a military general would. Re-think your strategy, and attack again from a different position.

Walking away is not failure – not if you have gained knowledge and character in the process. The key is to understand exactly why you are walking away and when and how to try again.

Myth #10: We All Do the Best We Can With What We Have.

Reality: People Achieve What They Think They Have The Ability to Achieve.

Raise the bar. Up the ante. Stretch yourself. Ask for more. Dig deeper. Think bigger!

Too many of us sell out. We fly too close to the ground. We don't allow ourselves to soar to new heights. Focus on your possibilities – not your limitations. Soaring to new heights means pushing past your mental boundaries. Scan your mind for viruses, and get the bugs out of your system.

If you change your thinking, you can multiply your performance. Allow your desires to guide you rather than your fears. Instead of arguing for your limitations, find ways to support your potential. Declare war on your current boundaries. Don't allow yourself to be limited in any way.

Give yourself permission to dream, to risk, to say yes instead of no! What lies within your reach will stagger your mind. You can increase your levels of performance dramatically. Quantum leaps are possible if you believe they are possible.

In truth, there are limits to what you can accomplish, but your real limits lie beyond the artificial ones that currently exist! It may sound insane, but you have to give up some of your old beliefs and sacrifice some of those sensible thoughts. It's time for a mental prison break!

You can do more - a whole lot more. You are capable of so much more than the results that you are currently getting.

Everything Counts!

Worksheet:

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