

HOW TO GET MOTIVATED

by Eric Levy

Jerry Towers had been practicing law for 11 years. During that time, he realized he often charged clients for services that they were capable of handling themselves. He wasn't about to tell paying customers they were wasting their money, since those fees helped pay his mortgage. Yet he couldn't help but feel he was victimizing people.

He spoke with several friends who were also lawyers, but not one could sympathize with his point of view. He heard one cliché response after another: "Don't rock the boat." "Go with the status quo." "It's our bread and butter." One peer who went so far as labeling Jerry crazy for his ideas was the one who had been in practice the longest. He was known in the trade as "Fat Cat" Farber, a man who had actually done nothing to expand his life past the point of obtaining a law degree. He did the same thing every day, in the same office, for half his life. Jerry did not visualize the same scenario for himself, but he didn't know how to stop it.

The answer came to him in a bookshop. While browsing through the section on law, he saw texts that were too complicated for the layman, and commercial publications that were not comprehensive. Not one book explained the legal procedures any individual could handle himself. Jerry Towers saw the need for such a book, and he knew he was the man to write it.

Four years passed before Jerry saw his name on bookjackets in stores throughout the country. Though it took longer than he anticipated and the work was more difficult than he ever believed it could be, Jerry Towers did it. He accomplished an ambitious goal despite all obstacles.

Different Goals

What sets Jerry Towers apart from his colleagues? First, his colleagues have different definitions of success. "Fat Cat," who has been handling

divorces, wills and lawsuits for 30 years, judges himself successful because he is in a profession that is well respected, admired and sometimes envied. He makes a great deal of money performing services that by now he could do with his eyes closed. He has put three children through college and has made his wife very happy



with their beautiful home, country cottage and boat. He is very comfortable with little to worry about, and this, he knows, is success.

Jerry Towers had just started to send his first child through college when the restlessness began. He could not derive the same sense of accomplishment from comfort and riches as his elder colleague. He felt he was staying in the same place, not doing anything to enrich his life. Jerry's definition of success was accomplishing a challenging goal that would alter his life for the better.

In general, success is getting what you truly want, according to Dr. Martin Gallatin, sociologist and lecturer. "Most people seem to be just passing through life," he says. "Each day they say they're going to do something else, but they don't. After years, nothing happens in their lives. They never get the right degree of motivation."

Success can be reached at the same point where motivation ends. "Fat Cat" Farber earned his nickname from growing wealthy and overweight

by sitting behind a desk pushing around paper and using a rubber stamp. "Fat Cat" has no intention of seeking out new challenges. He has no goals.

Defining specific goals, says Gallatin, is the first step to becoming a motivated person. It is important for the object of the goal to be engrossing--something you will not mind going out of your way to accomplish. If you're like many people who have fallen into a lifestyle that provides little fulfillment, ask yourself two questions: "Am I going to do the same thing I've been doing for the rest of my life?" And, "What do I really want?" Your goals may be easily identified--you just need to act on them. If your goals are less defined, then make a list of what you like and don't like, and work out your goals from that.

Mrs. Janet Simmons had planned for her success to come in the form of motherhood. She married a man who could supply a good home and would be a good father. When she was ready for a family, however, she found out she was unable to have children. Adoption services were not the answer, since she wanted an infant and the waiting list for babies was long.

That long wait turned into a nightmare for Mrs. Simmons, who sat at home mourning her loss. When a neighbor suggested Mrs. Simmons babysit for her toddler several days each week, Mrs. Simmons reluctantly agreed. As her spirit improved, Mrs. Simmons considered the need in her community for a pre-school center for children with working parents. She became determined to create a pre-school center. Her motivation was strong enough--she loved taking care of children. She hired some assistants and opened a storefront pre-school.

Mr. Simmons wasn't accustomed to his wife leading a life apart from what

he saw as the commitments of their marriage, and he attempted to block her efforts. What kept Mrs. Simmons from becoming discouraged was a firm belief in what she had chosen to undertake. No reason should be good enough to get in the way of getting what you want, says Dr. Gallatin. You must expect that it is entirely possible to achieve what may seem at first as the unachievable. "Why invest so much time and effort?" and "You'll never be able to do so much," and similar pessimisms have caused many a goal-seeker to give up. Mrs. Simmons and Jerry Towers were able to maintain courage despite the emotional outbursts of negatively thinking people, what Dr. Gallatin considers temporary roadblocks to success.

Personal Sacrifices

Achieving goals will involve sacrifice. Mrs. Simmons sacrificed her role as a 24-hour-a-day wife for that of part-time businesswoman. Jerry Towers lost many hours of potential legal fees for a gamble with a venture he believed could work. "When you give something up," Gallatin explains, "you have a vested interest in getting your investment back. If you don't give up anything, people tend not to bother."

Without this internal drive, a person will not reach success, Gallatin points out, but the nuts and bolts involved in reaching out to others is also of utmost importance. Starting a business, writing a speech, improving social skills or any other goal requires information. Researching the mechanics of a goal motivates because it acts as the fuel for the idea. It turns the idea into

business with the aid of students she had met at the school who were majoring in elementary education.

Enthusiasm cannot override the necessity of learning the ins and outs of a project goal. It is necessary to map out a plan of action, to discover what is the most effective means of getting what you want. Jerry Towers became discouraged when publishers

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a reality. Mrs. Simmons' first attempt at a pre-school center failed because she tried to run everything herself and discovered she was being taken advantage of by local businessmen. The school was closed and Mrs. Simmons went back to school to take business courses. She made contacts who gave her invaluable advice, and she finally reopened a manageable and successful

told him his writing was too rigid, that he sounded too much like a lawyer talking shop--just what he wanted to avoid. So he enlisted the aid of a professional writer at a public relations firm whom he had dealings with through his law practice. Towers' enthusiasm and detailed proposals impressed the writer, which resulted in a successful collaboration.

Yet once we've failed at a goal, it's very difficult to approach it again. Motivation is often lost; success seems impossible. If the self-confidence, enthusiasm and foot work all appear to be going full steam but you're still standing still for a long period of time, Gallatin says the problem may be unrealistic goals.

That's not to say that if your deepest desire is to become a lead in a Broadway musical, you shouldn't go after it. But if the only experience you have is as a singing daffodil in a grade-school presentation, the first goal should be easier--perhaps obtaining the recognition of a top singing instructor. Then create goals that present more demanding challenges to your increasing expertise. Mrs. Simmons recognized her error in jumping into the business world without the necessary knowledge, so she went back a step in her plan and made her goal a more realistic one. By formulating unrealistic goals, Gallatin suggests, a person may be setting himself up for failure by declaring his ability to achieve a hopeless situation.

People set up an endless path of roadblocks on the way to success. The most common excuse Gallatin says he hears is the dogmatic phrase, "This is how I am." If a housewife lacks energy, she believes it's an unalterable part of her metabolism. She may be surprised to learn that a change in diet and exercise can change the way she feels. An unsuccessful businessman still blames his bad childhood for his insecurities. A lack of motivation from parents does make it difficult to be a motivated adult, but the past doesn't dictate the present. "Instead of complaining about obstacles in life," Gallatin says, "ask, 'What can I do to overcome them?'"

The answer is action. People can get too caught up in pep talks about motivation without ever applying it to their lives. Gallatin has seen too many people attending his numerous lectures on motivation and self-improvement without making any useful moves to enhance their lives. After reading this article, Gallatin suggests asking yourself, "How will I use this information to make my life more meaningful?"