

Stop Making Excuses

Many of us know what we want, but we still don't take the necessary steps to get it. Even when we want it very badly, we often give ourselves as many hoops to jump through as possible to put off the most painful or difficult steps. We desperately want to achieve our goals and dreams, and yet we use avoidance behavior to protect ourselves from our irrational fears. We want the perks without paying the price. We want improved circumstances without improving ourselves. We live each day waiting and dreaming and hoping for the stars to line up in our favor or for the winning lottery number. If this describes you, it's time to take a long, serious look in the mirror. That day will never come while you're waiting. It will only come when you bite the bullet and do what has to be done. I love what Richard Taylor, author of *The Disciplined Life*, has to say about this:

Ambition will never be realized, even when it is within the range of one's natural endowment, unless its possessor disciplines himself through the training, sacrifice, restrictions, inconvenience, and consecrated application which its realization may demand."

Jim Rohn, one of America's greatest speakers and one of my early mentors, taught me a powerful lesson about accountability. When I first met him, I was sitting at a dinner table with ten other people. I grabbed a seat near him, just wanting to listen to his words of wisdom. A lull in the conversation arose, and I was caught off guard when he turned and asked me about my goals, dreams, and aspirations. In response, I began to talk about many of the roadblocks I had experienced in my pursuit of success. I listed all the reasons I wasn't able to achieve my goals and dreams. I let him know who was to blame and insisted that none of it was my fault.

I thought I had made a pretty good case for myself, and then the hammer dropped. Jim looked at me and said, "Kurt, for things to change, *you* must change, and for things to get better, *you* must get better." That brief moment changed my life forever. It was then that I realized that everything I wanted in life would be driven by personal change. I also

realized that no matter what the excuse was—good or bad—it would not produce *results*.

Top performers know that change is the key to both their success and their ability to persuade others. When we understand how we change, we can help others change. And helping others change is a large part of persuasion. Often, however, we fiercely resist change. Why is this resistance so often present? We can only become who we want to become through change. What we do or do not experience financially, spiritually, or physically depends on whether or not we are willing to make changes. In spite of this knowledge, we still often wallow in our comfort zone. Even when achievement sits on our doorstep, we're still too comfortable to make an adjustment.

Sometimes, people are actually afraid of being "too" successful. To be brilliant or amazing might actually be a scary proposition. As success comes into sight, you might feel a lot of responsibility weighing down on you. So how successful should you be? How healthy should you be? How wealthy should you be? How strong should your relationships be? Consider the following powerful quote from Marianne Williamson:

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our Light, not our Darkness, that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, or fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the World. There is nothing enlightening about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you."

In spite of the greatness that lies within us, we often program ourselves to do the least amount possible to get by. That is, we often do only what is necessary to survive. I see this tendency with my students at the local university all the time. Their mentality is: "What is the least amount of work I can do to pass this class?" They are paying top dollar to get their education, yet rarely do you see students take advantage of all the resources at their disposal. We see symptoms of the same mental laziness and resistance to change in the workplace, too: "What is the least amount of work I can do to

get a paycheck and not get fired?" We will never find happiness in this lethargic mindset, and as a result, our soul starts to rust.

We are often discouraged by not seeing results fast enough, particularly after we've exerted a lot of effort. We want the quick fix, the easy way out. However, this is not how life works. If it takes someone a year to lose twenty pounds, why does someone else think he can lose the same amount in a couple of weeks? This principle also applies in reverse. We may not realize how far off course we've gotten until years have flown by, due again to the fact that consequences and results are often slow to manifest themselves. An example of this is poor dietary habits. We know that junk food is not good for us, and yet we deceive ourselves with: "Hey, nothing bad happened today after I had that burger and super-sized order of fries." The consequences of consistently unhealthy intake will take time—maybe even years—to show up in a really obvious way. In the meantime, however, the instant gratification of a fast and tasty meal *now* overpowers concerns about the future that, in the moment, seem immaterial. Imagine if every time you ate at a fast food restaurant the consequences were immediate. You took a bite and felt a new bulge near your midsection. If that were the case, it wouldn't take long before you changed your ways.

As you can see, there are a myriad of excuses one could come up with to put off a personal development program. Do any of the following ring a bell?

- "I can't afford it."
- "It's too expensive."
- "The company should pay for it."
- "I don't have the time."
- "It's hard enough just to get by."
- "I can find a better way."
- "It's really just luck."
- "I've heard it all before."
- "I'm embarrassed to admit weakness."

- “My job is so specialized that no one can help me.”
- “It's too overwhelming—I don't even know where to begin.”

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