

The Desperation Cycle: Why Does Motivation Fail?

Many think motivation is useless because it doesn't ensure long-lasting results. This thought tendency can be seen in what I call the Desperation Cycle. The Desperation Cycle shows how human nature influences us to take the easiest path instead of the best one. In persuasion, we need to pull people out of the Desperation Cycle and into permanent, long-term motivation. We all know we are creatures of habit. We are like water following the path of least resistance. As creatures of habit, we dwell in our comfort zones, places where we don't have to think or expend much energy in analyzing our surroundings. In these zones, we become complacent, comfortable and resistant to change. We live by habit and routine in our comfort zones. We don't stretch or strive for excellence. We consider change only when the pain of our current situation becomes too intense to ignore. Fear of the unknown and fear of making mistakes are also reasons why we stay in our comfort zone. We love our comfort zone because it is a safe place where we can reduce our mistakes and keep our failures to a minimum. Mark Twain said, "A cat that steps on a hot stove once will never step on a hot stove again but neither will it step on a cold one." The comfort zone is safe and warm, but it keeps us paralyzed and unmotivated to venture out of it.

In the Desperation Cycle, we first feel safe in our comfort zone. Then, fear even begins to creep into our complacency. Only then do we realize that we haven't accomplished any of the things we need to do. Suddenly, we fear what we are becoming and where we are going. As we contemplate our destination, we panic and work frantically to save ourselves. This frantic rehabilitation lasts just long enough for us to see exactly how steep the hill is going to be or how long the marathon really is. Then the excitement dies. We numb ourselves to these stark realizations and find ourselves lulled back into our comfort zone.

Let's say you have a high school reunion coming up, but for the past decade, you've been enjoying some of life's finer foods. Over the years, your pants have become a little tighter and tighter. You don't want to go your reunion in this fat stage. You then begin to fear what it's going to be like to show up at your reunion looking this way. Panic hits and

you vow that you will lose weight before the looming event arrives. To that end, you starve yourself. You even start to exercise. The pounds come off and you go to your reunion, a slimmer and more confident individual. Then the cycle comes full circle. You get home and think it'd be nice to continue shedding the pounds, but you realize it's harder than you thought. You begin to enjoy the finer things in life again, just a little bit at first then more and more as time goes by. The weight then returns and you start the vicious cycle all over again.

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