

Newsletter: Bringing the Inside Out

October 2005

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Coaching 103: Goals:

If you don't set goals, how will you know where you are going? Goals, objectives and action plans are like a roadmap for life or business. They help to define you and/or your organization, give direction and avoid chaos. Goals motivate by providing a basis on which to measure accomplishments and successes. Organizations that set goals are more effective in recruiting members because they can communicate what the organization is striving to achieve.

There are three levels to define your priorities: your mission statement is a broad, general statement that states what your purpose is, it usually doesn't change from year to year and in organizations is frequently the first statement in their constitution. Goals are general or broad statements describing what you wish to accomplish, stemming from your mission. Goals are usually the ends toward which your efforts will be directed and often change from time to time. Objectives are the descriptions of exactly what is to be done, coming from the goals; they are clear, specific statements of measurable tasks that will be accomplished as steps toward reaching your goals. They are short-term and have deadlines. Objectives should be S.M.A.R.T. in other words, specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timed.

The first step for setting goals and objectives is to brainstorm a list of potential goals that appeal to you. In an organization, this step should be done as a group. Remember when brainstorming to write down everything, this is not a time for evaluation or judgement. Secondly, choose the goals you wish to work on from the brainstormed list and prioritize these goals. Next, determine objectives for each goal and develop a plan of action for each objective (there can be several objectives for each goal). Lastly, move into action and follow through. Periodically, evaluate and revise your goals and objectives in order to keep them current and relevant.

When creating your action plans, look at what is to be done, how it will be accomplished, what resources you have in terms of people, money and materials

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and your deadlines for accomplishing each task. Then look at how you will know when it is accomplished and how you will measure the results. What will you do to keep yourself on track and accountable?

When you are setting your missions, goals, objectives and action plans or if you feel stuck or you are having problems focussing or sticking to your plans, consider hiring a coach to assist you. Most coaches specialize in assisting their clients with setting goals and helping them stay accountable to get them accomplished. Coaches can also help evaluate past goals and action plans to see what worked and what didn't.

Set your roadmap and stick to it...make your dreams come true.

Resolving Conflicts

Many people are very uncomfortable with conflict and will do everything within their power to avoid it. Others thrive on conflict and will seek it out. Conflict is neither positive nor negative and can be constructive or destructive depending on the attitude and skills used to work through it. Conflict is both natural and expected in relationships and the resolution of conflict is determined more by a person's beliefs and behaviour than by the actual conflict.

Conflict does have positive functions. It prevents stagnation, stimulates interest and curiosity and can be the medium through which problems can be aired and solutions arrived at. It can be the impetus for personal and social change, a mechanism to enable the adjustment of norms for new conditions and can stimulate the search for new solutions. When conflict is resolved appropriately, it can diffuse more serious conflict as well as increase a group's cohesion and performance.

When conflict is avoided there can be negative consequences which may include the building up of resentments, the displacement of feelings onto other people or things, an increase of griping, backbiting, gossip and general discontent, morale and productivity might suffer. The credibility of leaders and the organization can be reduced, leadership abilities may become impaired, cooperation might be adversely affected and stress will likely increase.

How to deal with and resolve conflict is usually a learned skill. Some people are naturally more comfortable in conflict situations. They may be more skilful dealing with their emotions around conflict than others. A main tool used in conflict is identifying and controlling your own feelings about the situation. If you can talk yourself into remaining calm and try to turn strong emotions into curiosity, you will have more success in resolving the conflict. Use positive self-talk to keep your emotions under control, you have all the choice when deciding how to react.

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When you are curious about a situation, you are taking the first step to resolving it. Ask what the situation is about. Reflect back what you hear the other person saying. If their emotions are strong, they will calm themselves if they feel heard. Seek to find the common interest or common ground that you are both coming from and negotiate a solution from these commonalities. Use your active listening skills to reflect back what you hear and check out your assumptions. Stay assertive with a willingness to be flexible within your own boundaries. If you accommodate, fully giving up your own interests, the conflict will come back and it will likely be stronger than ever. However, if you stay within your own position with no compromise, the conflict will not be resolved, the other person may accommodate you or the conflict may escalate. If this occurs, it may be a time to take a break and return to the discussion at a different time. However, if a break is taken, ensure that a time is set to return to the conversation otherwise you may just be avoiding the conflict and therefore the resolution.

If you find you have problems with resolving conflicts or if you avoid them or accommodate others to your detriment or if you are always in confrontational situations; you may benefit from taking assertiveness training or conflict resolution training. Courses are frequently offered in communities and through workplaces. If you cannot get access to a course, ask for one at your local community college or family resource centre. Self-awareness and skills are the key to resolving conflicts at home, at work and in the general arena of life.

Living Life in Balance - Tips

1. Reduce your Stress (see April newsletter). How you react to the pressures in your life can make you ill. Stress can actually enrich and motivate us, but when it is not dealt with positively it can be very detrimental. What causes stress and pressure in your life? Begin to take notice of times that you are feeling overwhelmed. Can you eliminate these times? If they can't be eliminated, possibly you can change your reaction to them.

2. Make your Life Simpler. Are you busy every minute of the day? Stay home and relax occasionally. Cut out all commitments unless they feel important to you. Get in the habit of saying no to things you don't have time or want to do. Let go of guilt. If you can, consider hiring help to get caught up or do the chores you don't want to do. Set and remember your priorities.

3. Take Time to Play and Relax. When our leisure time decreases, we may see that our relationships begin to suffer. Take time out to play. Get down on the floor and cuddle with a baby, read with a child, build with blocks, play tag, watch a favourite movie, or share a cup of tea and some good conversation with your teen or a friend. Lie on the couch or take a walk. Really be there for each moment.

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4. Share the load. Partners and children – no matter how small -- can and usually want to help out. Sit down, and decide as a family where the household priorities are and divide the work. Do you really care if your refrigerator has dust behind it? Does anyone else notice or care? Giving your family a chance to contribute helps them to develop self-reliance. Sharing the load will result in more quality time for everyone.

5. Slow down! You are pulled in many directions. What happens when you feel there just isn't enough of you? Ask yourself, "What is most enjoyable and rewarding for me and my family?" Don't waste your precious time on activities that are no longer feeding your spirit. Instead focus on what is really important in your life. Set realistic expectations of yourself and others. Learn to be adaptable and go with the flow. Let go of what is no longer needed.

6. Love & Nurture yourself. A well taken care of body is much more able to deal with the stresses of everyday life. Eat nutritious, healthy, and good food, exercise regularly, and get enough rest. It's the advice given to us by our parents and it still works.

7. Stop Putting It Off. When something needs to be done, just do it and keep doing it until it is done. Avoiding takes just as much or more energy than just doing it. Even if you are feeling very reluctant to begin, usually when you're in motion you'll forget your initial reluctance. It may help to start out with the simplest part, and work into the most challenging.

8. Focus on the positive. Look around you at what you have to be grateful for. Taking the time each day to about at least five things you are thankful for will serve as a powerful reminder of just how much is going right with your life!

9. Take charge! Track the time you spend doing what you do. Around 30 percent of our waking hours are spent in regular, day-to-day activities. Decide which of these are important, and which should go. Make plans. Follow your body's rhythm maximizing your peak performance times. Before you go to bed, take just a few minutes to think about the day that has passed and review the next day. This is great way to stay focused on your goals.

Finding a balance in your life is an ongoing process. Life is in a constant state of change -- a work in progress. Love yourself and joy will follow.

Quotes to Live By:

“What you believe about yourself, positively or negatively will reflect from the inside out and be expressed in your behaviour...as within, so without.”

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