

# Get the Life You Want

*By Jeff Logue Ph.D.*

## **Introduction**

If you're reading this you're probably not satisfied with where you are in life. Relax, you're in good company. I think most people are dissatisfied with life – and they should be. The moment you stop striving, you start dying. Your decision to read this says something profound about you. It tells me you're not done with life, you're not a quitter, and you've dug your bloody fingernails into your dreams and refuse to let go of them. Hang on tight and keep reading.

## **Be Selfish**

Most people think this is a dirty word and we should never be selfish. Those are the same people that feel frustrated at the end of the day because everyone else gets a piece of them. By the time they get home from work, there's nothing left of them. Like a pie that's been setting out all day as people take one piece at a time until there's nothing left but the empty plate. Is that you? A cold empty plate at the end of the day.

It's time to break the plate. Stop giving yourself away and start being selfish about your dreams and goals. Keep some time and energy for yourself at the end of the day. Better yet, give yourself the first piece of pie. Get up 30 minutes early and work on a goal for that day. Plan to succeed and schedule your success.

## **Schedule Your Priority**

I've learned over the years that if I don't create my schedule there are 10 other people willing to do it for me. Failing to schedule your priority will leave you feeling exhausted at the end of the day without having accomplished what you want to do.

In this New York Time's best seller, *THE ONE THING*, Gary Kelly refers to what he calls, Goal Setting to the Now. Define your Someday Goal and work backward to reveal what must happen to achieve that success. If you have a

goal to be a millionaire someday, what must be your priority over the next five years, one year, each month, week and day? Notice that I'm using the word *priority*, not priorities. Keller reminds us that the original meaning of the word priority stems from the Latin word *prior*, which means "first". It wasn't until the 20<sup>th</sup> century that we changed the word from priority to priorities. The key to success, as Keller illustrates in his book, is focusing on a priority – one thing- until is done well.

Take control of your future by scheduling time each day to do the ONE most important thing you can to reach your goals.

### **Cast Out the Demons**

Identify the people, places and things that suck time out of your life and cast them out of your life. Look around you and identify the emotional vampires, time wasters, useless places in your life. Now, I'm not suggesting that you sell all you own and become a hermit in woods somewhere. What I am suggesting is that you take a critical look at the people in your life that are contributing to your success and failure in life. Who is the emotional vampire or negative person in your life that keeps you down? Who is the person that constantly reminds you of all your failures? Name the "Dream Killers" and list them down on a piece of paper. Avoid them, confront them, cast them out of your life and run free toward your success. If they are not actively pushing you toward success, they are pulling you away from it.

What are the time wasters in your life? How many hours do you spend of Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat and other dead ends to success? These can be tools that work for your success, but most people just mentally check out and, like zombies, troll social media vicariously living through other people's artificial life. Stop wasting time on "Fakebook" and live your own life.

What places are you going that have nothing to do with your success? Stop hanging out in places that suck your time, energy and money away from your goals. I love coffee, there's a cup sitting next to me right now, but if I spend \$5 bucks at Starbucks everyday I'm not reaching my financial goals.

Think about it:

\$5 bucks x 7 days = \$35.

$\$35 \times 52 \text{ weeks} = \$1,820.00$

$\$1,820.00 \times 5 \text{ years} = \$9,100.00$

What could you do the \$9,100.00? What could you do with just \$1,820.00? How far could that resource take you toward the success you want? You could use that money to invest in the Stock Market, to invest in a start-up business, or to invest in yourself as an entrepreneur.

### **Avoid the Money Trap**

Many people falsely believe that they cannot reach their goals because they don't have enough money. If you want to go on a road trip, you need a good map. It's the same with your finances. To manage your money well, you need to know where you want to go. That means setting financial goals: SMART goals.

You're more likely to reach your goals if they're SMART: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-Framed. Here's an example:

Let's say you want to save for a vacation, well "save for a vacation" is a bit vague and hard to measure. How will you know if you are making progress or have achieved it?

On the other hand, if you say, "I want to save \$5,000 for a trip to New York within eight months" this is a SMART Goal. *It's specific*—you know exactly what you're saving for. *It's measurable*—you know how much you will need. *It's achievable and realistic*—you can break the total needed into smaller steps (for example, saving \$625 a month) that will be easier to do. And it's *time-framed*—you've set a deadline. When you define your financial goals, make sure they are SMART and like a road map they help you avoid the money trap.

### **Stop Living on Adrenaline**

If you're constantly running from one thing to the next, with no time to slow down, you're burning yourself up and asking for failure. Adrenaline may get you up and going, but too much for too long will destroy you.

Adrenaline is a stress hormone that initiates our fight or flight response. It energizes us so we can accomplish what I call emergency tasks like defending yourself or escaping danger. Adrenaline feels good and, in some cases, can even reduce our awareness of pain, but in large doses over prolonged period of time it is damaging. Some of the negative effects of living on adrenaline include anxiety, depression, digestive problems, headaches, heart disease, sleep problems, weight gain, and reduced memory and poor concentration.

Life is stressful enough because of the things we do to ourselves to increase adrenaline. That \$5 cup of Starbucks with two shots of espresso is enough to jack up your heart rate, not to mention the high sugar cream-filled cookie dough Krispy Kreme donut hanging out of your mouth. You can't eat like that and expect to live long enough to see your goals achieved.

You may not be able to change your situation entirely, but you can do some things to reduce the stress in your life. You can start by eating a healthy diet and getting regular exercise and plenty of sleep. Try practicing relaxation techniques such as trying yoga, practicing deep breathing, getting a massage or learning to meditate. Perhaps you could start taking time for hobbies, such as reading a book or listening to music or fostering healthy friendships. Having a sense of humor is one of the best ways to reduce stress so you can focus on your goals. In many cases, very motivated people will seek out a counselor or life coach when they need help distressing and refocusing on their goals. The payoff for learning to manage stress is peace of mind and a longer, healthier life.

### **Get a Support System**

You have to stay connected to people. It's been said that no one is a self-made millionaire and that statement often flies in the face of Hollywood's romantic image of our enduring love affair with a rags-to-riches plot line. But, as Gladwell writes in *Outliers: The Story of Success*, "People don't rise from nothing....It is only by asking where they are from that we can unravel the logic behind who succeeds and who doesn't." Where are you from? What's your home town? Who is your Daddy? Tell me about your Mother. These are the core elements of your support system. Whether you're from Mayberry or Sin City, where you're from matters a great deal.

Your success, as Gladwell so eloquently illustrates, is hardwired into you. Your primal support system - childhood friendships, family of origin, the neighborhood where you grew up – all serve to set you on a positive or negative trajectory. Those influences remain very powerful well into adulthood. Powerful, but not omnipotent. As an adult, you now have the power to CHOOSE your support system. You no longer have to be held captive by the old messages from the past that haunted your childhood dreams. With maturity comes authority.

Take authority over your life. Choose your support system. A support system is important because it surrounds you with healthy people that give you the opportunity to express your feelings and voice your struggles. A support system can provide you with healthy and positive peer pressure that provides a lifeline during difficult times. Not everyone should be in your support system. Only those you believe are capable of genuine love, support and understanding. Quality bonds and a strong nucleus of friends are paramount. Focus on the quality of people, not the quantity of people.

Next time you log on to "Fakebook" count how many "friends" you have and list out their names. Go ahead, I'll wait..... Ok, now tell me how many of them are really committed to *your* happiness? Write down their names on a piece of paper. Now, how many of those will *sacrifice for you* and your principles? Of the few that are left, write down the two or three that are a good influence. That's your support system.

That small group of faithful and authentic people will help lay a foundation for your success. They are the ones that will support you and encourage you and inspire you toward greatness. They are the ones you'll see smiling up at you proudly as you look down from your pinnacle. Remember them and thank them often, because without their support you'll fall from greatness and dash upon the unforgiving rocks below. Get a support system.

### **Nourish Your Spirit**

Make time to relax and take care of yourself. This is often the last thing on our list of things to do, but it is arguably the most important. Meditation,

fasting, walking a prayer circle, taking the Sacraments, singing with a choir, going on a weekend spiritual retreat, listening to the words of Jesus Christ, lighting Hanukkah candles, or just saying daily prayers are all practices that many of us were taught in childhood, yet for some reason we've placed them on the back burner of our lives.

Just how important is spirituality? According to Dr. Ellen Idler, researchers from the University of Michigan analyzed high school seniors from 135 schools in 48 states and their findings show that religious involvement has a large impact on the lifestyles of these students. Students who make religion important in their lives and attend religious services frequently, have lower rates of cigarette smoking, alcohol use, marijuana use, higher rates of seat belt use, eating fruits, vegetables, and breakfast, and lower rates of carrying weapons, getting into fights, and driving while drinking.

This was also true for adults in Alameda County, California. That study has shown that people who attend religious services are less likely to smoke cigarettes in the first place; however, if those who attend services did smoke, they were more likely than those who didn't attend to quit smoking.

Those who attend religious services have lower mortality rates overall. People who nourish their spirituality are less likely to drink heavily, have sex with multiple partners, or get into fistfights. They also have a longer life expectancy. As you can see, there is ample evidence that religious and spiritual nourishment correlate negatively to some known health risk factors.

Another very important aspect of religious faith is that religious congregations become social circles that provide support and reduce stress in people's lives. Remember our discussion of support systems? This is a good place to start if you're looking for people to add to your group. Other studies have found that the most socially isolated people with the fewest social ties to others were at the highest risk of mortality. You cannot reach your goals and succeed if you're dead. Social groups are important not only because they provide rules for living, but also because these support groups nurture, care for, and support their members. Just as no one can truly succeed without the help of others around them, I think it's evident that we are far more likely to succeed when we incorporate the help from God above us.

Another aspect of spiritual nourishment includes journaling. This is an excellent way to empty your head and your heart of unhealthy emotions. Fear, stress, anger and resentment can build up over time and it can be very helpful to vent those emotions in writing. Releasing those negative thoughts in a journal makes room for mindfulness and meditation on more up-lifting thoughts. There is a strong connection between mindfulness and happiness. Journaling allows you to live in the moment and recapture that happiness that you may have lost over time.

Solitude can be another way to nourish your spirit. We are constantly bombarded with distractions including cell phones, email, texts and tweets that pull us away from ourselves back into the various roles we must play at work and home.

When was the last time you sat alone, with your thoughts and contemplated your current situation? Give you brain time and relax and reconnect with your spirit. Reconnect with the present and be there in the moment as you reflect on the beauty of the now.

Do you know how to appreciate the silence of a moment? The world is a noisy place screaming for your attention, the spirit should be quiet. Turn off the electronics and unplug your life from the world. Leave your cell phone at home and take a walk in the woods. Close your eyes and listen to the wind in the trees and the birds singing. Feel the breeze on your face and the pine needles under your bare feet.

Nature can be a great conduit for spiritual growth and insight. After my parents died, I had the opportunity to spend many hours in solitude with nature. I remember spending hours on a farm with my aunt and uncle, and one of my favorite past times was lying under a cluster of tall pine trees watching the hawks soar just above the trees. As I lay there, alone, I would talk to God and ask Him all the questions a young boy might want answers to after losing his parents. Not all the answers were satisfying, but what was most therapeutic was the time I spent alone with nature and my creator. Nature is a place I still enjoy retreating to as a way to find solitude and companionship with my God. It is a place where I'm free to ask painful questions, and in time, receive healing answers.

## **The Final Step**

By now you've come to realize that getting the life you want takes intentionality. Each of these life areas are crucial to bringing about the perfect balance of self-development, awareness, planning, support and spirituality. Without that balance you'll become lost in pursuit of life. Each piece of the puzzle is equally important in creating the picture perfect life you've always wanted to live. Be patient, be deliberate, be intentional and be sure that you possess the destiny you want. There is nothing you cannot do, if you put your mind, body, soul and strength into it. What treasure awaits you?

