

A Busy Lifestyle Can Hinder Your Purpose

One common trait of successful people is their unwavering focus on achieving goals. A perfect example of such an individual is Dwight Howard. Dwight is a 6-11, 270 pound NBA player whose athleticism has drawn comparisons to the league's greatest centers. Howard was merely an 8th grader when he started writing down his ambitions and tacking them up in his room. His most notable goals were to lead his high school to a state title and become a No. 1 draft choice. While these dreams seemed insurmountable at the time, he accomplished both of them. Writing down goals can drastically increase the likelihood of accomplishing them because it serves as a constant reminder of one's objectives. Yet, too many Americans participate in activities that aren't meaningful in the grand scheme of life. An increasing number of people are overly busy because of societal pressures to fill their schedule. We live in a world that looks down on downtime, and too many of us have excessive obligations that detract from what is truly important. Some even estimate the average American "has approximately 30 hours a week in extra activities scheduled" (<http://blog.lib.umn.edu/>). Many people take part in fruitless activities because they depend on the majority as their decision-making compass. It isn't mentally healthy to be a workaholic when such work is not vital towards one's ultimate purpose. In fact, overworking can be counter-productive because it hinders creativity and leads to a plethora of health problems and stress. True entrepreneurs often disregard conventional behavior and focus on just a few meaningful pursuits; this is why they are sometimes ridiculed for their creative ideas. Even Beethoven's symphonies were relatively unpopular until after his lifetime. But despite criticism, it's important to "Follow your intuition when new opportunities present themselves" (www.successconsciousness.com). In a recent interview by Paul Bradshaw, Rick Warren asked this question: "Am I going to be driven by pressures? Guilt? Bitterness? Materialism? Or am I going to be driven by God's purposes (for my life)?"

Avoid the Status Quo

Carefully consider whether your daily activities are purpose driven. Several of my friends have taken part in college athletics and discovered it was more of a commitment than they were willing to make. Despite their dislike of daily practices, they continued to attend and complain on a regular basis. Normally, the purpose of sports is to be enjoyable, and my friends' experience was accomplishing quite the opposite. It's easy to see how practices could become overwhelming without sufficient love of the game. Don't misunderstand what I'm saying, it's important to honor one's commitments. But these individuals only continued to play because of continual pressure from their family and peers. Sadly, the social process that drives much of the activity in our country is to go along with the crowd. "The status quo is the reason that most people lack truly prosperous lives" (www.thesoko.com). For example, Americans admit that enjoying one's profession is just as important as being financially comfortable. Yet, "95% of the population drift along in jobs they hate, with lives unfulfilled" (www.thesoko.com). This is due to an almost subconscious obsession with fitting into the norm. People are usually hesitant to change professions they see that others are unwilling to take such a risk. Even in terms of personal finance, one "needs to think antisocially to excel in Investing"

(Money). My point is to ignore societal views if they are contrary to your goals and personal judgment. But at the same time, one shouldn't purposefully make poor decisions for the sake of being different. As a high school teacher, I regularly encounter teenagers that are more concerned with being unique than making genuinely good choices.

Six Simple Steps

There are numerous simple steps a person can take to achieve his or her goals. First, continually remind yourself that it's useless to stress over problems that are beyond one's control. And rather than worrying about issues within one's control, it's more productive to brainstorm about how such problems can be dealt with. In either case, worrying is unproductive. Dwelling over the negative aspects of one's life will make problems seem more pronounced. Second, focusing on past achievements is equally unproductive. Past successes can lead to complacency as opposed to focusing towards what's on the horizon. Third, avoid trivial past times. It's important to focus on long-term goals as opposed to temporary fun because the former will result in a greater sense of fulfillment. Trivial past times can easily distract from time with family and God. Fourth, writing down goals can drastically increase the likelihood of accomplishing them. Fifth, resist societal pressures to go along with the crowd. A great deal of people mistakenly accept the opinions of others simply because these views are widespread. Yet, many prominent CEO's do the opposite; they implement continual change because merely imitating their competitors would be a grave mistake. This same principle applies outside of the business world. A wise man once told me "Any dead fish can swim downstream, but it takes a live fish to swim up." In other words, sometimes it's better to go against the crowd. Before you make your next major life decision, imagine how you might behave if you were the only person on Earth. Would you purchase a million dollar home if there wasn't anyone else in the world to see it? If not, you may be overly concerned with the views and opinions of others. Finally, stay the course, regardless of whether or not your goals seem farfetched. It sounds corny to simply say "Reach for the stars," but lofty goals increase the likelihood of extraordinary results. Even if one falls slightly short of his or her target, hard work will inevitably produce favorable outcomes.

<http://www.thesoko.com/thesoko/article724-1.html>

<http://blog.lib.umn.edu/koem0006/home/011081.html>

<http://www.successconsciousness.com/steps-to-achieve-goals.htm>