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## 1.7.

# Never Give Up

There are a couple things we can find useful in keeping us on the road that leads to our dreams. One is to set up goals along the way. Another is to exercise perseverance. The road may prove long and sometimes the end is out of sight.

We all have to fall back upon perseverance from time to time. I need it in my own work right now. Writing this book requires a good deal of perseverance, and in more ways than you might imagine. I have to hit each key on my typewriter with a stick that is fastened with a band around my head. It is not the fastest method in the world, but at least it gives me time to think about what I want to write. While other authors use their hands at work, I use my head.

Most of us find it quite easy to start new projects, such as learning a new language or starting to lose weight, but we usually find it more difficult to see those projects through to completion. Having a plan helps us finish our projects. I myself find it difficult to work without a plan. Again, take the writing of this book as an example. These texts have been taking shape in the back of my mind for a good while. During this time, many have asked me if I was planning to start a new writing project. They wondered what I was waiting for. It had been a good while since my most recent book was published. Before I can write anything worthwhile, though, I need an idea, some sort of vision. My writing won't be any good otherwise. I can't just jump in and start writing for the sake of writing.

For me, this idea or vision is what keeps me on track and therefore helps me to keep the writing moving. Without a vision of my finished product, I would be stumbling around in the dark. It is this central idea that unifies the different aspects of my work and that allows me to work out details over several months without losing direction. When I'm finished with the book I'm writing right now, I will have to begin looking

for a publisher – which is usually a monumental task in itself. I had to submit my first book to about 25 publishers before I found someone who was willing to publish it.

Richard Bach had to send his wonderful book *Jonathan Livingston Seagull* to 53 publishers before he found a taker. This was in spite of his book later proving to be an international best-seller.

This means that you should be prepared for a good amount of rejection before reaching success, particularly if you set out to launch something new. It requires energy to push past this resistance. Without this energy, you might as well give up.

That is why we need to choose our larger projects with care. We need to choose projects that speak to our passion. Without it, we will not find the energy we need to see these projects through. If we haven't found our passions in life yet, we need to be patient until they reveal themselves. For sometimes we must have periods of contemplation. We need soul time.

Waiting for something to turn up, however, can get frustrating. That is why finding your passion can be so liberating. We have to accept, however, that it takes more than just a day to become aware of one's dreams. Unfortunately, people often give up too early because of the time involved.

I believe that there is much to be gained by viewing our dreams as tools we can use to rise above our limitations and to develop our capabilities. But we have to accept that shattering limitations is no easy thing. We have to let it take the time it takes. We have to persevere in this way as well.

The alternative is to shelve our dreams and let them get so dusty that we no longer recognize them. In 1990, I started giving workshops and seminars, but I still haven't built my company up to what I first envisioned. This doesn't mean that I am going to give up my dream. Without this dream, I would be dead, and I believe that it's the same for all of us. The day we stop dreaming, we might as well just curl up and die.

Once again, what keeps me going is my vision of what I want to attain. That is what gives me the energy I need to take care of the myriad of details that running a company entails. These details are not to be made light of. I usually enjoy my daily work, the actual craftsmanship of it. Every little success can feel like a great achievement to me, even though these achievements might seem unimportant.

In fact, I believe this attention to the smallest of details is of great importance. Take the building of a cathedral as an example. You may already be familiar with the story about a man who is passing a large building plot where he meets two bricklayers. He asks them, "What are you doing?" The first bricklayer answers, "I'm laying bricks." The second construction worker answers, "I'm erecting a cathedral." This reflects two different ways of looking upon one's daily work and upon one's contribution to the world.

Have you ever run into any special situation in your life where you needed perseverance?  
Do you think that you are persistent enough?  
If not, how can you develop your perseverance?  
Have you ever met anyone you thought was stubborn? How did it affect you?

So my vision of what I want to achieve gives me an excellent framework in which to work. Having that framework gives me a great amount of freedom. As I work on a book, for example, I can choose from day-to-day what I feel like writing about. Since I have an outline in my head, I don't have to write in any set order. I can write whatever I feel like writing today and put it into its correct place in the larger work later on.

This kind of freedom is of great importance. Toward the end of the 80s, a Danish company came up with a new kind of personal organizer that you could use, in effect, to plan the rest of your life. It was used to create goals for different areas of your life. After the goals were set, you were to list what activities would lead you toward these goals. The next step was to fill up each day with an appropriate number these activities. Step-by-step you were supposed to be approaching your goals.

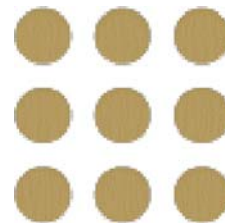
This method didn't work for me because I often wanted to do something entirely different than what was written in my calendar for the day. Perhaps I wanted go swimming. For me, using this time manager was impractical, since for the most part it contained a number of activities that I kept postponing. It's completely possible that others found this calendar useful, but I didn't. I realized that it is quite important to find a balance between spontaneity and planning. On the other hand, I don't want to play down how helpful this calendar was in getting me to commit my life's goals to paper.

It is of great value to formulate your goals in writing. If you can also carry these with you somehow, then these goals become more a part of your daily life because you have them more readily at hand. It is easy otherwise to let them slip away, as in the following situation.

You have a planning conference for your job at which all of you work hard compiling lists of proposed achievements and company goals. After the conference, you slip those lists into your files and then it's back to work as usual. The only person to get anything out of this pleasant conference is the consultant (not named Bengt, by the way) who has charged exorbitant prices to teach you goal-setting skills.

It is not enough, however, to put your goals into words. You must also pursue each of your goals, although as I mentioned above, you cannot let your goals choke out all flexibility and spontaneity. I have made up my mind, for example, to continue learning how to walk. This means that I should practice every day, or preferably, several times a day. However, I have not practiced at all for the last three months.

This does not mean that I have let my goal slip out of sight. It only means that I give myself the freedom to skip my practice whenever I don't feel like it. If I force myself to practice when I don't feel like it, I succeed only in building up a negative attitude toward my training.



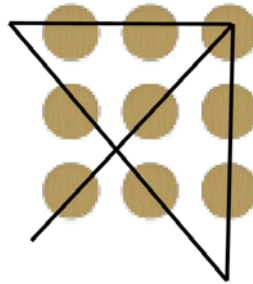
Do you have the persistence to find a way to connect these dots with only four straight lines? The answer can be found at the end of this section. Source: *Conceptual Blockbusting* by James L. Adams

In many cases, it is difficult to pinpoint which actions have helped you reach a particular goal. When success comes, it seems often to come from nowhere. It is unpredictable. In physical training, for example, breakthroughs tend to occur paradoxically after longer periods of rest. It is as if we need time to assimilate all our hard work before we are ready to move on to another level of achievement. This principle is true for everything we do, not just for physical training.

It's easy to believe that the harder we work toward a certain goal, the quicker we will reach it. But it seldom works this way. It's often much more important to work smarter than harder. Sometimes it takes time for things to mature. Perseverance in these situations is not primarily a matter of working hard, but is a matter of knowing when to exercise patience and let yourself wait. It can even be harmful sometimes to push ahead too hard. You only end up wasting time and energy. You can't pick fruit before it's ripe.

All this can be likened to a tree. A tree doesn't try to grow, it just grows effortlessly. Growing is a natural part of its existence. I believe this to be true also for us human beings. Development is a natural part of life. And it is not true that we learn and develop only as children. We develop throughout our entire lives, and we don't always have to make a determined effort to do so. It is more important to follow the natural cycles of the universe.

Having goals for the future and refusing to give up does not mean you must always be working relentlessly. By virtue of having goals, you gain the energy you need to move toward them and you find things falling into place by themselves. It is like flying a plane. The main thing is to set your course. Then you just switch onto autopilot. You leave everything else to technology and to the air traffic control people.



Answer to the question on page two.