

Keeping Your Life's Goals Alive and Well

from the American Counseling Association

We've all had dreams and goals in our younger years that seemed essential to our happiness, yet, for many of those dreams, we just never quite achieved them.

This doesn't necessarily mean we're unhappy with our current lives, but at some level we still may feel slightly frustrated or disappointed about those missed goals.

While there's no magic way to make all your dreams come true, you can take action to get closer to your life's goals and lessen those feelings of frustration.

Start by putting the past behind you. Unresolved anger and resentment over things that didn't work out uses up energy but accomplishes nothing. Instead, you need to begin managing your daily life so that it reflects who you are and what you value today.

Start by evaluating your old dreams and goals. There is, for example, no "ideal" romantic relationship or "perfect" mate. But there can be someone who can accept and care about the real you, and who is able to get things right more often than wrong. Similarly, there's no perfect job but there are work situations that can challenge you and provide a real sense of accomplishment.

Knowing yourself is vital to feeling more fulfilled. Identify your personal strengths and interests, and then put time and energy into nourishing them. Don't try to be someone you're not. Whatever you do well, do it frequently and proudly and you'll find that rewards will follow.

To achieve specific goals, it's vital to take action toward them, rather than simply dreaming about them and waiting for something to happen. Small steps in the right direction make a difference -- maybe a first phone call, rewriting your resume, or taking a class. Reaching the end result we want only will happen only if we take that first step.

You also want balance in your life. Saying "no" to excessive demands on your time, talent or goodwill will allow you time for the things you really want to do, without the resentment and anger that comes from agreeing to what you really don't want to do.

Reaching your life's goals means that you stop letting old beliefs and others' ideas define who you are and what you have to do. Instead, accept that you, and only you, can take action to reach the dreams and goals that really matter to you.

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