

The American Counseling Association's "Counseling Corner" Weekly Columns

Keeping Your Life Goals Clearly In Sight

from the American Counseling Association

Most of us have dreams and goals that we once thought were keys to our happiness, yet, for whatever reasons, we've just never quite achieved them.

This doesn't necessarily mean we're not happy with our lives, but there may be times when we still may feel frustrated or disappointed about those unfulfilled dreams.

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 to lessen those feelings of frustration.

One starting point is to put the past behind you. Holding on to unresolved anger and old resentments uses up energy and accomplishes nothing. Forget past hurts or abandonments and instead begin managing your daily life so that it reflects who you are and what you value.

It also helps to be realistic in evaluating your goals. In romance, for example, there is no "ideal" 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 not.

Similarly, there is 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. What are your personal strengths and interests? Once identified, put time and energy into nourishing them. Rather than trying to be someone you're not, enhance who you already are. Whatever you do well, do it frequently and proudly and you'll find that rewards will follow.

If you want to achieve specific goals, it's vital to take action toward them, rather than simply dreaming about them and waiting for something to materialize. Even small steps in the right direction can make a difference. Maybe it's a first phone call, rewriting your resume, or taking a class. While we usually know the end result we want, we often fail to take that first step toward making it come about.

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.

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.

"Counseling Corner" is provided by the American Counseling Association. Comments and questions to ACACorner@counseling.org or visit the ACA website at www.counseling.org.

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