

Raise Your Bar

There is nothing more exhilarating than exceeding your expectations of yourself. Achieving a meaningful, challenging goal is extremely fulfilling. Yet, how often do we give ourselves the opportunity to shine? In order to be able to exceed our expectations of ourselves and meet our personal potential, we need to address the factors that may work to hold us back.

Think for a moment about the last time you exceeded your expectations of yourself. How did you feel? Were you proud? Exhilarated? Excited? Energised? Or simply happy? The benefits of achievement are enormous. As well as promoting positive emotion, raising your bar also improves self image and confidence and encourages growth and the development of new skills. So, what holds us back from setting and achieving the challenges that will bring us happiness and growth?

1. Comfort

Operating within our comfort zone makes us feel safe because we are working within parameters in which we know we can deliver the goods. The problem is, if we constantly remain in our comfort zone, we never have the opportunity to grow. As the standards and environment around us change, we may find we are actually losing ground. One way to embrace challenge to meet our potential is to focus on using our strengths. It is about finding the right amount of challenge in the right area for you, at the right time. Initially, moving out of your comfort zone will feel uncomfortable. Over time, once you have mastered your new task or challenge, this will become your new comfort zone, moving you forward in life.

2. Desire

You need to choose a challenge that matches what you truly value in life, that is, what is most important to you. Ensuring your goal matches your

values, will provide a sense of meaning and purpose, bringing fulfilment and satisfaction to your journey and the outcome. Ask yourself: what will pursuing this goal bring to my life?

3. Fear

Achieving a challenge requires commitment. Committing to an outcome is associated with the risk of "failure". Success requires you to embrace the mindset that your achievement is as much about what you learn on the journey, as it is about the outcome. We may not achieve everything we desire, but we always have the opportunity to learn, grow and improve in the process. When you fully commit, you know you have given it your best shot, regardless of the outcome and you can recognise the benefits of your journey.

4. Negative Self Perceptions

We carry negative perceptions of ourselves based on past experience. You may believe you are not good at sports or that you lack concentration skills. These perceptions can steal our true potential from us when we believe they are absolute fact. Is it true that someone could possibly have absolutely no ability at every conceivable sport known to man? Or did they just buy in to the opinion of one sports coach, one parent, or even themselves, that they lacked expertise in one or two activities, thereby extending that belief through their whole life? We need to look for the evidence to the contrary to challenge our negative perceptions.

We also need to consider that it could have been just that particular sport, environment, coach or time in our lives. We only get to find out the truth about ourselves and our abilities if we remain open minded enough to challenge these negative perceptions.

A sense of achievement is an innate human need. To meet our full potential, we can only commit to a journey with a sense of purpose, which takes us outside our comfort zone. Breaking down the barriers of negative self perception will help alleviate the fear associated with the possibility of failure. Once we believe in ourselves, we know we can face any outcome. In doing this, we have the opportunity to lead a life of excitement and success. The right balance of stretch, desire, courage and confidence can have you asking yourself exactly how you are going to exceed your expectations for your exhilarating and fulfilling journey ahead. 💡

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