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KEEP ON PUSHING



Discipline Part II

Devon Harris

As we continue with our series on discipline, I'd like to discuss what I consider to be the first aspect of this master key to success - commitment. One dictionary defines commitment as (i) an agreement or pledge to do something, (ii) the state or an instance of being obligated or emotionally impelled. Jim Rhon, America's foremost business philosopher defines it as the practice of six or so positive habits daily. I see commitment as simply keeping the promises you make to yourself every single day. Whichever definition you choose, note that commitment requires definite action.

A man once approached Henry Ford and offered him the secret of success if Ford would agree to pay him \$10,000. Ford agreed, so the man gave him an envelope. Inside was a letter with two simple instructions.

1. Write down everything you need to do today
2. Do them

Ford smiled and gladly paid over the money because he recognized the truthfulness of the letter.

Commitment requires definite action

As you noticed in the story about Henry Ford, nowhere in the letter did it say write down everything you need to do and then try and do them. In fact, when it comes to success, there is no such thing as trying. You either do or you don't, and every time you try you are setting yourself up for failure. The minute you stop trying and start doing it's only a matter of time before you become successful. People who are committed don't dabble their fingers in the birdbath of life, they plunge in headfirst.

Neither did the letter say write down everything you need to do and then do them if you feel like it, do them if you're not too tired or do them if the conditions are just right. Anyone can work when they are well rested, are in high spirits and/or have everything going their way. Olympians - winners in life - are deeply committed to achieving their goals so they act despite the way they feel. They forge ahead despite the unfavorable circumstances they may find themselves in.

Commitment requires consistency

In order to make it to the Olympics the athlete must adhere to a regimen of daily workouts. Likewise, the student must study on a consistent basis and the sales person must make phone calls to prospective clients on a regular basis. Whatever it is that you need to do, it must be done whether or not you feel like doing it; and it must be done on a consistent basis. People often get frustrated over not hitting their goals. However, if they were to honestly evaluate their efforts they might recognize that they were sporadic at best. Seriously, how can you get frustrated over work you didn't do? Success, they say, is the progressive realization of a worthy ideal. It's the step-by-step process of achieving something that is worthwhile to you. Oftentimes the joy and exhilaration is not in reaching the final destination but in the realization that you are making progress. That only happens by doing a little bit at a time and getting better and better day-by-day.

Let's say your goal is to lose ten pounds within the next three months. This is definitely achievable. Your plan of action requires you to work out three times per week for 30 minutes; but instead, you work out every now and then. Why would you be surprised if you didn't lose the intended ten pounds at the end of three months? One of the keys to success is consistency. Lack of consistency results in failure. The successful person practices six or so positive habits EVERY DAY. The unsuccessful commits six or so errors in judgment daily. Any goal, no matter how monumental it may seem at first, is achievable if we work on it consistently, a little at a time. Remember, "Yard by yard it's hard. Inch by inch it's a cinch."

Commitment requires total immersion

Back in 1987 when our team was first assembled we practiced our push starts with a makeshift sled on wheels. For three hours every afternoon during the week and six hours every Saturday morning we would push back and forth on a flat concrete surface on the army base (www.jdfmil.org) in Kingston, Jamaica in the boiling sun. When we eventually traveled to cooler climates, there were many mornings where I woke up, saw the frost on the window, knew it was freezing outside, and just wanted to roll over in bed and go back to sleep and dream about playing volleyball on the beach in Jamaica. Instead, we got up. Fatigued bodies, aching muscles, strained hamstrings, facing hostile elements, lifting heavy sleds, all became inconsequential given our strong commitment.

Lake Placid, NY (www.lakeplacidny.com) should really be renamed Lake Frigid, for as I remember it back in January 1988 the average daily temperature was minus 25 degrees. One day we came out and it was a brisk minus forty. We were among the very few who dared to take to the track that day. Just imagine careening down an icy chute at 80 mph in minus 40 degree weather. Can you imagine what the wind chill was like? Can you feel the cold seeping through to your very core? We did.

In the pursuit of our goals we all face our Lake Placids, but when we are committed, we will show very little regard for our personal comfort. Opportunities often present themselves in the most uncomfortable and inconvenient of circumstances, but when we are committed to the goals we set, discomfort and inconvenience simply don't matter. I watch guys play football all the time in the freezing cold and wonder how they do it, but soon come to the conclusion that mentally and emotionally the weather isn't a factor. They have a Super Bowl to win and so they play full out. AND SO MUST YOU.

If you want to win in sports, business or life, you must play full out. Commitment equals total immersion. We were playing full out; racing in minus forty-degree weather. So, whether it is making your daily quota of sales calls, studying conscientiously or working out at the gym three times a week, when you stick to it even though you're exhausted or everything around you is going amiss, you will be playing full out. Always remember that extraordinary results require extraordinary efforts, while half hearted attempts will only leave you frustrated and defeated.

Keep On Pushing!!

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