



Discipline Part III

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We often hear stories of overnight successes - men and women who seemingly take a meteoric rise to fame, fortune and high achievement. Their stories, it would appear, are the stuff that fairy tales are made of. They wished it and, abracadabra, everything that they wanted to be, have, or do was manifested in their lives! I'm sure, however, that if we were to interview any of them they would tell you of the many years of toil, sacrifice and painstaking hard work it took for them to achieve their goals. They would tell you of the many hours of toiling in the back office, sweating in the gym, driving lonely miles between sales calls, and burning the midnight oil - cumulative effort that over time eventually paid off. Today we live in a microwave society. We've become accustomed to having everything at our fingertips. Fast food, quick cash and instant gratification are quickly becoming a way of life. More and more I've noticed that many of us seek the kind of success that is served up like the latest offering of a microwave dinner. The dilemma for those microwave dream chasers is that success continues to elude them and will continue to do so until they acknowledge that, just like it takes time to prepare a good meal, it takes time to achieve successful results. It does not necessarily have to be an inordinately long time, but it does take time. Through focus we are able to pay the price up front in the hard currency of time and effort.

Focus is paying the price

Highly disciplined people are focused. They understand that there is a price to be paid to live the life of their dreams and achieve their goals. They also understand that that price is represented by the intensity of their focus. They don't allow themselves to be caught up in the "What" - the things they need to do - but instead concentrate on the "Why" - the benefits they will derive from doing the "what." The Olympic athlete knows that total and complete fixation on the goal is absolutely necessary if he or she is going to have the opportunity to march in the Opening Ceremony or have a shot at making it to the medal podium. They do not focus on the "What" - the sore aching muscles, the hot sweaty gym, the numerous drills - they focus on the "Why" - the elation of marching in the opening ceremony, the jubilation of standing on the podium, the personal satisfaction of achievement through SUSTAINED effort.

John Naber, a famous US Olympian puts it this way, "The Olympian views each day of practice, each party unattended, each distraction withstood or temptation resisted as part of the price gladly paid to experience that wonderful feeling when the national anthem is played. The Olympics require a concrete investment of effort prior to the

weeks leading up to the actual competition. You can't cram for the Olympics during the three weeks leading to the opening ceremony the way you study for college midterms anymore than you can rescue a business relationship after months of neglect with one phone call. There is an understanding that the price must be paid for in advance."

I know this doesn't apply to you, but I am sure that there are people that you knew while in college who deferred studying for an exam until the night before. Maybe it became a habit for them and although they may have ended up with a degree, chances are they may not have received an education. They shortchanged themselves, failing to truly reap the full benefits of their college experience. How many times, due to a lack of focus, have you shortchanged yourself in life because you deferred the hard work that was necessary? How often have you chosen to focus on stress relieving activities, committing those six or so daily errors in judgment that we discussed in the last issue, instead of practicing those six or so goal achieving activities?

Focus is keeping track of your time and activities

In order to get to the Olympic Games the athlete knows that he or she must work out everyday. They have made that commitment and they have a tool that helps them to determine and track what it is that they need to do and when it should be done. It is called a training program and it tells them exactly what it is that they need to do, whether it is general conditioning work, weight training, running or doing whatever else is necessary. Not only does it tell them what to do, but it helps keep track of their progress towards their goals and focused on the commitment they have made to achieve them.

The successful person has a habit of doing the things that failures don't like to do. Although they don't necessarily like doing them either, because they are disciplined they do them anyway. When we are focused we become quite adept at managing ourselves; prioritizing our tasks so that in the end we are truly pursuing goal achieving activities.

In the Olympics of life, you have many tools available today, ranging from computers to palm pilots, to daily planners to a simple sheet of paper. Whichever one you chose, it will be of no use to you unless you write your training program in it. As I have heard it said, "Never start the day until it's done." In other words, plan your day the night before. Ideally plan your schedule at least a week in advance and, like the athlete who measures his or her progress by how fast they run, jump or throw, record and measure your progress based on the number of goal achieving tasks you are able to accomplish each week.

Focus is keeping track of your thoughts

As important as it is to focus on our actions, it is even more important to focus on our thoughts. A wise man once said thoughts are "things" and we tend to become that which we think about all day long. Psychologists have determined that the average person has between 20,000 and 60,000 thoughts everyday and each and every one of them either moves us towards or away from our goals. Thomas Fuller (1710-1790), an

African slave and mathematician, was quoted as saying "A strong will, a settled purpose and an invincible determination can accomplish almost anything and in this lies the distinction between great men and little men." When you allow yourself to focus on those kinds of thoughts, you start to act in a more empowering way and thus enjoy more positive results

As Norman Vincent Peal said "More gold has been mined from the thoughts of men than has ever been taken from the earth." Make a commitment from this point forward to take frequent inventory of your thoughts and, since you tend to move towards your dominant thoughts, make it a habit to only think of the things that you want instead of thinking of the things you don't want.

Over the next few weeks improve your level of discipline by becoming more focused. In the next issue we will discuss the final aspect of discipline - ATTITUDE.

Keep on Pushing!

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