

Creating Sticky Goals

By Marti Benjamin, MBA, Professional Certified Coach

'Tis the Season

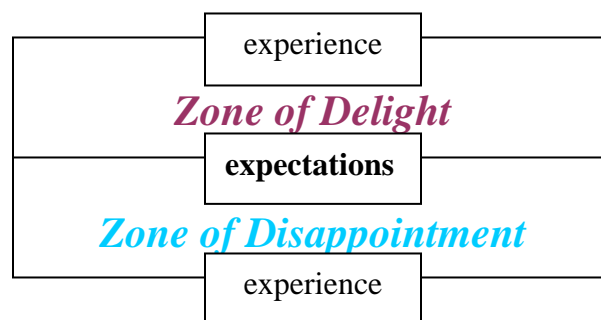
This is the time of year, as the new beginning of a New Year full of promise approaches, when our interest in goals and resolutions increases. And yet, so many of our well-intended goals and resolutions do not make it past the first page of the New Year calendar.

Why do so many of us have difficulty setting personal or business goals and sticking to them? It is certainly not because we want to fail or do not care about being healthy, breaking negative habits, correcting those minor flaws pointed out to us by our loved ones who are only trying to help us. When we said we would start exercising or eating less or getting up earlier or keep our desks clean, we felt it was the right thing to do and we probably even felt a little power surge in our body to affirm that we were on the right track. All good intentions and founded on strong motivation and yet, many times we are not successful in achieving what we set out to do.

Choose Your Goal Wisely

Maybe the problem is not with the level of resolve or even with knowing what it will take to succeed; maybe the problem is with the goal(s) you set. What if your goal was so compelling you could not stop smiling about it? Imagine being delighted with yourself and proud of your progress. What if your goal was so sticky in your mind that your efforts to achieve it just flowed effortlessly?

The difference between the dump heap of failed goals and the success scenario may well be the place from which you look when you set your goal. I envision it in this way.



All the Difference

When our experience falls short of our expectations, we dwell in the Zone of Disappointment. This is where we compare ourselves to others and hear all the “shoulds” that crowd in: “I should eat better,” “You should smile more,” “I should be nicer to my neighbor/kids/boss/co-workers.” Rather than giving us power to change, the Zone of Disappointment zaps our energy and pulls us into a downward spiral of comparison and frustration. What a waste of valuable energy that becomes! We feel exhausted and unable to move forward as we spin ever downward. In this Zone, we are focused on

correcting deficits, either real or imagined. (Honestly, they are mostly imagined but our imaginations are so powerful they feel very real.)

Above the midpoint—the line that marks our expectations—lays the Zone of Delight, where we are positively energized and enthusiastic when our experience exceeds our expectations. When in this zone, we choose goals that inspire us, rather than deflate us. In the Zone of Delight, we choose a rich experience over the dry goals of the opposite side of expectation. Rather than coming from the dreaded land of deficit, we embrace the perspective that we are strong, powerful and capable of achieving many remarkable things.

In getting to Delight, the focus shifts from what's wrong to what will be great. Rather than a goal of going to the gym three times a week, how different would it be to focus on the experience of enjoying being physically strong and flexible? You may still go to the gym three times a week, or you may choose to walk the dog, do yoga, dance, or play basketball with the kids.

Building Powerful Connection to Your Goal

Successful, compelling goals focus on how you want to feel, not what you will suffer through doing in order to achieve the outward measure of achieving that goal. The attention is on who you are being (i.e., strong and flexible), rather than what you are doing (i.e., going to the gym).

To tap into your personal Zone of Delight, ponder this question: **What is the richest experience I can imagine in this area of my life?** Once you have that picture in your mind, make it stick. Revel in that rich experience and let it expand. Talk about it and connect with it. And, see how it changes who you are.

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