

Staying Focused on Your Priorities

By Kathleen Barton, MBA

Jessica set a goal at the beginning of the year to eat right and exercise more. She joined a gym and started a new exercise program. Jessica was motivated to lose those excess pounds she had gained over the holidays. She exercised four times a week and made healthy eating choices. Now just eight weeks into the New Year she's lucky if she makes it to the gym once a week. Work keeps her so busy that she often eats on the run gobbling down donuts and coffee for breakfast and fast food for lunch. What happened to her motivation and determination to improve her health?

Jessica's story is not an uncommon one. Oftentimes we start out "gung ho" about our goals, but then lose momentum and motivation as we go along. How can you stay focused on your goals and priorities, whether they involve growing your business, strengthening your marriage or improving your health? Here are some tips to help you focus on your priorities.

- Visualize success

Visualize the desired end result. If, like Jessica, you want to lose weight, imagine yourself 20 pounds lighter. Imagine how good you'll look and feel in a bikini this summer. If you want to earn a promotion to management, imagine yourself as a manager of employees. Imagine yourself leading your team to success.

Visualization can be very powerful. Actor and comedian, Jim Carey, took it a step further. Years ago he wrote himself a check for ten million dollars for "services rendered", dated it and signed it. He kept it in his back pocket at all times. When he felt down and discouraged, he'd sit on the hills overlooking Hollywood and imagine himself as a famous actor. Then he'd pull the check out of his pocket and read it to remind him of his goal. A few years later Jim Carey landed the starring role in the movie, "The Mask" for over ten million dollars. The date was almost identical to the date he wrote on his check. Now that demonstrates the power of visualization!

- Review your goals

Review your goals on a regular basis. Ask yourself, "Is what I'm doing right now helping me to achieve my goals?" Always keep your goals in the forefront of your mind. Review your progress. What steps are you taking to achieve your goals? Give yourself a pat on the back for making progress.

- Work with an accountability partner or coach

If you know you need to report your progress to someone else, you're more likely to follow through. By having an "accountability partner" you can help keep each other on track. Choose someone who is also striving toward a goal. Meet once a week to check in. Share what you've accomplished this past week and what step(s) you plan to take this coming week to achieve your goal.

Better yet, hire a professional coach. Coaches are trained to help you succeed. They can not only help you stay accountable, but also help you see the bigger picture, overcome obstacles by exploring different ways of doing things, and give encouragement and motivation to succeed.

- Reward yourself

Choose a reward for attaining your goal. Be sure to choose a reward that is motivating to you and commensurate with the effort required to achieve the goal. What is rewarding to you? For one person it may be an elegant dinner out or a weekend getaway. For another it may be a shopping spree at Nordstrom's or a full-body massage. Choose something that you'll really look forward to, and it can increase your motivation to succeed.

By visualizing success, reviewing your goals, working with a partner or coach, and rewarding yourself, you'll find that you stay motivated and focused on your goals. Only by focusing on your goals will you actually attain them. So keep on keeping on!

*Kathleen Barton is a keynote speaker, workshop presenter, and life coach specializing in life purpose, career success, and work-life balance. She is the author of **Finding Your Purpose and Passion in Life** audio/workbook. Kathleen can be reached at www.YourLifeBalanceCoach.com.*