

Chapter 19. Anticipating and Overcoming Obstacles



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ANTICIPATING AND OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

WHAT CAN I DO WHEN THE GOING GETS TOUGH?

“Your circumstances may be uncongenial, but they shall not long remain so if you but perceive an Ideal and strive to reach it. You can not travel within and stand still without.”

James Allen

Plan for Obstacles *Before They Arrive*

“Your destiny is to fulfill those things upon which you focus most intently. So choose to keep your focus on what is truly magnificent, beautiful, uplifting and joyful. Your life is always moving toward something. Make it something that’s absolutely great.”

Ralph Marston

Earlier in the processes of this playbook, when you were constructing action plans, you wrote down possible obstacles you might encounter. Now is another good time to identify (but not focus on) obstacles that may get in the way of direct and rapid progress. These are things that may make it more difficult to complete the necessary action steps or potentially derail you altogether.

By anticipating obstacles, you are able to plan to proactively deal with them before they become a problem. You will also not be shocked and thrown off course if some appear that you were not able to specifically anticipate and prepare for.

One type of obstacle that is almost certain to come into play is distractions. They are numerous—daily matters of interest enticing us to watch an hour of TV not in our schedule, for example. They are sometimes subtle or “disguised,” which we realize only after the fact. Something may come along while we are constructing or executing our action plans that seem as if it might actually seem to enhance them.

Upon getting into it a ways, we see that actually it has taken us off our “definite chief aim,” as Napoleon Hill called it in *Think and Grow Rich*. (If you don’t own this classic, you can get it from www.UltimateDestinyUniversity.com/tagr.htm).

It takes constant discernment to properly weigh out what may be a “devilish distraction” vs. a “divine appointment.” So don’t beat yourself up, or stay frustrated too long if you find you’ve discerned poorly. Most important is continued belief, enthusiasm, and forward movement.

Another type of obstacle is current responsibilities, sometimes appearing as “the rut” we’re in. First, don’t curse the rut! Find ways to appreciate the good things about it and focus on those as you work to create greater freedom and expansion. If family obligations take a lot of your time and seem to be an obstacle to progress, two things are important. One is to step back and get perspective. Remember to enjoy the present—be in the moment with your children (or spouse, aging parents)—that’s one of the big ways they help us!

Another way to help family be a greater asset is to look from a fresh perspective at your work in relation to your family life. Are there ways of working that would allow you to incorporate them in your work life, ways they might really enjoy? If you have a place of work where it is at all possible to take them, do so—if for no other reason than to enhance their knowledge of you and how you spend your “away” time.

If you work from home, part or all the time, set and explain reasonable boundaries for work time and work space—giving family members acceptable ways to “interrupt” you, or check in on occasion. (Of course, very small children don’t understand such distinctions, so other solutions may be necessary.) Keep re-balancing between business focus and personal focus. You may be amazed to see that your kids may ask for less of your time if the time you do spend with them is totally focused on them, their interests and needs, etc., and not with a divided mind or heart.

Transforming Responsibilities into Assets

“Let us act on what we have, since we have not what we wish.”

Cardinal Newman

You may also be able to pull off a real coup, and actually incorporate your family, even small children, into some of what your job requires. This is more likely if your job, or an “Ultimate Destiny” project aside from your job, is your own business. Involving family in one’s own business or livelihood was almost a given in years past—whether it was a family farm, a trade to be learned, or life-supporting skills that parents would pass along to their children. These days it is often more possible than we tend to think and Howard has a couple of examples from his business coaching.

“Most of my clients were real estate agents and mortgage lenders. The training company I worked with encouraged them to cultivate a variety of contacts with their clients after the sale as a way of getting referrals. Sometimes I could convince an agent or lender, if

they had small or pre-teen children, to take one or more of the children along, or a spouse, when they did quick drop-by visits to their warmest clients who were usually non-active at the time.

The purpose of the visit was to re-connect or re-activate the client by bring a small item of value or interest as a gift to them—although I encouraged them not to leave one of their children! Rather than being a problem or distraction, most of the time the child or spouse was an enhancement to the visit. It was often fun for the children too, and certainly good training in how to build business while having fun. And a third benefit was that these clients were spending time with family while making more money or preparing to.”

“Another example, more common but still often overlooked by business owners or people in some types of sales is to have children help with certain clerical or other low-skill tasks. Actually, your children may be more skilled than you—or quickly trainable—in certain computer applications that may be very helpful to your business, such as promotion, organization, etc.

One specific task my clients’ children would often help with was addressing, folding, inserting and mailing monthly contact letters, newsletters, or materials of interest. Children from age 7 or 8 on up were very helpful while older ones often handled these tasks entirely. Even if the person decided to pay the going hourly wage for such work, it was well worth the investment because keeping it in the family helped! “

Now, let's take the same concept a step further: How much is your personal working time worth? Few people in business know this. Either they don't know how many hours they actually work, or they don't know what their net income is for a given period. If you are in business, you should be able to at least come up with a reasonable estimate. Let's say you made about \$75,000 last year, working an average of 50 hours a week, with two weeks off. Did you realize your working time is worth \$30 an hour? At \$100,000 and 40 hours a week, you are earning \$50 an hour.

Suppose you are at \$30/hour and you have clerical or other work that can be done by someone else, perhaps faster or better than you can do it. Because paperwork may be spread here and there throughout the day, or left to catch up on at the end of the week, month, or year, it may be taking more of your time than you realize. And even worse than taking your valuable time, these tasks may be draining your energy and positive mood, -- either because you don't like it, you worry about it, or you feel guilty for putting some of it off.

You probably know where we're going with this. Even if you have to pay as much as \$15 to \$20/hour to get someone trustworthy and appropriately skilled, if rightly managed, that investment will more than pay for itself. If you delegate the right work to your help, and use the extra time and sharper focus this will provide to do the things that you love to do and do best, your own hourly value will rise. For example, if your business depends on promotion, getting leads, finding the best advertising outlets and similar activities, you are probably the best

(or perhaps the only) one to do it. And I'd bet my bottom dollar that you are not putting as much time into it as you know you should.

Regarding hiring help and delegating some of your work to others, be aware of an encouragement and a caution. The encouragement: it rarely, if ever, seems the perfect time to bring in help, as far as feeling financially ready.

Do be sensible and wise in how you do it, but if you're always frazzled and "behind," and do have a good business flow, go for it! Start with just a few hours a week, if necessary. The caution: be sure you have a plan on how to use your freed-up time to bring in more business before you bring in help. Make a firm commitment to revise your habits and your schedule before the help arrives and continue to do so regularly afterward.

Putting First Things First

"Set priorities for your goals.... A major part of successful living lies in the ability to put first things first. Indeed, the reason most major goals are not achieved is that we spend our time doing second things first."

Robert J. McKain

For many commission-based sales jobs, the most valuable activity besides doing the actual sale and the direct lead-up to it, is generating leads. You can never have too many leads, especially if they are referred and interested clients or customers. If you have too many to personally serve them all, they are probably still worth a lot to you to pass along or to give to an intern or agent working under

you. So with an assistant keeping your schedule and office affairs moving smoother and largely without you, your \$30/hour time that once included all that office time, time lost to interruptions, etc., now becomes \$40 or \$50/hour time—as long as you discipline yourself to lay out the lead-generating work and do it!

An important principle to interject here, for everyone, regardless of their type of work, applies to home activities as well: “Work expands to fill the time available.” In other words, if we have a project that we decide to give ourselves all day to accomplish, it is likely to take us all day, even if it could have easily been done in 3 or 4 hours. Except for some naturally very fast, hard-driving people, who may need to purposely schedule less and slow down, it is generally best to schedule things fairly tightly, yet allow for breaks and possible adjustments if certain tasks prove to legitimately take longer than anticipated.

A good example of work expanding to fill the time available is filing taxes. If we say, “I’ve got until April 15 to file,” when do we usually file? Sometime late on the evening of April 15 right? Many people have been caught in that dreary cycle for years. However, it is possible to finally “get it” that from about Feb. 1 to April 1 of each year they spend more time dreading their taxes than it would actually take to work on them. You, too, can wise up and discover how great it is to get your tax returns done late in January or early February and drop the dread and procrastination. It may not be painless, but at least it’s over quickly.

If work will always expand to fill the time you make available for it, the corollary to this law is that there are always more than enough other activities to fill out any unused and unscheduled time. So you have to do careful “time blocking,” with high priority given to activities, done regularly, that you know will lead to bringing in more business. Whatever is of highest priority, do that thing first!

Notice, that we didn’t say, you should do whatever is most urgent, first. There will be time to do the urgent as well—after all, since you’ve labeled it urgent, it will keep tugging at you. However, do keep a running and up-to-date “to do” list. Without a “to do” list, some things may be overlooked and then become time-consuming problems. Again, in the interest of keeping a good balance—keeping the “wheel of life” round, so that it rolls—remember that many relationships, especially with immediate family, are both important (top priority) and urgent. Thus, they should be in your schedule along with high-priority business and activities that serve others.

We include the “serving others” category because for some people, such as those in social service or ministry work, or people doing heavy doses of volunteer work, family can become neglected due to the constant sense of urgency coming from the needs or demands of that service or ministry. Sometimes too much of the person’s self-worth is wrapped up in “the need to be needed,” and they have trouble just “being” with family or with themselves. A recommendation for anyone identifying with this situation: Experiment with enduring a bit of guilt

for what you're not doing and schedule some extra time just to be with your family, doing something fun and relaxing.

You will probably find that you return to your people-helping duties with greater energy and enthusiasm, thus better serving people, and alleviating any sense of guilt you may have had. Another reminder given often to those very giving, serving, loving people in business who would care for everyone but themselves is, "What will happen to all the people you feel responsible for if you burn yourself out (which is all too frequent), and none of them get any of your help?" We often let an inflated sense of our importance cloud our logic, and forget that we can do the most when we take the time necessary to nurture and rejuvenate ourselves. We are best for others and ourselves when we run, in a relaxed way, at peak efficiency—in balance, not on that razor's edge of over-exertion and too much of one thing.

Making It a Habit

"We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act but a habit."

Aristotle

One very helpful thing we can do for ourselves, in moving toward this kind of balanced, guilt-free, unhurried efficiency is to create systems for getting everything possible done as naturally as possible. This involves forming habits, but it goes beyond that.

An example that nearly everyone can relate to is brushing your teeth. You probably do that on at least a daily basis. How do you get

it done so consistently? “It’s a habit,” you may say, which indeed it is. But to make the habit work, you probably have some kind of system: a place you keep your brush at all times, a specific time you go to brush, even a fairly uniform length of time you do it.

You may have systems within your overall brushing system, such as a favorite type of brush or tooth paste you use to help make it appealing so you don’t skip too many times. You may have an order in which you do your upper and lower, left-side and right-side teeth, etc. These are to help make sure you get the job done, without having to think about it, freeing your mind for other decisions or planning.

One of the key points here about the value of systems is that making decisions takes time and mental energy. The fewer we have to make, the better. So we don’t want to be thinking, “Should I use the stiff or the medium brush today, or the mint or plain toothpaste?” We intuitively put most of that on automatic by developing our personal system.

We may take that a bit further with other tasks that are generally routine and necessary, such as driving via the quickest route to work, doing the laundry, etc. The trouble is we often don’t extend that system-creation to things that are less critical, at least in an immediate sense. In terms of our discussion here, that might include setting and reviewing goals on a regular basis, spending time meditating and connecting with our guidance, writing and using affirmations, or expressing our gratitude (to be discussed shortly).

So how can we make these critical, but seemingly more optional, activities automatic? First, we have to truly want to do them. For that, either we must believe they are highly valuable and will bring us what we want, including joy, fulfillment, etc., or we must at least be interested in finding out if the activity will work for us. In the latter case, we may be interested in experimenting for a while to see what the results may be. We brush our teeth, a task not very pleasant in itself, because we want the benefits of healthier teeth, fresher breath, etc. We don't doubt the results, so we just do it. We figure out the best times and method to help us remember and get it done quickly, and off we go.

The process is very similar for anything we want to be sure we do regularly and finish without a mental battle over whether to do it or not at a given time. Just decide on the best time and method, and play whatever reward games or other mental gymnastics needed to begin doing it consistently for 30 or 40 days. By insisting on total consistency for a shorter period of time, you have a good chance of getting a long-term habit formed that will then take less effort. It may even become a "positive addiction," which you try hard not to miss!

Just as with a tooth-brushing, there may be a need for systems *within* your system for doing a given thing. Suppose you want to meditate daily for 15 minutes. That's the broadest "system." Systems within that would be a regular time of day, a specific quiet place, a comfortable chair, an approach to the meditation (basic practices of

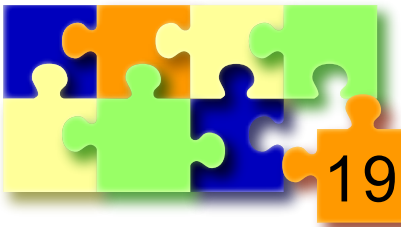
how you'll do it), perhaps some journaling afterward, and a simple chart or calendar to check off each time it's done.

Another aspect of a system to make sure something gets done might be to enroll an accountability partner. This may be your spouse, or another family member or a friend you ask to check with you on it. You might also tie the timing to another thing you always remember to do, do, such as your evening tooth brushing!

The Inspiration to Follow Through

If you have done a good job of identifying your strongest desires and have gotten in touch with dreams and things you are passionate about, following your action plans should be fairly easy. The effort you put in should seem effortless.

Yes, it will take some consistency, and diligence to create new behaviors and turn them into habits—to put them on auto-pilot. But if you are inspired from within, or motivated by the attitudes and perspectives you have chosen, it should take little outside motivation to get you going. By learning to quiet yourself and get in touch with the deeper parts of you, and respond to the inspiration from within, what you do will be effortless and full of joy! ♦



Chapter Summary

19 Anticipating and Overcoming Obstacles

Ultimate Destiny Success Puzzle

"Your circumstances may be uncongenial, but they shall not long remain so if you but perceive an Ideal and strive to reach it. You can not travel within and stand still without."

James Allen

Quiet yourself.

Get in touch with your inner being.

Respond to the inspiration from within and then what we do is effortless and Full of Joy!

"Your destiny is to fulfill those things upon which you focus most intently. So choose to keep your focus on what is truly magnificent, beautiful, uplifting and joyful. Your life is always moving toward something. Make it something that's absolutely great."

Ralph Marston

Have Fun!

Express Your Inner Child



*"Let us act on what we have, since we have not what we wish."
Cardinal Newman*

1. Identify (but don't focus on) obstacles you know may get in the way of direct and rapid progress.
2. Anticipate obstacles, and plan to proactively deal with them before they become a problem.
3. Don't beat yourself up, or stay frustrated too long. Most important is continued belief, enthusiasm, and forward movement.
4. Step back and get perspective. Remember to enjoy the present and be in the moment.
5. Look from a fresh perspective at your work in relation to your family life.
6. Set priorities for your goals by putting first things first.
7. Keep a running and up-to-date "To Do" list.
8. Be passionate and take interest in finding out what you love to do, are passionate about, and what brings you fulfillment.
9. Identify and develop the inspiration to follow through.
10. Get in touch with your dreams.
11. Create new behaviors and habits.

"We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act but a habit."

Aristotle

Realize More of Your Potential, Fulfill Your Life Purpose and Co-create Your Ultimate Destiny!