

Setting and achieving goals in career and life

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Here are a few important tips and considerations as per conventional wisdom and quotable quotes that can help our budding and enterprising youth in setting and accomplishing goals in their career and life. Seven steps required for the same are presented as under:

1. Set goals for yourself

First and foremost, rule of goal setting is to set your goals by yourself. Since goal setting is all about you, your life, your hopes, your dreams and your plans, others cannot set the goals for you whether they are your parents, friends, relatives, teachers, mentors or anyone else though they may help and guide you in doing the same. You cannot achieve your real goals if you are living someone else's dreams and expectations. Therefore, you are the one who'll have to undertake the task of setting and achieving your goals, no one else can do that for you. The goals that you set for yourselves should be SMART i.e., specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-bound. Tony Gaskins, an American motivational speaker, author and life coach has very well said, "If you do not build your own dreams, someone will hire you to help him build his dreams". Here we need to make a clear distinction between working for our institutions and working for individuals.

2. Write down your goals

It is believed that specifying your goals in writing stimulates the 'filtering' system of your brain, called the Reticular Activating System (RAS). When you write down your goals, the RAS begins to collect and store relevant information and then keeps sending inputs to the conscious part of your mind from time to time. It acts behind the scenes, making you more conscious of the available opportunities that would have otherwise gone unnoticed, thereby helping you to get oriented towards your goals. Therefore, you need to make sure that your goal is positive, action-oriented and as specific, clear, unambiguous and elaborate as possible.

3. Set deadlines for your goals

American writer and author of the bestseller "Studying Smart: time management for college students", Diana Scharf Hunt has said, "Goals are dreams with deadlines." Therefore, after you set your goals, you need to fix timelines and deadlines for achieving them well in time that will keep you steadfast and save you from a whole lot of distractions and deviations which may deter you from focussing on your goals. Though it is said that we should not count our chicken before the eggs are hatched, in case of goal setting we need to start counting our chicken even before they are hatched implying that we have to imagine ourselves accomplishing our goals and thereby feel the excitement of it which will keep us on track towards our goals. By setting a deadline, your subconscious mind gets activated to ensure the achievement of your goal within the prescribed timeframe. If your projections are realistic and based on some reasonable logic, then you will achieve your goals on their fixed timelines.

Diana Scharf in her quote above has laid emphasis on "dreams" that are important for touching new heights in one's career and life. As narrated by the former President of India APJ Abdul

Kalam, “dreams are not those which we see in our sleep but dreams are those which do not let us sleep”. These are the dreams for our future, our career and our ambition in life, that keep us going amid all odds and obstructions and make each day of our life meaningful and worth living. However, it needs to be understood that dreams alone are not enough. If you simply dream and sit on an idea and fail to act on your goals, then that is not your dream but your ‘wishful thinking’ or so-called ‘day-dreaming’. You need to give wings to your dreams, impart a tangible vision and a passion to your dreams, that alone will take you where you actually want to be in life. Nevertheless, foregone conclusion is that without dreams we merely exist, we do not live our life to its fullest and we are not here in this world merely to exist. We are here to live each day of our life with full vigour, purpose, objective and reason.

4. Devise an action plan for achieving your goals

Goals are the roadmaps that guide us and show us the way towards fulfilling our dreams. Every small step that we take towards accomplishment of our ultimate goal is a goal in itself and a milestone achieved. These milestones serve as checkpoints along the way that fully align with the final goal. As such merely setting one’s goals is not enough, we need to devise a concrete action plan on achieving them too. As Rabindra Nath Tagore has said, “You cannot cross a river simply by standing on the shore and staring at the water, you need to jump into it and swim across”. We need to continuously monitor and review our progress on achieving each milestone in our journey towards our final destination and once each milestone is achieved, we may reward ourselves with little joys and thus celebrate our incremental success. David Joseph Schwartz, an American motivational writer and coach, known for authoring “The Magic of Thinking Big” way back in 1959 has said, “Think little goals and expect little achievements; think big goals and win big success”. We should not choose easily attainable goals, because that way we may fail to realize and reach out to our full potential. Difficult but attainable goals make us strive hard and walk an extra mile towards them. While devising our action plan, we need to undertake a SWOC analysis of our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges towards achieving our goals and accordingly devise suitable strategies to bolster on our strengths, capitalize on our opportunities, overcome our weaknesses and take all challenges in our way head-on.

5. Compete with yourself

Once we set our goals and embark on our journey towards achieving them, we always need to be in competition with ourselves but not necessarily with others. Every day we need to make sincere efforts to make ourselves a better version and put our best foot forward without caring for winning or losing because with enough hard work we may either achieve our goals or else we may find something that is even more rewarding and, in the end, irrespective of the final outcome, we will realize that we have lived our life to our best. Unhealthy competition is a big distraction that leads to waste of time, energy, focus and resources and therefore we should stay away from it. We need to focus on ourselves, do what is best for us and do it to the best of our abilities. As per Michael Jerome Oher, a former American footballer who played in the National Football League for eight seasons, “We need to go after our goals like it’s nobody’s business”.

6. Maintaining balance in life

Maintaining balance in everything that we do in our life is very important. While pursuing our goals, we need to maintain a fine balance between hard work and entertainment, between

studies and sports, between books and social media, between self-study and coaching, between our work and our personal life, between ourselves and other important people in our lives. Success is nothing but the net outcome of this very balance. As per Denise Morrison, an American business executive who served as President and Chief Executive Officer of Campbell Soup Company from 2011 to 2018, “Life is a balancing act. You have multiple roles and goals, and you can do it all – just not all at once”. It is said that “all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy” and therefore we need not to tax and deprive ourselves of all other small joys in life for achieving our goals but we just need to maintain a fine balance and avoid unnecessary distractions and wastage of our precious time in unproductive activities.

7. Chase your goals and dreams like a tiger

You need to firmly resolve to take massive action towards the accomplishment of your goals. Hard work, persistence, perseverance and determination will keep you on the right track every time obstacles come to stand in your way. By continuing to take relentless action, you will develop the necessary discipline and momentum that will eventually help you reach the point where nothing can stop you from achieving your goals. You need to manage your negative emotions, stress and all kinds of anxieties well taking help of your parents, teachers and mentors. You need to be happy, cool and relaxed amid all circumstances and try to be productive on each passing day. You need to gird up your loins because no one else is going to do that for you. So be your own motivator without waiting for others to motivate you. Above all, do what you enjoy to do and enjoy doing what you choose to do. Do not get demotivated when you come across hurdles in your way. Successful person is the one who knows very well how to overcome hurdles by converting them into stepping stones. Last but not the least passion, perseverance and dedication are the keys to your success.

(Based on the excerpts from the speech delivered by the author online as Special Guest during the day-long counselling-cum-guidance programme organized by Sir Syed Educational Trust, North Kashmir at Govt. Higher Secondary School, Tanghdar on June 16, 2022. Author is Director, Centre for Career Planning and Counselling, University of Kashmir)