



BY RUSS JONES

What Do We Do When We Are Feeling Unsuccessful?

What We Don't Talk About

It seems that one's lack of success is rarely discussed. It is certainly a topic seldom discussed as opposed to the frequency of the media coverage and discussions around the success factors and habits of successful individuals. But, when we are feeling as though we have not achieved what we set out to accomplish, or are feeling as though our achievements personally and professionally don't measure up, those feelings certainly get our attention and deserve further exploration. But too often discussion about being unsuccessful, whether within the context of promotions, recognition or one's personal life are glossed over in favor of more palatable subjects.

Feeling Unsuccessful?

Often times the feeling of not being successful comes from an issue relative to context. Too often success becomes a comparative of one's social status, position of power or authority, or accumulation of wealth versus others in their social, community, or work worlds. That comparison is unfair. No matter what our level of success in any of these areas might be, we need to look at who the

competition really is. In our minds, the competition is often those who have achieved elite status; and while our achievements may put us in the 95th percentile in any category, which is very admirable, the competition as we see it is not those in the 95th percentile but the 5% above us. In the words of Warren Buffet, "I don't want a 405 foot boat just because someone else has a 400 foot boat."

What happens in the more severe cases when individuals feel unsuccessful? In extreme cases we cease to function and are rendered ineffective. We become exhausted because we have negative feelings about ourselves and those negative feelings drain energy.

There are many reasons why we might feel unsuccessful. A frequent occurrence these days is the discouraging phenomenon of "organizational plateau". Too few opportunities for promotion are being pursued by too many qualified people. As organizations become flatter, promotional opportunities decrease. More and more people are competing for fewer and fewer promotions. In effect, the pyramid is shrinking in height, resulting in the fact that only a very few

people ever reach the top. If only 1% reach the top, does that mean that 99% are failures?

Some Actions to Consider

What can a valued employee do when he or she reaches an advanced stage of burn-out or in the initial stages of feeling unsuccessful? One appropriate step may be to seek help from a professional therapist or counselor. Frequently this can be through your company's Employee Assistance Program (EAP). Barring that, especially if an individual is in the early stages, the following steps may be beneficial:

First, expand your self-image. Take into account the important roles you may have or may assume beyond just an executive. Such roles include parent, spouse, profession leader, community leader, church leader, etc. The rewards from fulfilling these roles can be very positive and energizing.

Second, change how you experience life. Take time to appreciate relationships. Explore and appreciate beauty, truth and excellence. Take the time to explore new interests and learn new things. All these add dimension to your

life. Likewise, consider your health. The Greek philosophers were wise when they recognized the three-fold interdependence of a healthy body, healthy mind and healthy spirit. How we feel physically has a direct impact on how we feel mentally and spiritually (emotionally). Most of us pay too little attention and devote too little time to getting and keeping a healthy body.

Third, and last, re-define success. Choose one of the definitions from our previous *Hospital News* article titled "How We Define Success" or better still, make up one that fits your needs. It is your needs that must be satisfied, and you must measure your needs by standards that are appropriate for you.

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