

The American Counseling Association's "Counseling Corner" Weekly Columns

Taking Action To Get What You Want From Life

from the American Counseling Association

Have you ever found yourself thinking that your life just has not worked out as you once planned? Many of us realize at some point that our past optimistic visions have had to surrender to reality.

Instead of feeling sorry about things that haven't happened or didn't work out, you might try some of these tips to get you closer to your dreams.

One starting point is put anger, blame or helplessness aside. Forget past hurts or abandonments. Unresolved anger and resentment uses up energy much better spent on building the life you desire.

Next, find your own voice. Often past relationships leave us unsure of ourselves or reluctant to express our feelings. You want to move to honest living and loving. Don't worry that speaking up will make you appear selfish or overbearing. You don't want to be controlling, simply honest and understood.

It also helps to learn to say "No" sometimes. Set limits and know when you've done enough. Avoid excessive demands on your time, talent and goodwill. Doing so creates room to say "yes" to things you really want to do, and avoids the resentment that comes with agreeing to things you really don't want to do.

Try identifying your personal strengths and interests, and then to put time into nourishing them. Rather than trying to be someone you're not, try enhancing who you really are.

Then take action, even if in just small steps. Make a resolution to take one daily action that moves you closer to your desires: make that initial phone call, rewrite your resume, organize your closet, clean out those old files. Too often we fail to take a first step in a new direction. Don't wait until you feel like doing it, just begin.

This is also a good time to create an overall balance in your life. If any one area of your life is consuming all or most of your time, look at small ways to make a shift. It might be work, social contacts, family demands or something else that keeps you from enjoying who you are. A healthy life means finding a balance in a variety of areas: physical, social, emotional, work/productivity, intellectual and spiritual.

A life that is too busy can easily crowd out moments of reflection which can help reconnect you with your core self and your reason for being.

Counseling Corner" is provided by the American Counseling Association. Comments and questions to ACAcornet@counseling.org or visit the ACA website at www.counseling.org.

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words: 394