

MOTIVATION APLENTY

Creating Your Best Life Begins with Bolstering Self-Esteem, Commitment & Discipline

BY SUSAN SMITH JONES, PHD ©

HOW MOTIVATED ARE YOU TO LIVE THE LIFE OF YOUR DREAMS?

Have you ever stopped to think about how unique, special, and marvelous you are? No one else in the world, now or in the past or in the future, is exactly like you. Never, from amongst all the seventy-six billion humans who have walked this planet since the beginning of time, has there been anyone exactly like you. As I thought about this concept recently, I thought about the approximately six billion people living on our planet. Then I figured out how long it would take to count all these people if they passed by me single file, one every second.



Imagine this. A clock ticks out the seconds while you sit in a rocking chair on your front porch. Without taking time out to stretch your legs, eat your meals, or rest your eyes, count each person passing by. How many weeks or months do you think it would take to count the world's population, one per second? You would have to sit there continuously for about 200 years! *By that time you would probably be off your rocker!*

This calculation of the world's population is an amazing lesson in how miraculous are life, living and relationships. Try to grasp the idea that for 200 years you would never find two people exactly

alike. You would never find two whose experiences had been the same or whose fingerprints were alike, or who thought, believed, felt, or talked alike.

And then to that, add the fact that you are the one special being created from one egg and one out of more than 50 million sperm that traveled an immense distance, overcame tremendous obstacles, and won a fierce and challenging competition at the moment of your conception. You are

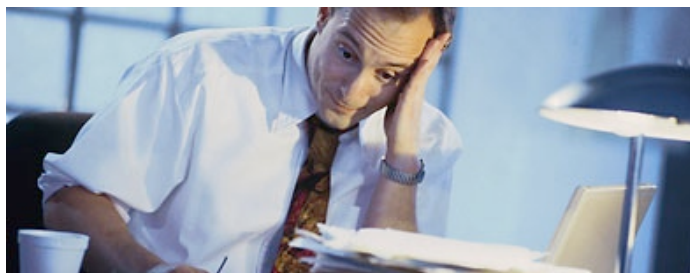


already a winner. What's more, you are composed of a body, mind, and spirit, and you already have everything you need to live up to your highest potential—to become master of your life. I think that calls for a celebration. You are amazing in who you are and what you can do with your life.

Here's an uplifting quote from Shakespeare's *Hamlet* that I'd like you to memorize and remind yourself of often: "What a piece of work is a man! How noble in reason! How infinite in faculty! In form, and moving, how express and admirable! In action, how like an angel! In apprehension, how like a god! The beauty of the world! The paragon of animals!"

Give Your Self-Esteem Wings and Fly

On a universal level, I believe the thing that people wrestle with most in their own lives is low self-esteem. That's why I'm addressing this topic first. When you embrace high self-esteem and live from an empowered presence, you will be



successful in all areas of your life. It's an inner change that needs to be made. Look at magazine ads, television commercials, or makeover reality shows; either by innuendo or by outright declaration, they are almost all

aimed at changing who we are, making us somehow better—smarter, more attractive, slimmer, richer, and more secure. You can spend millions of dollars changing your physical features, but that will do little good until you change your attitude about yourself and cultivate a relationship with yourself that incorporates your very own divinity. When you do that, chances are you'll be happy with the physical body that God provided for you, and you will establish a salutary health and fitness program to keep your body temple in peak functioning order.

We must *choose* to be kind and loving toward ourselves—all the time. Self-image is crucial here. Being vibrantly healthy, living fully, and celebrating life starts with celebrating ourselves. Whether we succeed or fail, enjoy our lives or struggle, depends largely

on our self-image. In fact, numerous studies have concluded that the view we have of ourselves is the key to taking control of our lives. Develop a loving, kind relationship, a warm friendship with yourself. Be your own best



friend. Out of that friendship all your other relationships form. Stop being so critical, judgmental, and unforgiving of yourself. When you are not feeling good about yourself, you feel separated from others and God. When you see yourself as a failure, you create a self-fulfilling prophecy. You attract to yourself that which you believe you deserve. Your negative thoughts and attitudes about yourself, whether they originated within yourself or others, convince you of your inability to succeed. If you feel you don't deserve success, prosperity, an enjoyable life, happy relationships, or joy and peace, you will settle for less than that to which you are entitled. When you feel unworthy, you cut yourself off from the fullness of life and create more stress. Put simply, *when you learn to love yourself and take loving care of yourself, love will come to you in the forms of happiness, health,*



success, prosperity, peace, joy, and balance.

Living in such a fast-paced world, constantly in a tizzy over one thing or another, conspires against inner peace. The intense pace and stress of our daily lives can very easily put our peace, joy, urbanity, and health—not to mention our spiritual lives—at risk. It’s easy to get caught up in the whirl of today’s hectic lifestyle—especially

if we’ve forgotten the truth of our potential. This leaves us less time for self-fulfillment. Deteriorating standards and values lead to low self-esteem and rob many of us of our motivation and dignity.

It’s Always an Inside Job

When we feel an inner emptiness, we are less inclined to make the difficult decisions of life and may be tempted to seek “easy” solutions to problems. This “quick fix” approach to life is understandable, since learning to live fully takes time and patience. But the fact is, we can, and must, slow things down if we ever hope to stay motivated and face our own large and small challenges with aplomb and equanimity, on terms that are our own, guided by our purest hearts. We can choose to experience aliveness and become masters of our lives, keeping in mind that this awakening is always an “inside job.”

In the 1960’s, Abraham Maslow wrote his famous book, *Toward a Psychology of Being*, which helped turn around the emphasis of psychology. Psychology was my undergraduate major at UCLA, and I was drawn to Maslow’s work. Unlike most psychologists of his day, he chose to study high-



functioning people—those living their highest potential—rather than people with problems. Maslow developed a psychology of being—not of striving, but arriving; not of trying to get someplace, but living fully. He found a common denominator among all his high-functioning subjects. They all had a vision and were committed to it, believed they had the power to master life, and were self-motivated and disciplined. Do you believe you have the power to master life? How committed, motivated, and disciplined are you to follow your highest vision and purest heart's desire?

Exemplify Commitment & Discipline

Breakthroughs and miracles occur when people are willing to live from their highest vision, commitment, and discipline. A commitment is the honoring of a decision. When you're committed, you allow nothing to deter you from reaching your goal. You are disciplined even when you are not feeling motivated. Making a commitment is being willing to put all of your resources on the line and taking responsibility for the outcome.

Commitment—to a project, a relationship, a health and fitness program, a yoga practice, a spiritual practice—can lend stability to the stressful, chaotic whirlwind of everyday life. Daily actions that reaffirm commitments bring a feeling of empowerment and increase self-esteem. *It's*



through our everyday behavior that we know what really counts. Our commitment must be woven through all of life—our thoughts, our emotions, our words, and our actions.

I know many people who say they are committed to being healthy, yet they continually let excuses get in the way. They say they'll have to wait until next Monday to exercise because they're just too busy now; they won't be able to eat

nutritious food for the next two weeks because of birthdays, anniversaries, and the church's bake sale coming up; or they're too stressed to make a major change right now. Commitment means that you get past your excuses and follow through on what you said you were going to do. Make your word count. Be responsible and accountable. How do you ever expect someone to make a commitment to you or think you will follow through on a commitment to them unless you first show a commitment to yourself and what you say? Commitment takes organization, follow-through, and a big dose of mettle. If you are ready for commitment, you will be committed. In other words, you will arrange your personal circumstances so that your lifestyle, in every way, supports your commitment. You will do the things you need to do to order your life, eliminate the nonessentials and the superfluous, and consciously focus on what is important.



I know that many people wish they felt more committed, wish they had something really big to commit to. These people do not realize that *you can't be committed to anything if you aren't committed to yourself*. By really committing to yourself, by following through on your convictions and decisions and allowing nothing to stand in the way of your becoming the master of your life, you will quell stress, experience more balance and joy, and gain tremendous power. But to be committed, you must choose to be

disciplined. Discipline is a choice. If we are to live our highest potential, we must practice self-discipline in every aspect of our lives. The mountain of soul-achievement and fulfillment cannot be scaled by anyone faint of heart or by anyone who lacks control of body, mind, and emotions.

Invite Discipline to Be Your Guiding Compass

Discipline, to me, means *the ability to carry out a resolution long after the mood or enthusiasm has left you*. It also means doing what you say you're going to do. Discipline brings freedom, joy, and balance to your life. A disciplined person is not at the whim or mercy of external circumstances but is in control of what he or she

thinks, feels, says, and does. An undisciplined person is lazy, undirected, and usually unhappy. Mind discipline creates body discipline. And from a disciplined body comes an exhilarated mind.

We cannot very well discipline ourselves in the great things of life unless, and until, we have learned and accepted that discipline must begin with the small things. It's been my experience that through discipline in small things, the greater tasks that once seemed difficult become easier. For example, it takes discipline to sit at my desk each day with my water and a sanguine and ebullient attitude to write this article or my many books. As the days go by, however, the writing becomes more enjoyable, and I see my vision of an article or book come to fruition.

We can't address the topic of discipline without also bringing in the power of conditioning. The way we have been conditioned to behave affects all areas of our lives. For example, choosing foods that support well-being requires repeated reinforcement of such choices. When you continually repeat a negative or unhealthy habit (such as always eating a high-fat ice cream treat every night for dessert immediately after a filling meal), it develops into a bad habit. *To eradicate your negative conditions, to break bad habits, and to strengthen your self-discipline, make a 21-day agreement with yourself.* Let's say that at mealtime you want to stop eating before you feel stuffed (overeating stresses every organ and cell in the body). Resolve to stick with your agreement every day for twenty-one days. If you skip a day, you must begin the twenty-one-day cycle again. Behavioral scientists say it takes 21 days to form a new habit or break an old



one. After 21 days, your mind and body stop resisting the change you're trying to make. Twenty-one days isn't a very long time. If you find your mind coming up with excuses, as it will, you can maintain discipline by reminding yourself that you have to continue for only 21 days.

I have been punctilious about incorporating this 21-day program into my life for thirty years. On the first day of each month, I make an agreement with myself to give up some unhealthy habit or to cultivate a new or upgraded positive pattern. In this way, I make twelve beneficial changes in my life each year.

Keeping your agreements with yourself boosts your motivation and self-esteem. I know how I feel when I say I'm going to do something and I don't follow through on it. I feel lousy. When I stay disciplined and do what I say I'm going to do, I feel empowered. I have great respect for people who keep their word. I lose respect for those who don't. I have a few friends who make a habit of saying they are going to do something, like start exercising regularly or eating more fresh fruits and vegetables. But when I check with them to see how they're progressing, I hear a litany of excuses.

Make your word count. Don't let your excuses get in the way. Focus on what you want in life. Visualize the end result and always assume the feelings of the wish fulfilled. Begin today; know with every fiber of your being that you deserve the best and can create your very best life. Stay motivated.

