

The Hidden Power of Goals

By Loretta M. Siani, Ph.D.

Make measurable progress in reasonable time.

Jim Rohn

One morning very early, before the sun was up, I rose and headed out with my little toy poodle Roxy, on one of my “meditation” walks. My purpose on this morning was twofold: one, get some exercise in for Roxy and me; and, to allow a deeper level of my mind to process an article I had been writing on the hidden power of goals. We had the whole morning in front of us, but we did have to be back home by ten a.m. for an appointment with a client.

With tape recorder in my pocket, dog treats for Roxy and a peanut butter and jelly sandwich for me, we padded north on Obispo Street. Together we enjoyed the hush of daybreak and the wafting perfume of gardenias. At Colorado Street we turned east. There the silver eye of the sun greeted us as it crested above the treetops burning through steamy gray clouds. A woodpecker tapped out morning revelry. Roxy and I synchronized our steps and headed into the sun towards the lagoon at the end of Colorado Street.

Colorado Street is lined with a variety of mature tropical trees. Most notable are the lofty date palms waving their pineapple haircuts high above. The houses along the way are by and large California bungalows, smartly painted in tawny earth tones. There’s a wonderful, outdoorsy feeling to these turn-of-the-century homes for which Long Beach is so famous. They were designed with big windows that open wide and covered verandas that families could use to enjoy the fresh ocean air.

About a quarter of a mile before you get to the lagoon there’s a little store called Ma and Pa’s Grocery. It’s on the corner of Roycroft and Colorado. Ma and Pa’s is a gem. It’s an old fashioned, corner store, with wooden floors and neighborly service. Inside the air is always rich with the aroma of home baked foods, like cookies and cakes or their famous homefried chicken. On this morning I popped in to get a cup of coffee “to go” while Roxy, waited dutifully for me at the door.

Coffee in hand, we left Ma and Pa’s and resumed our trek towards the Lagoon. Practicing “dog avoidance” we had to take various detours along the way but we were undaunted. Once at the Lagoon, we walked across the wooden wharf to the park on the other side. A lone fisherman nodded a silent good morning to us as we passed by. We took up our observation post at a lunch table, me on the bench and Roxy on the top of the table where she could get a good view. Together we sat in happy silence, save the sound of our breathing, and the occasional flapping and quacking of ducks fishing in the lagoon. Roxy gave them the beady eye as she waited with infinite patience for an opportunity that never came.

I was waiting with infinite patience too, but for a different kind of duck. I took out my tape recorder anticipating the visitation of inspiration. In its absence I sunk my teeth into the soft bread of my peanut butter and jelly sandwich and sipped my steaming coffee. Roxy found her consolation in a lamb jerky treat. We stayed there until it felt right to move on.

In time, we packed up and headed across the street to Marine Stadium Park. By now the silver eye of the day had turned to a yellow ball. It burned down on us as we walked across a patch of freshly cut grass. The aroma was therapeutic. It was the kind you wanted to breathe in down to the very bottom of your lungs and hold there for a very long time. We did so, grateful for this unexpected treat. Once again I took out my tape recorder. I talked about trees and grass and sunshine but not one word about goal setting.

At the end of the park across from marine stadium there's a long stretch of asphalt road that follows the marina all the way to Apian Way. It's not a through street so it makes for a nice place to walk or bicycle ride. Roxy and I took this route over to Second Street in Belmont Shore and then began the long trek back home. It was nine o'clock now, so I knew we had to pick up the pace in order to make it back by ten.

As we clipped back home I took out my tape recorder and talked of all the things I enjoyed about our walks. I talked about no matter how long they were neither of us ever seemed to tire. When we're walking we always do it with a sense of purpose. Our sense of purpose makes our walks meaningful and fun. We don't ever walk because we "should" walk or because someone else tells us to or because we're out to "prove" something. We just give it our all because we love it and it serves us well. We especially like the way we feel when we're finished – like we've accomplished something. We also like to walk because it makes us physically fit and this makes us happy -- and when we're happy other people in our lives are happy too. When we take care of ourselves and in this way we are actually serving others. And, we never berate ourselves if we don't accomplish what we set out to accomplish. We know we've made some progress and there's always another day.

As I talked into my recorder I realized that there were many parallels between our walks and the hidden power of goals. If you want to experience the true hidden power of goals then they have to be sort of like our walks. Here are six tips on the hidden power of goals that I spoke into my tape recorder on my meditation walk that day.

1. *Make sure your goals reflect what makes you happy in life.*

Your primary responsibility in this life is to be happy. Why? Every thinking person knows that happy people are more productive. They make better friends, better lovers, better business partners, better parents and better husbands and wives. Happy people are healthier, physically, emotionally and spiritually and make more of a contribution to society.

2. *Make sure your goals are yours and not someone else's.*

In order to be a happy person you must live your life for yourself and no one else. Make sure that you're not trying to satisfy someone else's idea of who you should be or what you should do. Also be careful that you are not trying to prove something to anyone else either. Motivation fueled by a need for approval or by anger or revenge comes from your ego. Its rewards are limited and short-lived. Happiness is a by-product of pursuing the things that matter most to you in life. It is a derivative of being true to your self and an attribute of doing what you love. Without this you will feel dispirited and out of humor with yourself. *With it* you will be filled with desire. And, desire and success are inseparable.

3. *Make sure your goals are connected to a purpose beyond your ego.*

Life is at its best when we live it with a sense of purpose beyond our ego. It doesn't really matter what our work is or whether we rank among the rich and famous. What matters most is that we are giving our all in some useful way to something we believe in. Then, when the going gets tuff, we get going all the more because we have a good reason.. As the great German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche said, *he who has a why can withstand any how.*

4. *Make sure your goals are flexible.*

Do what your doing until it feels right to change and do something else. Expect the unexpected along the way. It has been said that the road to success is always under construction. Nothing is set in stone. Don't put your shoulder to the rock. Go around it. In the end, John Lennon's adage that *life is what happens to us while we're making other plans*, is a good one to remember. Our future is always, ultimately, in God's hands. There will be many detours and surprises in life and we must be prepared to appreciate them and change directions without hesitation or self-condemnation.

5. *Make sure your goals have a deadline.*

It has also been said that a goal without a deadline is a dream. Deadlines fuel energy. They create a sense of urgency. That's because the unconscious mind likes the click of closure. It doesn't like loose ends hanging. It remains vigilant until the last piece of the puzzle is found. But remember, a deadline is used to fuel energy and give you something by which you can measure your progress. Do not let it overwhelm you. If it does, give yourself a little more slack. Apply Jim Rohn's adage: *Make measurable progress in reasonable time.*

6. *Go easy on yourself.*

The worst thing you can do is berate yourself or condemn yourself for not meeting your goals or taking longer than you think. Again, remember all you need do is, *make measurable progress in reasonable time.* Goal setting is meant to be inspirational not demoralizing. Don't fret about it that much. Goals are tools that should work *for* you not against you. If they fail to do this then they probably aren't right for you.

In the end, it isn't what you accomplish in life. It's the person you become along the way. Remember your overall mission is to be happy. Make this your task and you will have unlocked the hidden power of setting goals.

And that's what came to me to that morning. The entire walk had taken about three hours but we had done what we set out to do and we felt good about it. When we got home Roxy lapped up a whole bowl of water and I kicked off my shoes. My feet were sore. I hadn't noticed this while I was walking. I guess I was having too good of a time. I felt happy about what I had accomplished. At last I sat down at my computer and edited my article on the hidden power of goals. And Roxy? She fell asleep on the floor next to me.