

Is Procrastination Killing Your Dreams?

by Sandy Geroux

Do you have a dream that has been pushed to the back of your mind, unfulfilled? We all have desires, dreams, goals, hobbies – but too many of us put them off until “a better time.” We wait until “we retire”, until “the children grow up”, until we have “more time”, or until we “finish this project.”

Procrastination, as well as fear of trying new things, holds us back from accomplishing our goals... and there is no way we will be able to create WOWs for ourselves or anyone else if we're not enjoying a feeling of accomplishment and fulfillment in our own personal lives.

For example, my husband and I love to travel. Since there is a large difference in our ages, we are compelled to do all we can... *while* we can. Instead of waiting until we retire to travel, we have planned (and taken) a nice trip at least once a year, almost every year since we were married in 1982. This has led to exciting experiences and wonderful memories that we can look back on and enjoy, no matter what happens in the future.

We all know people who have waited until retirement to “enjoy life”, only to get to retirement age and have neither the money nor the health to do so.

Don't put off your dreams and desires until tomorrow. Enjoy life now! This does not mean you should throw yourself into debt, creating stress and worry in the here-and-now. But it does mean you need to focus on what is important to you and begin accomplishing those dreams and goals before it's too late. While you're at it, be sure to take in the simple pleasures of life, enjoying every moment with loved ones while they are still around.

With that in mind, here are some tips you can begin using now in order to enjoy life and loved ones to the fullest – now and in the future:

Make a list

- Write down your goals and dreams. The mere act of writing goals makes them more real. Have everyone in the family make a list of common family goals, as well as their individual goals. Keep the written goals in a prominent place (you could create a poster and tape it to the refrigerator), so you don't forget about them as you go through your daily life. Too often, we become so busy trying to get through our daily chores that we simply forget to focus on our bigger goals and dreams in life.
- Plan a “Family Review Day” once a month for everyone to assess their progress toward the goals. Make adjustments as necessary regarding timeframes and budgets, as well as actual stated goals (which may have changed since the last review). This prevents you from getting too far off track before making the modifications necessary to accomplish your goals. Make it a fun family event, with pizza and ice cream (or your favorite foods) as you review all family and individual goals together. This helps you encourage each other and help everyone stay accountable to their goals, while teaching children at a young age the value of setting and achieving goals.



NOTE: Be certain to reassure young children that these goals are not cast in stone, but may be changed as they grow and experience more of life.

Make a plan

- Plan out how you intend to accomplish your dreams. It is impossible to achieve a dream by simply stating the desire to accomplish it, without determining the action steps necessary to make it happen.
- Begin at the end and work backward through the steps, make a list of the action items necessary to accomplish that goal. This ensures that you don't forget a crucial step somewhere in the middle, which could result in unnecessary delays.
- Be sure to include deadlines and budgets (if necessary) for each step in the process. This helps you accomplish the goal in the planned timeframe and within your financial means.

Get things off your To Do List that really don't have to be done right now

- Many of us clutter up our lives with "chores" we don't really need to do, leaving no time for the things we'd really like to do. If we constantly find things to do that don't help us move closer to our dreams and values in life, we often find ourselves in the unfortunate position of going through the daily motions and "chores" in life without making any progress toward our dreams.

Plan fun activities you can do now

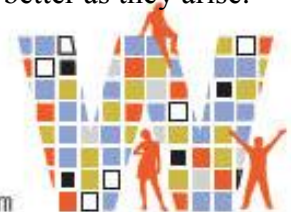
- Make specific appointments in your calendar for these activities. If you don't schedule them as appointments, you'll never find time to do them! This includes "dates" with your significant other, family events and get-togethers with friends. At one point, my husband and I realized that we hadn't seen some good friends for almost a year. When we finally got together with them, we all pulled out our appointment books and scheduled our next "date" before saying good-bye at the end of the evening. That way, if something occurred in the meantime to force us to cancel, we had to contact each other to reschedule, preventing us from letting another year go by without seeing each other! Pretty soon, all our friends were doing this because it helped everyone keep in touch.
- Keep only one calendar for all your activities. Or, at the very least, keep one master planner that is consulted for all family and personal activities outside of the work environment. Before committing to a personal activity, each family member must consult the master planner to be sure there is no conflict with other previously scheduled activities requiring the presence of that person. This will reduce the stress of double-booking, over-committing and priority conflicts. Also, seeing appointments in black and white helps you cut back when necessary in order to avoid burn-out.

Stop putting everyone else ahead of YOU all the time

- Many people, especially in the case of women, are nurturers who often take this to extremes as we continue to subscribe to the belief that everyone else's needs are more important than our own. While our children's needs are often more urgent in nature at any given time, we must be careful not to burn ourselves out by forgetting that all human beings occasionally need a little "down-time". Schedule an hour or two each week for yourself –read a book, go shopping, take a walk, exercise, or participate in a hobby. If you take care of your own mental and physical health, your stress level will be reduced, enabling you to handle your family issues and "crises" much better as they arise.

Workplace: Where employees have to go because they make a paycheck

WOWplace: Where people love to go because they make a difference



Stop perpetuating the “constant motion” syndrome

- We must be very careful regarding what we consider our children’s “needs” vs. their desires (or our own desires for them). Many of us fill up every second of our children’s calendars (and consequently our own) without giving rise to the thought that there is no need to fill every second of every day with so much busy-ness! Do our children really need to take music and voice lessons, as well as tap, jazz and ballet, and play soccer in the fall, basketball in the winter and baseball in the spring, as well as enrolling in karate or judo – all at once? When we add this to homework, studying for tests, dances and other planned school or church activities, school and community plays, band and chorus concerts, holidays, and just-plain-playing with their friends, we realize we are inadvertently creating a generation of stressed-out children who have no concept of relaxation or a normal pace. I can’t believe the number of children I’ve seen who are enrolled in so many activities that no one in the family has time to take a breath! Find out where your child’s interests *really* lie, limit the number of activities they are allowed do at one time, and enable them to make adult-like choices (no matter how old they are) to select the ones that are most important to them at that time.

The benefits of this action are numerous: your children will feel a tremendous sense of accomplishment in being able to choose their own activities; limits will be imposed regarding time away from the family, not to mention the family budget; and children will learn at an early age that life involves choices – they simply cannot have everything they want at the precise moment they want it. Finally, as a result, your time demands and subsequent stress level will decrease, leaving you with more time to spend with your family and more energy and patience to make the experience enjoyable!

Please use these tips to help you plan for more fun and enjoyment in your life, now and in the future. Stop putting off until tomorrow the things you want most to do today. And remember these wise words:

The best way to get something done...is to begin
- Anonymous Quote

With over 27 years of speaking and training experience, national speaker and author Sandy Geroux delivers motivational and educational programs to help "Turn Your Workplace Into a WOWplace™", helping organizations create WOW experiences for customers and employees alike by fostering a culture of trust, compassion and commitment to values, service and respect.

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