

INVISIBLE CONVERSATIONS

What we say without Speaking



Marlene Green

“Some people think they are concentrating when they’re merely worrying”

~Bobby Jones, Golf Legend

FOCUS

Focus is the ability to stay directed on a path and work towards a vision that you care about and are committed to fulfill.

When you go through life without any set goals in mind, you wake up day after day with no sense of drive or accomplishment. Whatever happens is the luck of the draw – you are totally at the mercy of life and what it puts on your path. However, when you have a dream, a clear plan, and smaller goals to achieve that dream along the way, you can then begin to focus all your energy on achieving your dream and accomplishing what you are most passionate about. This will, without a doubt, bring a great sense of meaning and accomplishment to your life.

Many people live their lives without being aware that they can choose the life they want to lead. This realization, while simple in nature has changed the lives of millions. One day, after following the path that was laid in front of them, they realize that their heart, soul, and mind are not fulfilled; that they are living a life without color, passion, or joy. They wake up and say, “It’s time to take a risk and try something new.” And they go for it, and from that day on, their lives are changed forever.

It is valuable to know yourself and realize who you are and what you really care about. Sometimes you get so busy with everything around you that you lose perspective on what you really love. Before going any further, take a moment to close your eyes and shut out everything around you, and think about the following questions:

What do you truly love? What are your life’s dreams? How do you plan to achieve them?

A big step to achieving your goals is to have a clear plan. Writing it down will make it a lot easier to follow. It will help you stay focused and not yield to the inner or outer voices that are filled with worries, fears, and doubts.

Take out a notepad, and write something next to each of the above questions. Visualize your answers as clearly as you can. Your goals can be anything from working out twice a week, beginning a healthy diet, getting a new client, developing a strategy for your company, or simply taking a risk and seeing where it leads you. What's important is to just choose one and go for it.

Often times, the abundance of ideas in your head seem so overwhelming that you end up doing nothing. There are so many choices and so many directions to go that you find yourself unable to choose any single one of them. You may also have the belief that if you choose to focus on one goal, then you'll be neglecting other things you care about or that you'll make the wrong choice and end up spending a lot of time and energy on something you'll later regret.

The first step in overcoming this situation is to challenge that belief. If you spend your whole life afraid to choose something in fear of neglecting other things you care about or not making the right choice, your whole life will pass by and you'll end up missing many wonderful opportunities.

From the list of goals you created, choose one and just focus on it completely for a couple of minutes. Forget about everything else for a moment.

Would accomplishing this goal be meaningful to you? Will it bring you happiness?

If so, make this your weekly goal. Focus on it during the week, work on it during the day, enjoy the process, and see what happens! Results will come if you begin to focus. Sometimes writing your weekly goal in a place you'll constantly see will help remind you in case you forget or lose focus. For some people, writing in a journal works really well. Having a journal also allows you to track your progress and remind yourself of what is really meaningful to you.

While you begin to work on your goals, remember it is important to get into the habit of choosing one goal and sticking to it until you achieve an outcome. If you don't have goals and if you don't

have anything to focus on, life will take over. You will not be in the driver's seat of life. You'll be no more than a passenger heading in an unknown direction. You can't always stop what comes your way, but you can control how you handle it.

Try to let go of those thoughts or *invisible conversations* in your head that keep you from achieving what you want to do in life. If you hold on to those negative thoughts, tomorrow will be the same. You can only create a new future by adopting a new way of doing things. If you start with a clean slate today, you can create a different future for tomorrow. If you just keep holding on to the past you'll just carry the same problems forward and you'll be living the same life over and over again.

If you start creating goals based on what you care about, you work to achieve them, and you stay focused, you will be surprised at what magic is unleashed in you and will begin to learn what makes you unique and what lights you up inside.

It is natural that when you first start working on your goals, you might encounter some resistance. It's hard for people to break their habits, or change things they've done repeatedly over the years. When you start working on your goal, be present with it and be aware of the resistance you may encounter. When your *invisible conversations* **the little voice in your head**, tells you that you can't do it, you're not good enough, or it's too hard, just acknowledge it, thank it for sharing, and move on. Remember, stay with your goal. Always be actively pursuing it. If you become too passive, the obstacles will find it easier to stop you from achieving your goals.

Reaction is one of the biggest challenges in staying focused on your goals. It is the easiest way to stray from being present. Reaction could manifest itself in the form of worry or fear. Choosing your goal, and staying focused and committed takes practice. Remember, identify your negative *invisible conversations*, acknowledge them, and continue on. I know you can do it.

I recently worked with a client who had a hard time focusing. Choosing one thing made her feel like she was choosing favorites and neglecting all the other goals she cared about. Her day spun

out of control and she accomplished less. Most of us can identify with this situation. “Should I pursue this, or work on that? Should I start this, or finish that?” When you go into this mode, you only waste time being indecisive and don’t accomplish much.

I worked with my client until we came up with a plan of action. The first step was to prioritize all her “cares.” The next step was to make promises against her cares with a timeline as well as set her conditions of satisfaction. Every day she focused on her plan until the practice became part of her life. To this day, she is thriving because of that simple realization that she needed to make promises to work on her goals, set dates for them, and establish conditions of satisfaction.

The lesson here is that choosing one goal does not mean you are ignoring all your other goals. It just means that you are prioritizing and learning to focus on your goals to achieve success.

Before you go any further, take some more time to understand how to tackle obstacles or resistance that you’ll meet along the way. Most people are good at setting goals and sketching a quick plan of how to achieve them. However, one of the biggest reasons people don’t achieve what they set out to do is because they don’t account or prepare for detours they may find along the way. Encountering an unplanned detour will most likely cause you to react, and this will take you off your game. For instance, take something you frequently experience – you’re happily driving to work when all of a sudden you see that the road ahead is closed or completely jammed with traffic. You immediately turn to reaction. You get upset, yell at the traffic, or even get into a bad mood from it. Why? Because you’ve been detoured from your usual route which forces you to step out of your comfort zone and find a different and often unfamiliar way. The same is true with achieving your goals. Almost always, there will be detours from your ideal plan. This may cause you to react very quickly and then focus on what you’re reacting to instead of your goal.

Start noticing when you’re in reaction. I call it “pushing your buttons” or “grabbing you.” You’re working on what you care about, and from nowhere a curve ball comes directly at you and you react. The easiest way to know if you’re in reaction is by

identifying the physical signs when reaction sets in. A natural physical reaction is to tense up. When this happens, pause what you're doing and work on bringing yourself back to the present. Identify what caused you to react. **Don't let your *invisible conversation* take over.** Think for a few minutes about your current situation with your goal in mind, and try to come up with a different route or way of getting there. Instead of seeing this as a negative obstacle, think of it as an interesting challenge. Get creative! Who knows, you might end up finding a route that's even better than the one you planned!

You often miss a lot of opportunities when you overreact to obstacles. Even worse, when you react, you often cause others to react around you. This is because reacting to reaction is very common among people. For instance, one of your friends reacts to something you did and maybe shouts at you for something that wasn't your fault. As a result, you automatically start reacting to their reaction and scream back at them. Then, before you know it, both of you are screaming at each other when it was all just a big misunderstanding. The best thing you can do when you're exposed to reaction either from yourself or someone else is to try to stop as soon as you can. Reaction will make you do things you later regret. Trust me, it's not worth it. This is the time to take a deep breath and ask, "Why am I reacting? STOP!" Pause what you're doing, take a deep breath, and go back to being present. Stay focused on the goal.

I work with Principals of schools. One of the main things we focus on is becoming aware of how their personal lives can have an impact at work. If they had a fight with their spouse in the morning, for example, they might have gone to the school in reaction mode and this would have carried on as a chain reaction: *My husband was angry with me, so I acted angry at the teachers. Then the teachers acted angry with the students, so the students go home sad and may be unmotivated to come back to school the next day.* If that principal had been focused on identifying when she switched into reaction mode, had paused, and then come back to a present or balanced state, many people that day would have been affected differently.

Worry is another obstacle you might encounter along the way. It is one of the *invisible conversations* that stop you from focusing

on what's important. It can be a very strong and negative emotion accompanied by fear, anxiety, and trouble. Worry usually makes your mind wander into the past or the future, so it detracts you from staying present. It can completely take you off your game. There is nothing productive about worry. When you're worried and upset and things are bothering you, you're off focus.

Remember you're in control of yourself.

When you become worried, just like reaction, pause and ask yourself if your worry is helping you in any way or if it is just an unjustifiable fear that you can overcome.

When you make a commitment to pursuing a dream or goal, your *invisible conversations* may tell you that *you can't do it, that it's not working, or that you're not good enough*. Don't listen to it! It wants to cause you to worry and be negative. Stop! Look at what you care about, focus, and be in action towards your 'cares' and not your reaction.

Be in charge of your *invisible conversations*. Know which ones support you and which ones stop you.

I invite you to take this opportunity to practice being focused and overcoming worry and reaction. Make an effort to really look at what's important to you. I promise you, it will make a huge difference in your life.

Putting it into practice

- Take a few minutes to write down everything you care about. Keep adding to that list whenever you think of something new. From that list, choose one thing that stands out. This will be your daily goal for the next few weeks.
- Start with 10 minutes every day and just focus on your breathing while you visualize your goal. Once you see what you want to achieve clearly, start visualizing how you're going to get there. This could be anything from a plan, a strategy, or simply smaller checkpoints along the way. As the week goes on, try to increase this time until your goal and your plan to achieve this goal become very clear in your mind.

- Share your idea with your trusted community. Share with them what your goal is and how committed you are to fulfilling this goal. You'll be surprised how many good things come from sharing. You might even discover that the people you find dearest have very similar goals!
- If you find obstacles along the way such as worries or reactions, practice going through the technique we covered in this chapter. Stop what you're doing, pause, take a few deep breaths, remind yourself of your goal, and try to find a new and, if possible, creative way of getting around the obstacle.
- Lastly, track your progress in a notebook or sheet of paper. You'll be proud of how much you accomplish and it'll give you something to look forward to each day!
- If you achieve your goal, build on that confidence and try tackling even bigger goals. When you feel ready, go for your dream!

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