

Stuart Showalter  
Child Custody Life Coaching

## Monthly Motivation 12 - Giving Up Prematurely

I rail against the endorsement of New Year's Resolutions as they are as arbitrary as the setting of the day itself. From a purely cosmological perspective the new year should begin on the winter solstice. Many cultures and early civilizations marked a three day period coinciding with the winter solstice as the termination of one year, the passing and then the rebirth. Regardless of the logical deficiencies I realize that New Year's Day has become a set point for marking the beginning of a new self or a commitment to betterment. This may be a ritual in which you have participated. Therefore, if you have made the commitment I feel it incumbent to ensure success.

There are two great barriers to fulfillment of resolutions. The first, which at this point must be overlooked, is that the initiation is arbitrary. Success in the self-improvement domain is much more likely when the motivation is organic rather than imposed by peers or tradition. The second, which is the focus here, is perseverance – or lack thereof.

Howard Carter didn't stumble into the Egyptian desert and discover King Tutankhamen's tomb by accident. He searched for six seasons until, when on the cusp of abandoning the effort, the young pharaoh's tomb was discovered. In his autobiography Carter wrote, "we had almost made up our minds that we were beaten, and were planning to leave the Valley and try our luck elsewhere; and then – hardly had we set hoe to ground in our last despairing effort than we made a discovery that far exceeded our wildest dreams." I want for you to also exceed your wildest dreams.

A common theme for resolutions centers on fitness be it weight loss, measurements of physique or performance, or diet. Whatever your particular resolution make sure it is for you and that your basis of comparison is you. That is, don't use a measure such as I want to be able to also run a 5-minute mile. Instead set a goal to improve each month by running a mile at a set heart rate – somewhere near max, say 90%. As your fitness improves your body will become more efficient which will produce a corresponding increase in speed through exerting the same effort.

Weight loss can be done the same way. Determine a realistic goal. It doesn't necessarily have to be a number. Be wary that numbers can create a floor or a ceiling. A few years ago I set a goal of getting back to my early adulthood weight, post cycling, of 135 pounds. Upon reaching that I decided for high school graduation weight – 125. I got down to 124 [120 while fasting] but by mid-winter was up to 144. I planned to and did drop back to around 130 by early summer. For me, as with many elite athletes, it is easily accomplished. It is that perseverance, the will power, the commitment to never give up that propels us to the top of our game.

When I planned to get back to racing bicycles I set a date of three years of riding before

I would try racing. I knew I would need to get in at least 10,000 miles of conditioning before I would be fit to race. A realistic goal therefore seemed to be three years. During those three years my fitness did not improve in a linear manner. There were ups and downs which is the usual outcome so don't measure obsessively. Whatever your goal, measure infrequently. Once a month or less may be a reasonable regular time setting. Or evaluate based on some other objective measure such as when a work project is completed if your job is divided in that manner. Strive to perform consistently but measure infrequently. Maintaining strict adherence to a plan only to see a slight regression between days 231 and 235 and be psychologically disabling. This is what sets many people into a negative feedback loop. "All that effort and my performance went down. Why am I even trying?" Which leads one to be less motivated to put forth the effort which leads to further decline while still under the impression that the same effort is being put forth.

Keep your goals in perspective. Whatever you are seeking to accomplish keep in mind the period of time it took to get to your starting state. You likely didn't reach the bottom in a few months or a year – don't expect to reach the top quickly either. Much effort has been wasted by giving up prematurely. Even when in the depths of despair cling to the long-term goal and exceed your wildest dreams.

Stuart Showalter  
Child Custody Life Coaching  
P.O. Box 374  
Lebanon, IN 46052-0374  
Stuart@StuartShowalter.com