Aspiration

Making good choices is a crucial part of accomplishing what you desire. But commitment may be the most important part of success in anything. Although one starts an endeavor by making a choice to follow a certain direction or take a particular series of actions towards a goal, when one commits wholeheartedly to refuse to yield to outside forces, or even to inner ones, that's when the magic begins! A very famous quote by W. H. Murray of the Scottish Himalayan Expedition agrees:

"Until one is committed, there is hesitancy, the chance to draw back, always ineffectiveness. Concerning all acts of initiative (and creation) there is one elementary truth, the ignorance of which kills countless ideas and splendid plans: that the moment one definitely commits oneself, then Providence moves too. All sorts of things occur to help one that would never otherwise have occurred. A whole stream of events issues from the decision, raising in one's favor all manner of unforeseen incidents and meetings and material assistance, which no man could have dreamed would have come his way. I have learned a deep respect for one of Goethe's couplets:

Whatever you can do, or dream you can, begin it.

Boldness has genius, power, and magic in it. "

-- W.H. Murray, The Scottish Himalayan Expedition

That last bit from Goethe seriously amplifies on the idea, but the key word in that couplet is Boldness. What a concept, boldness! Can a person make a commitment to themselves without it? I've always said that the secret of my own successes was my audacity, but it was really boldness I was referring to. But another great word I learned from master teachers from Tibet is the word aspiration. It is a very healthy replacement for the word 'goals,' for a very subtle reason.

In Tibetan Buddhism as in all other flavors of Buddhism and many other Eastern philosophies, one of the subjects of study is the cause of suffering. An often recommended remedy for many causes of suffering is to remain in the present. The past is over, our memories of it are always clouded or biased in some way, and the future is a fantasy, and cannot have all the delicate detail and substance of the present time, because, for one thing, it doesn't even exist yet! So, all of its existence is contained in our mind, and the human mind, for all its amazing power, cannot comprehend the awesome truth of any present moment, let alone project a future one with any accuracy. So, it is a good thing to admit one's inability to do any kind of very good job of projecting futures, and that includes the setting of goals. This may surprise you that I'm saying that after the above quotations. But let me ask you: if you set a goal and do not attain it in all the idealized splendor which you had preordained - or worse, utterly fail - then you are likely to project your own role in that as being a failure, perhaps even a dismal failure. This notion permeates much of our emotional projection of the future. It is figured in as a painful possibility, and pain is something to be avoided. So, no matter how much you may commit or 'emotionally prepare' yourself, you are still potentially setting yourself up for a disaster! (Our primitive, self-protective emotional brain cannot help but 'foresee' such dangers, especially after a childhood filled with warnings and taboos!) This is the same mind that can make a mess out of recollection, of course, so can it be trusted with carrying something as important to us as our goals? I think not!

By staying in the present moment, we can acknowledge our emotional mind's projections and poor interpretations of past events (even just moments past), but time does not stand still. Propelled forward by aspirations, we become mindful of opportunities we may have otherwise missed. Propelled forward by aspirations, we live with a sense of purpose, and yes, boldness. *Propelled forward by aspirations, the actual outcome does not really matter, for we remain caught up in the action of being.* Not merely existing - being! *And caught up in this way, we experience happiness and fulfillment constantly.* I hope you are getting the idea!

We are constantly being told to set goals for ourselves, but those telling us this do not understand the nature of goals as being mere fantasies which could never be fulfilled utterly! We are consequently being ill-advised to always put our happiness on hold, and to invest all of our being into fulfilling a goal, and *it is only once that goal has been satisfied that we are to 'celebrate.*' And after the goal is accomplished, what then? Emptiness. A “let down”. That which drove us forward is gone! So, we are expected to derive from that success another goal, 'to build upon our successes', *and so it never ends so that we can simply be happy in any present moment.* No thanks!

I ask that you abandon all your goals, and convert them into aspirations. *Aspirations exist in the present moment, and every moment that passes which contains aspirations is a moment one can celebrate - right away!* We build upon successes this way with a constant, endless flurry of successes. With an aspiration behind me, I do not merely have success every few days, or every week, or even every hour, or minute, or second. *Instead, my success is built of a succession of nanoseconds of success!* And that, my friend, is a lot of success, and a lot of “cause to celebrate.”

**Be bold, commit to your aspirations born of choices, and experience constant happiness, even in times of tragedy and sorrow, for every nanosecond of your existence will be backed by purpose. By aspirations.**

What do you aspire to? Give me details. If these details begin to sound like goals, convert them.

May your aspirations be wondrous, and great, and boldly hold them in your mind-stream, and enjoy the sensation of ever moving forward - forever onwards!