

The Hard Part Is Getting Started

Dr. Ron Kaiser January 18, 2014 No Comments

The Hard Part Is Getting Started (Transcription)

Welcome to the December 2014 Audio podcast from the mental health gym. This is Dr. Ron Kaiser and today I'm going to be talking about a subject that a lot of you have encountered, namely, getting started on projects or activities or the pursuit of certain types of goals. The name of the podcast is.

The Hard Part Is getting Started. In goal achieving psychotherapy the keyword is goal. I always think it's important to think of any project, any campaign, any pursuit of an objective like a new job, or a new relationship or buying a house or buying a new sweater or whatever, think of it terms of a goal, you are setting out to achieve a goal and some goals are easier to achieve than others, some are less prone to resistance than others but everything that we set out to do is a goal and some people have more difficulty in achieving their goals than others because they have difficulty getting started.

Whenever I decide that a challenge is worth pursuing and whether that is writing a new blog or starting a new book or creating a new course or proposing a new idea to my department chairman at the University or initiating a discussion with somebody that I'm not really looking forward to discussing it with, I deliberately use the goal analogy as the important part of it because I think that the goal that I'm trying to achieve is much the same as somebody who is on the athletic field and is trying to score a goal whether it be in soccer or basketball or hockey or any sport that has a goal line, football or anything of that nature, and I like to think of myself as facing three defenders, three opponents that are defending that goal. One of those opponents is inertia, one is resistance and one is anticipatory anxiety. One of the real difficulties in getting started with any project is the matter of inertia.

It is much more comfortable to do nothing than to do something. When I say more comfortable, it may be an uneasy state of comfort because I may have that gnawing sense that I really have to get this thing addressed, that I really have an idea that I have to pursue or that I have a discussion that I have to have with somebody in order to take a further step in our relationship. But, the fact that it is unpleasant, takes a little bit of work and so on, lets inertia become a more important defender than it has to be. So I really have to ask myself, you know, what about inertia? Is inertia the thing that is stopping me? Inertia is the tendency to do nothing when action is really required or actually desired.

A second defender of the goal is resistance. In his classic book on creativity, the war of art, that's the title, *The War of Art*, Steven Pressfield call resistance the most toxic force on the planet. It is the act of stopping ourselves from doing what we may want to do, to sit down and write and then give ourselves the excuse that I'm not feeling creative today. The matter of calling up to address an issue with somebody and coming up with an excuse like maybe I'll interrupt their favorite TV program if I call now or why would they want to listen to me or the thing that I call the "too excuse" I'm too old or too young or too emotional, you know, giving active excuses for staying stuck. Resistance is a powerful defender of the goal; it keeps us from achieving it. And the third is anticipatory anxiety.

Anxiety has been defined as the functioning as if you have failed at something before you actually failed at it. Anticipatory anxiety is going through a lot of stuff inside your head to convince yourself that you have no chance of being successful at it. But it is more than just something going on in your head; it actually has a physiological component to it. So anticipatory anxiety can immobilize us, it makes us feel as we are going to fail before we have tested it out. Now that really makes no sense, it is not scientifically appropriate to think in

those terms and yet we treat it as a fact that we are going to fail. So if we are convinced that we are going to fail then why try? The only thing is that the reasoning in many cases is faulty. Decisions made on the basis of anticipatory anxiety are often faulty because they are based on incomplete and irrational knowledge.

So those are three defenders that we have to confront. Whenever we wanna get started with a project the hard part is really getting past looking at or at least feeling those three defenders interfering with our plans to achieve that goal, inertia, resistance and anticipatory anxiety. How do we confront it? The best way is to start out with a sense of pride and with the question, what can go right? You know that is kind of the theme of the mental health gym. Too often people sell themselves short and don't pursue goals and don't get started on the direction of doing so because they think about all the things that can go wrong without giving fair attention to what can go right. Think in terms of the things you have achieved in your life. They weren't achieved due to inertia or resistance or anticipatory anxiety, they were achieved because of action. There is a lesson there. If you are going to be successful in reaching a goal you have to believe that you are stronger than the defenders and you have to get started. The critical thing to remember is that all three of those defenders are not external. They are all internal defenders.

They are all parts of you and they are all things that can be dealt with by you developing a greater sense of strength, self confidence, pro-activity and positive orientation. Those are all things we aim for at Mental Health Gym and that we try to promote in goal achieving psychotherapy. You know these are not external kinds of things that are blocking you from the goal; the external thing would be something that would stop you from going skiing in the desert because there's no snow there. Most of the time we can find ways of avoiding getting started, but if we are conscious of who the defenders are of the goals and who is defending the status quo, as

human beings we can do a pretty good job of talking ourselves into moving forward. Give it a try, you will be surprised because once you get started, a lot of the stuff that flows tends to be a lot easier than the hard part which is getting started.

This has been Dr. Ron Kaiser, my voice is kind of cracking but I think we made it to the end of the podcast. I do want to wish you the very happiest of holiday seasons and a real good 2014. This has been our Mental Health Gym podcast for December 2013 and I will be speaking with you again next year in the mean time I hope that you will frequently visit the Mental Health Gym website.