

Many writers and coaches have a tendency to focus on specific diet and exercise programs as a way to achieve excellent health. Of course I agree that proper nutrition and appropriate exercise are important. But I also believe that diet and exercise alone provide very little in the way of support for the countless individuals who struggle to maintain consistency in their lives when it comes to their health. The first mistake with health is the assumption that it begins with the body.

When you consider how many books on health, nutrition and exercise are sold every year, not to mention the books that line the shelves of our homes, it's clear that access to information is not the problem. Yet the United States is one of the worst nations on the planet when it comes to health. After more than 20 years as a health professional and strength coach it became clear that what people needed most was not to be found in the latest diet or exercise book.

For the person who struggles with consistency, December can be a painful time of the year. Many people find themselves staring down the barrel of another new years resolution, starting another exercise program and quietly knowing that somehow, someway, they are going to quit...again. In part two of our "prophecy of quitting" series, we are going to temporarily put aside thoughts of calories, diets, food journals, the effects of prescription medications and exercise and replace them with more familiar symbolic tools of success such as the *flashlight, the shovel and the wheelbarrow.*

The Flashlight:

Picture yourself walking out the back door of your home at night. You quickly realize that your security lights can only extend so far, and if you haven't already done so you immediately go back inside to get the trusted flashlight to help find your way. When it comes to searching out the habits that lurk in the shadowy places in our mind, the symbolic flashlight is the first tool we need.

In part one of the "prophecy of quitting," I said desire is a tool of inspiration and the first step to determine how strongly we feel about the goals we have. However, desire is more than strong feelings; desire is a focused and concentrated form of thought powered by action. As 2018 quickly approaches, many people already have a vision for their new years resolution, the burning desire to see it achieved and be prepared to take action, but if the hope is to experience a different outcome than years past they will need a tool to help examine the thoughts and behaviors that consistently undermine their efforts to succeed.

Behaviors that trip us up and sabotage our goals have history with us and are never new. These thoughts and behaviors lurk in the shadows of our thinking and arise at very specific times, every time. For some people quitting the new program might take three weeks while some may even make it through a year. But until we discover the root cause of the issue we are not going to succeed. Science is still baffled as to why people continuously struggle to lose weight and maintain health, but the fatal flaw of science is persistently looking for things they can measure like calories burned and miles ran per week. The road map for success is never found outside the individual, but from within. And to read it they need the correct tool. That tool is the flashlight.

The Shovel:

The shovel is a tool of effort and every successful person has one. Once you have used the flashlight to discover the thinking and behaviors that undermine your efforts to succeed you need to get to the root causes in order to prevent them from happening again. Perhaps in your search you discovered that you spend so much time focusing on the needs of others that you no longer have time for yourself. That's a great discovery, but the work and hence the need for your shovel is to determine why you continue to do so at the expense of yourself. The next step

at this stage is to accurately assess your strength and resources to create the change you seek. This is the stage where you usually find that there is significant fear and resistance that make change difficult to achieve. Do not be fooled, the stronger your desire for change the greater your efforts must be to overcome the fear and resistance to change. Fear and resistance take the form of stress or obstacles in our lives, but realize stress is the tool of the universe constantly testing your desire to change. *Remember, the shovel is a tool of effort and every successful person has one.*

The Wheelbarrow:

The wheelbarrow is the final tool needed and represents the power to set healthy boundaries between ourselves and the circumstances that threaten to derail our goals. Everyone is born with their individual wheelbarrow and within that wheelbarrow contains every experience the individual is required to work though in life – the challenges, the joys, the highs and the lows. Although we can and should help others there is a point we cannot go beyond. One of the biggest challenges that cause people to quit is not having enough time because their lives are too busy managing the lives or circumstances of other people.

Relationships are areas that impact your time the most, where so much effort is used to control the lives of others in the form of assistance that is usually rejected by the person you are attempting to help. For example, your partner or spouse may have a history of ignoring medical advice from the doctor and then receive a diagnosis of heart disease or diabetes. The news is terrible, but despite your tireless efforts there is absolutely nothing you can do. For those of you familiar with the Old Testament story of Lot understand this is exactly what he faced. No matter how much Lot loved his wife he had no control over what she willingly chose to do. Lot's wife according to the biblical account would turn into a pillar of salt. This is a sad story, but one that happens all too often in life when we fail to respect the natural boundaries that exist in our relationships.

Again, it is important to remember that loving those in our lives and working tirelessly to influence what they chose to do are too separate things. The wheelbarrow reminds us that we have the ability to enjoy our lives fully by respecting the appropriate ways to use our time and energy. As we grow comfortable in the changes that make our lives more efficient, we remove the obstacles that affect our ability to succeed.

The question was asked, *"What do I need in order to succeed?"*

The answer is simple. *“You need a flashlight to find your way, a shovel for the work required of you and a wheelbarrow to understand what is yours to carry.”*

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