

Coaching Works Volume II Issue 4
Fly in “V” Formation

Research shows that we are shaped largely by our interactions with others. Whether we have a long conversation with a friend or simply place an order at a restaurant, every interaction makes a difference. The results of our encounters are rarely neutral; they are almost always positive or negative. Remember, motivation is based mostly on “VEE” – *Values, Enjoyment and Empowerment*. We can compare this VEE to a flock of geese flying into their traditional “V” formation. Engineers have learned that each bird, by flapping its wings, creates an uplift for the bird that follows. Together the whole flock gains about 70 percent greater flying range than if they were journeying alone.

In pursuing your goals, especially difficult ones, you cannot afford the luxury of a negative thought! You must devote a huge amount of your energy to motivating yourself and pursuing your goal. You don’t have enough energy to ward off negative energy and still pursue your goal with fervor.

If you feel someone is not giving you the support you would like in pursuit of your new goals, you should first assess whether their doubts are valid. Is it possible that these doubts are legitimate and that your goals are either too rushed, problematic or unrealistic? If this is not the case, and you feel that they are not being supportive due to other reasons, you should discuss this with them, but you should not allow their discomfort to stand in the way of you achieving your goals.

This being said, you need to know that the people who are close to you usually do want to support you but don’t know how. You need to teach them how. You may need to give them the exact step-by-step process to use. Above all, ask the people closest to you to be supportive, validating and encouraging. If they slip into negativity, simply imagine you have a mirror in front of you and their words bounce off you and reflect back onto them. You can also tell them, “I only hear positives.”

It is imperative for your success that you surround yourself with positive thinkers. It is difficult enough to be a positive thinker, so without encouragement and validation from others your progress will be impeded. Ask others in your life to “catch” you when you slip into negative thinking and self doubt. Ask them to force you to restate your words into a more positive statement. Ask them to remind you of how far you’ve come and how much you have already accomplished.

----Once you’ve done the mental work, there comes a point you have to throw yourself into the action and put your heart on the line. That means not only being brave, but being passionate towards yourself, your teammates and your opponents.

----Phil Jackson

Partners and Teams

Partnering and teamwork can also lead to greater motivation if you *truly* feel committed to the other team members. Even for someone with a low sense of self-esteem, she/he can go beyond these self-doubts because of her/his desire to succeed not only for her/himself but for the other members of the team. Having a partner can increase the motivation of both people, because they can profit from each other's energy

and motivation. The partnership that is formed is a larger unit than the self. Each partner then becomes committed to, and will feel responsible for, this larger unit. The only caveat is that each of the partners should maintain a level of independence. Without this level of independence, a dysfunctional relationship will most likely arise.

In the corporate setting, more emphasis is now being placed on “teamwork” and creation of “working teams.” This concept has been shown to be much more productive than when workers previously worked in isolation in their cubicles. Team members can provide additional motivation and support; however, they can also impede progress if they have a negative attitude. Team members can become more united and less irritated with each other if they keep their focus on their shared goals.

It is important to point out that people are very different in regard to their need for social support. Some people need much more social support than others do: some individuals work better alone, others work better as part of a team. It is vital when partnering that you determine what your needs are in the area of social support, and whether or not those needs can be met.

*---People in your life are either giving you energy or sapping your energy.
Choose those who bring you energy.*

---Oprah Winfrey on her final show March 2011

Mentors, Sponsors and Teachers

Mentors, sponsors and teachers are more pots of gold for you. They play a critical role in helping people overcome hardship and adversity. Alcoholics Anonymous uses a sponsor system in which new members are matched with sponsors who have had similar experiences and who have overcome similar problems. In *Pathfinders* (1981), her detailed study of people who succeed in life and remain optimistic and motivated even in the face of adversity, Gail Sheehy writes,

“Even when pathfinders had an absent or severely flawed parent - -and many of them did -- somewhere they found a person who became a transformative figure for them...Instead of allowing a less than ideal set of parents to set them back permanently, the potential pathfinders usually gravitated toward another figure who did have purpose and direction and who offered something healing, cohering, possibly even inspiring.”

Think back over your life and remember who your mentors were. Think about the impact they had on you. Now think about who you could mentor, sponsor, coach or teach. The only thing better than having a good mentor is being a good mentor!

---If you hear a voice within you saying “You are not a painter,” then by all means paint...and that voice will be silenced.

--Vincent Van Gogh

Sprint to the Finish Line with Coaches

Successful people discover a way of drawing from the environment what they need. They find supporters who can help them overcome obstacles and can serve as coaches and cheerleaders. A good coach will provide a sense of structure in a person's life, thereby enabling them to take risks and make important changes. Forming a

supportive partnership with a good coach provides reinforcement for your ideas and helps to keep you moving forward in the pursuit of your goals.

Here are two more “pots of gold” for you: performance coaches and life coaches. “Performance coaches” are experts in your field, who assist you with improving your physical skills. “Life coaches” who may know nothing about your field, can assist you with improving your mental performance. Life coaches can also be called “professional coaches,” “personal coaches,” “empowerment coaches,” etc. Most top performers now have both types of coaches that they rely on. A coach’s specialized training can provide structure and additional support, give you guidance and assess your progress along the way.

One of a coach’s most important functions is to make you accountable for your progress. As you work toward your goal, you will have mini-steps or sub-goals to accomplish on your way to your larger goal. Much like your teachers in school who gave you deadlines for turning in your homework, the coach should also give you time lines for achieving your sub-goals. This accountability can often be an important motivator in itself. Accountability can be provided by a mentor, spouse, employer, etc., but in a case where a support system is lacking, a coach may provide the necessary tools to keep your momentum going.

----The will to win is not nearly as important as the will to prepare to win.

----Unknown