

Your Gremlin is in Your Way

Negative beliefs about yourself or your efforts will interfere with achieving excellence and realizing your potential. Becoming aware of the source of and responding to your negative beliefs can be the difference between gaining average and superior results in your life. It is well known in the sports arena mastering psychological hindrances to performance such as negative thinking is essential in reaching highest potential and persevering. Personal trainers, coaches, sports psychologists work with athletes to focus on letting go of negative beliefs, gaining a positive attitude, and developing mind over body ability. In work and in life it is important to recognize how your mind impacts your performance and success. I regularly hear about unfulfilled dreams, unrealized potential and un-lived lives affected by negative beliefs. In this newsletter, I will describe a powerful obstacle in your life and direction in mastering this obstacle. This obstacle is called your gremlin.

In *Taming Your Gremlin* by Rick Carson, Carson describes your gremlin as the narrator in your head. He is not your negative thoughts/beliefs but rather the source of them. Your gremlin likely developed from prior experiences and relationships which is the source of your negative beliefs and thoughts. Now these experiences live with you in the form of your gremlin. Your gremlin is trying to distract, influence and even define you with his efforts. You want to pursue your goals; however your gremlin reminds you of your fears, worries and doubts. At times, it is attempting to convince you it is best not to even try to pursue your goals. It seems so right and having your best interest in mind, sometimes protecting you from rejection.

As you pursue your goals, any of the following may be taking place in your mind.

Your gremlin may be telling you:

- (1) Keep making others happy and you will be happy. Your capacity to realize your potential is limited. You may find yourself feeling resentful.
- (2) Keep striving for perfection. You live by rigid rules, therefore becoming successful at all cost. You are working harder not smarter, never truly getting there and on the way exhausted.
- (3) Don't take risks. Maintain your comfort zone so progress is slow and minimal. You are fearful and anxious as you take steps.
- (4) Don't plan just go for it. Take unnecessary risks that are impulsive and have consequences. You find yourself sabotaging your success.

Other example gremlin statements:

You can't do it.

Everything else will fall apart.

Too much work for you.

Don't you remember you failed last time?
This could be a mistake and then what?
You do not have the time or \$.
You can't have everything. Be satisfied with what you have.
Do what you are supposed to not what you want.

To identify *your* gremlin and what it is telling you, ask yourself;

What are the ongoing negative thoughts/beliefs?
What are those thoughts trying to achieve?
What patterns of behavior are they perpetuating?
When are these thoughts successful in influencing your behavior?

Maybe you procrastinate, people please, defensive, self-righteous or a perfectionist.

Your gremlin has likely been influencing your behavior and approach to life/family/work for a long time in self-limiting ways. Now it is time to tame it in order to move forward with your goals. Carson lays out 3 basic processes involved in approaching this obstacle in your life. Simply noticing, choosing and playing with options, being in process.

First process: Simply noticing

Become an observer rather than reactor. Your gremlin has trained you to react, to feel guilty for what you want, feel ashamed of who you are, feel anxious as you try new things, fearful of success/unknown/failure. When you are feeling this way, you have been attacked by your gremlin. What do you do when attacked? Do you give up, comply or flee? Do you indulge in a bad habit? When you are doing these things you have allowed the gremlin to take over. Instead simply notice your gremlin is there. Notice your thoughts, feelings, response. Do not try to censor or fight them. You do not need to analyze or understand your gremlin, just know it is there. You can practice meditating, pausing, breathing, centering, writing, and walking, whatever for you works to not react. You do not need to resolve the gremlin issues. You can learn how to move forward despite the gremlin.

Second process: Choosing and playing with options

You and your gremlin are not one and the same. You have the ability to create new messages, reactions and behaviors. You can choose to even maintain your gremlin. Once you know it exists and what it is doing, it becomes your choice to do with. Own your choice rather than feel victim. You choose when and how you will make a new choice.

If you choose to create new possibilities, experiment with new behaviors and choices. Learn and watch from those you want to emulate. How do they plan, make decisions, and take action?

Let those supportive of you know you are experimenting with new behaviors. Let them know you are creating a new possibility for your self by changing your behavior. This may mean you will be saying 'no' to some of their requests as you take more action on

your goals. Letting others aware of your intention keeps you even more motivated to change. Being open to their feedback can be helpful.

To be successful making a new choice it can be helpful to have a response to your gremlin as it rears its ugly head. Practice an exercise in affirmations. List 10 negative statements you make when pursuing your goals. Now write down a response to each that can counter that statement. For example, in response to “don’t even bother”, affirmation can be “my fulfillment is worth the effort”. Recall times when you have been successful and at your best. Use those experiences to counter your gremlin. Keep your affirmations posted around your work or home. Affirmations do not in and of themselves change your behavior. You need to match your behaviors with these words.

Third process: Being in process

As you continue to be conscious of your gremlin you become more intentional with your choices. They are now your choices not your gremlins. You will forever be taming, making choices. As Carson states, “Being in process is an attitude- an appreciation of this simple truth and of the reality that your life will be forever unfolding and your future always unknown.” Seeing your self in process making intentional choices will help you be in the present moving forward to future rather than present dictated by your past. You will feel empowered, motivated, hopeful, and inspired by your increased performance and success.

What if you could master your gremlin, how would your performance and success look?

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