

## 3 Ways to Notice the Unexpected That Will Help You Achieve Your Goals

The story is told that when the very first European tall ships arrived in the New World, the people on the beach were unable to perceive them. These things were so far out of their experience and so entirely unexpected that they simply were not noticed.

We all tend to be like those native peoples when confronted with something out of the ordinary. We generally notice those things that fit into our concept of the world and ignore events that fly in the face of reality as we know it.

In some ways it serves you to note those things that support your belief system. You need to trust that the world is a predictable place.

However, failing to notice exceptions to the rule can get you in trouble. Like most of us, you probably have clear ideas of who you are as a person. For the most part, these generalities may hold true. But the negative beliefs you have about yourself can limit your ability to make positive changes in you life.

If you have negative expectations about yourself and consistently ignore realities that disprove those expectations, you undermine your ability to create positive change in your life. The negative assumptions you have about your patterns of behavior can keep you stuck if you fail to notice exceptions to the rule.

The impact the European explorers had on the Native Americans was major and quite adverse. Unlike those native peoples, the realities you ignore could actually have a positive impact in your life.

Here are three ways to notice the unexpected in your life that can help you achieve your goals.

### **1. Notice Past Exceptions to the Expected**

When contemplating behavior change, your expectation for success will be vastly improved if you can point to times in

the past when you successfully performed the desired behavior.

For example, it is not unusual for my life coaching clients to say something like, "I never finish anything!" When we look carefully at their past, however, we identify many instances when they actually completed important projects.

Identifying instances that disprove your negative expectations instills hope, an essential ingredient in successful behavior change. When you acknowledge past success, you recognize that you have what it takes to achieve success in the present and in the future.

By recognizing past success you indisputably establish the fact that the desired change is possible for you. When you believe that change is possible, you create the expectation that you can – and will – succeed.

## **2. Expand Your Notion of What Is True for You**

People make sweeping generalizations about themselves which, while often true, provide a limited picture of who they are or what they can accomplish.

I commonly hear from life coaching clients such statements as "I can't focus" or "I'm lazy." These descriptors are used to justify the notion that change is not possible. The truth is that we are all capable of virtually any human behavior.

The phrase I love best as an antidote to such sweeping generalizations is "...except when I do" or "...except when I'm not." So, "I can't focus, except when I do" or "I'm lazy, except when I'm not."

The next time you catch yourself making this kind of disparaging generalization about yourself, pay attention to how it feels. Then correct yourself, using one of the phrases above. Notice how different you feel when you expand your notion of what is true for you!

### **3. Notice Small Successes in the Present**

I am often surprised at how difficult it is for my life coaching clients to recognize their successes. This is especially true when these behaviors differ from the negative expectations they have of themselves. Yet noticing success is essential to achieving your goals.

Carefully notice the outcome when you attempt new behaviors. Tune into your successes even if you only practice the desired behavior a small percentage of the time. Pay attention to what works, even if your effort is not perfect. Give yourself credit each time you substitute a new, more successful behavior for an old habit, no matter how minor the change may seem.

You will have essential information to guide you in the countless choices you make throughout the day. When you notice those things you do that help you achieve your goals you become an expert in the solutions, not in the problems!

Allowing yourself to be pleasantly surprised by your successes will help you achieve your goals. It will also transform your opinion of yourself for the better which is, after all, the basis for improved self-confidence. Enhanced self confidence and achieving your goals will definitely make your good life better!