



Birds of a Feather

Who you surround yourself with will determine how far you go.

After I decided to take up the sport of luge and train for the 1988 Calgary Winter Olympics, decision making became pretty simple for me. I knew that every action I took in the next four years was either going to get me closer to my goal or pull me away from my goal. Everything I did would make a difference. Even the people I associated with.

You see, there are two kinds of people in the world. They are either on your team or they are not in your team. They are either on your dream team or they are not. People will either encourage you or cast doubt. If they doubt you can do it, they could steal your dream away.

Associating with negative people makes us think negatively. Close contact with petty individuals develops petty habits in us. On the other hand, companionship with people with big ideas raises the level of our thinking; close contact with ambitious people helps make us more ambitious.

I came to the realization that if someone laughed at my dream; they were laughing at me. If they did not believe in me, I stopped associating with them. I had to. They had the power to make me doubt myself and ultimately quit.

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I was taking up the luge at the age of 21 - way too old! And I was trying to qualify for the Olympics just four years away! I could not leave anything to chance. I did not have time to waste. I needed to know right away who was for me and who was not.

How did I do it? I told everyone I spoke with about my dream. If they laughed at me, rolled their eyes, or in any way showed lack of belief, I stopped associating with them. I could not afford to. They were a dream stealer. However, if they got excited about my dream, I held on to them like they were made out of Gold! I'd just found myself a cheerleader – an encourager.

By doing this all the time, before long I could have filled a cheering section with my supporters. An unexpected benefit of doing this was that I created a positive pressure that kept me from quitting when the going got tough. You see, no matter how rough a day I was having at the track, it was going to be easier to get back on the sled than to come back home and tell everyone that I had quit.

Birds of a feather flock together. Make sure you're in the right flock. It's your choice.

Put it into action:

If you fly with eagles, you will think, feel and act like an eagle. Who are you spending most of your time with? Are you spending your time with the people that will lead you to your dream? Are you associating with people who encourage you and push you to take greater risks? Or are you hanging around with people who are keeping you where you are? Ninety percent of success is a result of who you regularly associate with.

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