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Creating Momentum to Reach Your Goals

by Four-Time Olympian Ruben Gonzalez

Have you ever gotten excited about the idea of doing something or creating something — maybe starting a business, writing a book or even doing something really wild, like biking across the United States to raise money for a special cause?

Did you do it? Did you follow through on that urge? Or did you get all practical and realistic and quit before you even got started?

Dreams are very fragile things. When you're inspired by the possibility of an idea, unless you take immediate action, your dream will fade, and you'll regret it forever. On the contrary, if you overthink or over-plan something, inertia sets in, and you never get started. You talk yourself out of taking action.

The key to making great things happen is to start before you're ready. Think less and act more. You only have to be courageous for about 10 seconds to do something you fear. After that, you're committed, and it's easy to keep going.

Don't worry about making mistakes because mistakes mean you're doing something. That's a good thing. There's always time later to analyze and make corrections. For now, just get going.

If you hesitate for even a second, your mind will start making excuses and justifications, and it will come up with countless reasons why you can't or shouldn't do what you know you need to do.

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In The Scottish Himalayan Expedition, author W.H. Murray said it best:

Until one is committed, there is a hesitancy, the chance to draw back, always ineffectiveness. Concerning all acts of initiative, there is one elementary truth, the ignorance of which kills countless ideas and splendid plans: that the moment one definitely commits oneself, then Providence moves too. A whole stream of events issues from the decision, raising in one's favor all manner of unforeseen incidents and meeting and material assistance which no man could have dreamed would have come his way. I have learned a deep respect for one of Goethe's couplets: "Whatever you can do or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius, power and magic in it." Begin it now.

When Murray wrote that, he was talking about how the simple act of booking a ticket on a ship to India committed him to follow through and be a part of the Scottish Himalayan expedition. That small act of commitment led him in a direction that changed his whole life.

Buying that ticket was relatively easy to do. But what's easy to do is also easy not to do.

I've taken that approach all my life, and it has worked miracles for me. In February 1984, inspired by watching the Sarajevo Olympics on TV, I decided I would compete in the next Olympics. I was 21 years old and had never been a great athlete. But I took immediate action.

Within three months, I was in Lake Placid, NY, where I started learning the sport of luge. Incredibly, four years and a few broken bones later, I was competing in the 1988 Calgary Winter Olympics.

Here are some things you can do to take advantage of your initial excitement for a big goal or project.

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1. Don't focus on the probability of whether you can make it happen. The more you commit, the higher the probability. Instead, focus on the possibility of pulling it off and how great you will feel when you reach your goal.

2. Take the first step. You'll feel 100% better after you do.

3. Put pictures of your goal all around you. Surround yourself with pictures of your goal, like on your screensaver, for example. It will help you stay focused and even encourage you to tell people about it. Become known for your goal.

4. Write your goal down first thing in the morning before you check your emails. It only has to be a couple of words. Writing your goals down is an act of commitment that goes into your subconscious much faster than just telling yourself what your goal is.

5. Find someone who has already done what you want to do. Ask them to be your mentor and your accountability partner.

So how about it? What will you do the next time you get excited about the possibility of doing something? Are you going to overanalyze it and ask all your friends for their opinions until they fill you with doubt and make you quit before you even get started? Or are you just going to go for it?

Remember, start before you're ready. Think less and act more. Done is better than perfect. Just throw mud on the wall — some of it will stick, and you can always clean up the mess later.

If you'll just do that, you'll be amazed at what you can accomplish in life.

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