

A dream is but a dream

Recently I had a conversation colleague about the relationship between having a dream or vision and actualizing that dream or vision - you know, self-help. The quintessential book these days around this notion is "The Secret" which promises that if you follow their suggestions, well, you can have it all.

The essence of The Secret is to have a vision, a dream from winning the Super Bowl, to winning the lottery, to owning a larger home, or more expensive car, or finding a parking space at Starbucks the second you arrive.

The essence of the Secret - that all you need to win is to have that vision or dream and stay focused on it - that, believing in the belief itself, is the key to success. "You gotta believe!"

That's the illusion and the essential fallacy of The Secret, of all cult-ish thinking. Dreaming is not the strategy; hope is not the strategy and willpower is not the strategy.

If dreaming and visioning alone were sufficient, everyone who dreams big would realize their dreams. Few ever do.

Willpower won't do it. If that were the case, then 100% of those who resolve to follow their New Year's resolutions, would. Of course, by Valentines day, 98% have failed.

How many folks, perhaps even you, have dreamed and hoped for years and are still waiting for something to happen?

Without a strategy, action, to support the hope and the dream, nothing happens.

The downside of The Secret and other self-help books of the same genre lies in the fact they posit if one does not realize their dream it's simply because they weren't consistent, intent and intense enough in focusing on their dream. They didn't believe deeply enough, long enough.

Ironically, we're led to believe it's never about the self-help books, it's about me. I just didn't believe in The Secret enough. I didn't believe in the belief. Hmmm.

Many of us suffer from not believing, especially in ourselves. The deal is that the belief is a good thing, the vision is a good thing - but only when it is supported by action - a combination, the only combination, that results in true change and real transformation.

Without the action and the resulting frustration of not experiencing true change, we then buy another book, CD, or video. Maybe this time!

So, what's the real deal here with The Secret and its thesis?

The deal here is one of self-responsibility - am I honestly, sincerely and self-responsibly pursuing what I hope to achieve or realize i.e., the belief, the vision, the goal. That entails do-ing as well as be-ing and hoping and dreaming That entails commitment, engagement, self-discipline and action. Pure and simple.

The intention, hope, dream is only as small as the tiniest brain molecule that holds it - and will remain that way - until one takes action.

When I come across folks (outside my coaching practice) who are lamenting and bemoaning their life is not working, I suggest they take the myriad self-help books slewed across their coffee table, and piled on their night table and put them away, except for the one book (video, CD) that resonates the most with

them. Then, take one principle (belief?) from that one book that feels right, get a journal, and put that one principle into action every day for six months and journal around it daily. Live it and track how your life unfolds.

When I run into many of these same folks later on and ask them how they're doing with the principle practice, 99% have not followed through - having all the requisite reasons (excuses?) for not doing so.

Who do so many fail in realizing their dreams? Here are two thoughts to consider:

Infantilizing folks and enabling folks (beginning in childhood and moving into adulthood) is one culprit that accounts for one's inaction. Infantilizing is about hubris, power and control - consciously and unconsciously. The "I know what's good for you" approach to parenting, relating, bossing, religion, teaching, being a friend, enables folks to do nothing, to feel taken care of so, later on, when they have a developed capacity to "think for myself", they still feel lacking and deficient and from a self-worth or self-esteem place jump at the chance to be taken care of, i.e, do nothing. It's learned behavior, and becomes habitual.

More deeply, a lack of a deeper life vision and purpose (for being on the planet) is another.

Am I really, really crafting and working my life purpose and life vision so I can materialize a parking space at Starbucks (and especially if mine is one that is being closed - perhaps a good time for some deeper, serious self-reflection and perspective on priorities and values)?

On another level, maybe experiencing a lack of success begins with the dreams themselves. There's a greater force operating out there (also "in here" but many are oblivious to it), that has our greater interests at heart (opposed to those interests that we hold "logically" in our minds).

Perhaps, not winning the lottery, or not finding that parking space, or being booted off Idol in the first five seconds, or...is an opportunity to stand back and look at ourselves from 25 miles out and ask What might be inappropriate or self-deceiving about this picture (i.e. me, my goals, desires, or values in some way, shape or form)? An honest, sincere and self-responsible inquiry and exploration might reveal....the "real secret".

Why, too, do we become so dependent on The Secret and related self-help books?

Because they give us what we need - some type of association, good feeling, goodies- (mentally, emotionally, spiritually, psychologically) that make us feel secure, comfortable, feel like somebody, help us deny or withdraw from our own immediate inner pain, and allow us to (continue to) be irresponsible to our selves, because in some way the hope they "instill" absolves us from having to really face the true and real challenges and pain of growing up and taking action. They give us a faux sense of safety and security - very ephemeral which is why we keep going back for more. Feeling good, and dreaming itself are the salve that allow us to "not do."

So, how did we get stuck in only dreaming the dream without acting on it? How do we back out of the place where we have a dream, and then stop?

We got here by going unconscious. There are four basic levels of consciousness: (1) *not conscious* - (instinctual, ego-driven) allowing ones lower-level, ego-driven, base, and selfish desires to drive, completely unaware of the consequences and the impact on greater good of the community. (2) *subconscious* - habitual, robotic, reactive. (3) *conscious* - aware, intelligent, conceptual, reflective and (4) *superconscious* - (intuitive, guiding, truthful, loving, universal, at a collective level).

We back out by backing up and looking at our life choices and how being unconscious brought us to a do-

nothing place or to a place where we make habitual, unconscious choices that end up being self-destructive and self-limiting. We reflect and explore and make a superconscious choice to change, to act on our dreams to "do" as well as "be". Becoming conscious means making an honest, sincere and self-responsible evaluation of our life and then taking requisite actions and making healthy choices that create positive change in our life at work, at home, at play and in relationship.

So, some questions for self-reflection are:

- Garth Brooks wrote, "Every man dies, but not every man lives....." Will (or does) this notion apply to your life?
- Where are you struggling in your life? Do you have an action plan to move through your struggles?
- One measure of success is not that you are dealing with a personal or professional challenge, but whether it's the same challenge you had last year, and the year before that, and the year before that. Is it?
- Fear is a question, "What are you afraid of that keeps you paralyzed, or stuck?" What does your fear reveal to you, about you? What one small action can help you move through your fear?
- What motivates you. What de-motivates you?
- How deeply do you trust your own guidance?
- How many self-help books have you read in the last six months, in the last year? How well are you following one or more of the principles you read in those books, in a consistent and intentional manner, on a daily or weekly basis?
- What are you attached to that restricts you from taking action towards change in your life?
- What defense mechanisms do you use that keep you from taking action and forwarding the action of your life?

An ant on the move does more than a dozing ox. -- Mexican Proverb

(c) 2008, Peter G. Vajda, Ph.D. and SpiritHeart. All rights in all media reserved.

Peter G. Vajda, Ph.D, C.P.C. is a founding partner of SpiritHeart, an Atlanta-based company that supports conscious living through coaching, counseling and facilitating. With a practice based on the dynamic intersection of mind, body, emotion and spirit, Peter's approach focuses on personal, business, relational and spiritual coaching. He is a professional speaker and published author. For more information, www.spiritheart.net or contact [pvajda\(at\) spiritheart.net](mailto:pvajda@spiritheart.net), or phone 770.804.9125