The 3 Tries: The Three Things That Absolutely Keep You From Achieving Your Dreams (and the 3 Solutions for Maximum Living)

January 28, 2015 By Alexander Avila

When we were little kids, we were told to try hard. Our parents told us, the harder we try, the better our results: in grades, sports or activities, and eventually, in grown-up jobs. Although they meant well, our parents were only half right. Psychology tells us that trying too hard can actually defeat our purpose: If we do more of the wrong things, we get more of the same (bad) results.

There is a better way to achieve your goals and dreams. It is called “Trying Right”: Putting forth the right effort in the right way for the right goals. Let’s take a look at 3 examples of Trying Wrong, and three effective ways for “Trying Right.”

TRYING WRONG EXAMPLE #1: NOT TRYING AT ALL: Many times we give up when we don’t achieve our goals. We try for that ideal career, relationship, or mental attitude, but we keep failing. Eventually, we give up; we stop trying. In psychology, it is known as learned helplessness: In rat experiments, rats go through a maze looking for food. When they receive an electric shock just before they get the food, they may give up looking for food--they avoid traveling through the maze--even though there were no more shocks for them. They have learned to be helpless. It applies to humans, too. At some point after having a few failures in trying to achieve our goals, we believe we can’t succeed. We stop trying to avoid the pain of failing. We have “learned” to be helpless.

THE TRYING RIGHT SOLUTION: REFLECT ON PEOPLE WHO HAVE ALREADY SUCCEEDED. If you want a great relationship, study people who have them. If you want to make more money, find a financial mentor who can teach you the ropes of finances. If you want spiritual peace, learn from someone who truly has it. Absorb the knowledge and wisdom of those who have already succeeded in the areas you are interested in. When you do this, you have a road map to avoid the electric shocks (pain) of the world; you can go through the maze of life accomplishing your goals with minimum pain and maximum satisfaction.

TRYING WRONG EXAMPLE #2: TRYING TOO HARD: Another problem we have is trying too hard.

Have you ever noticed the man or woman who tries too hard to impress a potential romantic partner (while secretly believing that he or she is socially inadequate), and then ends up pushing him or her away? Or, in the classic case of stutterers, they worry so much about stuttering (and try so hard not to), that they end up stuttering even more. They suffer from what is called “anticipatory anxiety”; they are anxious about being anxious, which makes them even more anxious (and they stutter even more).

THE TRYING RIGHT SOLUTION: REVERSE YOUR TRYING AND MAKE IT FUNNY: The solution to trying too hard is to reverse your effort, and intentionally try to be the opposite of what you have been trying to be. If you have been trying “not to stutter,” as an exercise, do the opposite: Tell yourself that “I am the greatest stutterer in the world.” Exaggerate your stuttering with a few friends; even make a joke out of it: “I, I, I, am, am, am, the biggggest stutter in the world. Looook aatt me.” When you intentionally stutter in this humorous experimental way, you take away your anxiety about stuttering, and you become more relaxed. Paradoxically, the more you intentionally try to stutter (as a humorous experiment), the less likely you are to do so (you actually speak more fluently and confidently). Trying less hard gets you into what Eastern philosophers call the flow of “effortless effort.” By trying less (in the right way), you actually accomplish more.

TRYING WRONG EXAMPLE #3: TRYING FOR THE WRONG THINGS: Now we get to one of the biggest problems in our society: trying for goals that do not fulfill us. An artist strives to make more money, even though that is not her primary passion in life. A businessman is told by friends to relax more and lie on the beach, even though finances are his greatest talent, and he hates wasting time. There is nothing wrong with either money or relaxation. What matters is whether a goal matches who you really are inside. By having mismatched goals (from our true nature), we suffer because we extend too much energy chasing the wrong things--objectives that can never truly satisfy us. We lose our power--giving power to the objective which we think will make us happy (but it won’t).

THE TRYING RIGHT SOLUTION: TRY FOR YOUR GOD-GIVEN TALENT (DON): All of us have a God-given talent, also known as “Don,” a secret wellspring of ability, power, and skill that is unique to our psychological DNA. Known by many names, such as “multiple intelligences,” “strengths,” or “talents,” this reservoir of inner power and ability is our birthright. For some of us, it is emotional, or spiritual, or financial, or athletic, or scientific, or artistic, or word-related. Regardless of what our “Don” is, our mission is to actualize that ability for the greater good of others--which naturally is reflected back to us in our own inner growth and happiness. While it’s perfectly fine for the businessman to dabble in leisure, or the artist to learn about finances, the ultimate key to your happiness and success is to discover and nurture and focus on that true power or ability your have inside--the wonderful talent called “DON.” Now, when you put all of your effort into your Don, you will only see positive results in many areas of your life. You world will change miraculously.

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.