

## Welcome to CoachNet – July 2004

The online newsletter for navigating life's changes and transitions  
from Bailey Coaching and Mary Ann Bailey, MC

### FEATURE ARTICLE – Leaving the Ledge

This past weekend I saw the film, "Touching the Void". It's the true story of 2 men climbing the western face of Suila Grande, a 21,000 foot peak in the Peruvian Andes. All goes well on the ascent, but on the descent disaster strikes. One of the climbers, Joe, breaks his leg and ends up falling into a crevice. His climbing partner, Simon, assumes Joe's dead and climbs down the mountain without him.

Joe spends the night on safely perched a ledge in the crevice, but when morning comes he knows that he cannot stay there or he will die. He needs to make a decision as to what to do next. He struggles with the knowledge that he needs to take action to get himself out of there; however, none of his options is very promising. But he knows that taking any kind of action, even if it's the "wrong" action, will greatly increase his chances of getting out of there alive, while sitting safely on the ledge will lead to certain death.

Although Joe's predicament was much more extreme than what most of us will hopefully ever face, the internal struggle to make a decision and then act upon it, is something many of us can relate to. How often have you had a great idea or something you wanted to accomplish only to watch it fade away because you couldn't quite make yourself take that first step? Maybe you couldn't decide how to start. Maybe you had too many ideas and couldn't sort them out. Or maybe, you just froze because you were afraid that you couldn't do it.

There are many reasons why we stop ourselves from touching the void of the unknown. But just as Joe was afraid he would die if he didn't take any action, our hopes and dreams also die when we don't take action. So, what can we do to help ourselves get past the confusion, overwhelm, and fear that can hold us back? How can we empower ourselves to take that first step?

One of the best things a person can do is to let other people know what they're struggling with. Talking about the issue does a couple of things. First, it gets the problem out of your head. When we keep ideas bottled up in our heads, they gather a lot of power. The number of options grows exponentially while the voices telling us that we can't do it get louder and louder. Often what starts out as a good idea turns into our worst nightmare.

When we verbalize our thoughts, it becomes easier to sort them out and to clarify exactly what it is we want and need to do. Also, enlisting the support of another person is useful in keeping us motivated and accountable. If we have told someone that we are going to do something, we are much more likely to actually do it. We can make up stories for ourselves, but it isn't so easy to explain to our friend why we didn't accomplish a certain task.

Another strategy is to develop a workable action plan to achieve your goal. What is it you want to achieve and what are the things that need to be done to accomplish your specific goal? Break your "to-do" list into small, workable, units. Start with the smallest, or easiest, task. Ensuring success in the beginning of any project is important. Success will give you the energy and inspiration to continue working through the other steps towards reaching your goal.

Often we think we need to accomplish our goals in one fell swoop, when in most cases, success is achieved by taking small, consistent steps towards our goals. Joe was successful in getting off the mountain because he set reasonable goals. When he allowed himself to look too far ahead, he was overwhelmed by a sense of hopelessness and despair. So, he kept his focus on what needed to be done at that specific point in time, knowing that the culmination of each small step would be his getting off the mountain.

Lastly, believe in your ability to achieve whatever it is you want to achieve. Realize that fear and confusion are just roadblocks that your mind is throwing in your path to keep you from growing and changing. With each step that you take towards your dreams, no matter how small, you begin to break down those obstacles. Sitting on the ledge may feel safe, yet, there is no real future for us there. Our hopes and dreams do not live on the ledge. They live closer to the void and we must be willing to leave our ledge and venture towards the unknown if we want to see our dreams come true.

"When we walk to the edge of all the light and step into the darkness of the unknown, we must believe that one of two things will happen. There will be something solid for us to stand on or we will be taught to fly." Patrick Overton

Until next time, all the best,  
Mary Ann Bailey, MC

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