

**YOU CAN'T
GET IT DONE**

**BY DOING WHAT YOU
SHOULDN'T DO**

**HOW TO STOP WORKING
SO HARD AT GETTING
WHAT YOU DON'T WANT**

DEBBIE MOREHEAD

You Can't Get It Done by Doing What You Shouldn't Do
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CONTENTS

Preface

Chapter 1: Why Are You Working So Hard to Get What You Don't Want?

Chapter 2: When You Don't Get What You Want, This Is What Happens

Chapter 3: You've Got to Know Who You Are Before You Can Be Who You Want to Be

Chapter 4: You've Got to Control Yourself Before You Can Create Who You Want to Be (Part 1)

Chapter 5: You've Got to Control Yourself Before You Can Create Who You Want to Be (Part 2)

Chapter 6: You've Got to Speak Up for Yourself to Get More of What You Want

Chapter 7: You've Got to Stand Up for Yourself to Get More of What You Do Want

Chapter 8: How to Lead A Simpler Life with Better Results

Chapter 9: Getting More of What You Do Want

CHAPTER 1

Why Are You Working So Hard to Get What You Don't Want?

Life doesn't have to be as hard as you are making it.

Why are you working so hard to get what you don't want? You could be working not so hard and actually get what you really want.

I've worked with people in all areas of their lives. They have talked to me about every aspect of their life—their relationships, their marriage, their business or their job, their health, their family members, their kids, and even their friends. I've spent years listening to people tell me what they're doing. They explain in detail, "I'm doing this, and then I did that," and yet in the end, they lay out all the problems and what isn't working.

It always amazes me how hard people work to get what they don't want. Why? The truth is, you don't have to work hard to get what you actually want.

There is a better way. Stop working so hard and get the results you truly want.

I bet there are ways you are working hard but not getting what you want. Just for fun, start thinking about one thing you can stop doing that's not working for you.

Make sure to take time to pick the one thing you will stop doing so you can stop working so hard at what isn't working. Later on I'll talk about what to do that *will* work for you.

Ways People Are Working Too Hard

Money

People want more money, and they work so hard to get it. And yet they consistently go out and spend more money than they have. And then they wonder why they don't have enough money. They wonder why they don't have anything saved for retirement.

It takes more effort to outspend yourself than it does to not spend it. When you are spending more money than you have, you are constantly thinking about where you are spending it, worrying about having enough money, and anxious if you will be able to cover all your bills. It's so much more work to outspend yourself. Instead, budget and spend less than you make.

One client had built up almost seventy thousand dollars in credit card debt, all behind her husband's back. She came to me trying to figure out how to tell him. She wanted something more emotionally, and that's why she was buying stuff, but in the process, she lost her husband's trust. And she had to work much harder to rebuild that trust *and* pay off the debt.

But it doesn't even have to be that big. The number of individuals and couples I have worked with over the years that describe to me why they needed this or that and slowly build their credit card debt up and then come to me stressed or fighting over money is astounding.

Did you know that more than half of Americans spend more money than they make? Half of all Americans have some sort of credit card debt. And money is one of the top issues couples fight over?

Where are you at with your money management?

Very Poor Fairly Poor So-So Fairly Good Very Good

What's one thing you can stop doing right now that isn't working for you?

(stop using your credit cards, stop purchasing nonessentials, stop ignoring your bank balance, stop hiding what you are spending)

Write down one thing you will stop doing:

Weight and Health

People work so hard to lose weight. In some ways it takes more effort to gain weight than it does to lose weight. You think about food all the time. You eat food all the time. Then you worry about your health because you are overweight or you are borderline diabetic or your cholesterol is too high.

One of my clients had been diagnosed with diabetes. He was in his sixties and about thirty pounds overweight. He was fretting a lot about it, and this caused stress and an increase in cortisol, which isn't good for the body. He was looking into all sorts of herbs and supplements and alternative treatments. Don't get me wrong; I think alternative treatments can be great, but the one thing he wasn't doing was changing his diet or increasing his exercise. Three years later his diabetes is still there and now he has to take medication, and his insulin gets out of control at times.

According to the CDC, 42 percent of Americans are obese, and 71 percent of Americans (including obesity) are overweight.

Where are you at with your health and weight management?

Very Poor Fairly Poor So-So Fairly Good Very Good

What's one thing you can stop doing that isn't working for you?
(stop eating late at night, stop eating while watching television,
stop sitting all day long, stop going on crash diets)

Write down one thing you will stop doing:

Significant Other Relationships

In relationships people are working harder to cause themselves more problems. If they didn't work as hard at it, they'd have better results. Instead of working harder, I teach my clients to work wiser.

The truth is that most of us have never been taught good relationship skills. We learn about relationship skills from what we see our parents do. If they didn't learn good relationship skills, then you aren't going to learn them either. And we certainly didn't learn these skills in school.

We are stuck doing what we observed growing up. When I begin working with a new client or couple, I ask questions about their experiences growing up. I ask how their parents or primary caregivers showed affection, and I ask them to describe their parent's relationship as well.

It never fails that in some ways, often without even realizing it, they have repeated some of the same behaviors and ways of interacting in their relationship.

Typically the stuff we hated that our parents did when we were growing up gets played out in our relationship with our partner.

One man that came to see me as he was going through his third divorce. After helping him with the immediate issues of moving out and figuring out how to co-parent, we then delved into all those questions about his growing up and his past. I wanted to make sure he saw how hard he was working at repeating the same pattern, three marriages later! I wanted to help him to stop all that hard work and go on to create what he really wanted in a significant other relationship. We made connections between the patterns in his marriages to patterns in his youth that were being repeated. He told me he went home after that summary session and sat in shock for several hours that evening. As we were ending therapy, he said to me, "I wish I had come to you a lot sooner; it would have saved me so much hard work and pain."

Most of us have heard the divorce rate is around 50 percent, but did you know that the chances of divorce increase (not decrease!) with second and

third marriages? The divorce rate is 67 percent and 73 percent respectively. It's not that we get smarter and learn to do it better—we just repeat it all again. Working harder once again!

There are reasons why we fight the way we fight, why we protect ourselves the way we do when we get hurt in our relationships, and why we react to our significant other's behavior the way we do. It's time to stop doing things that make it harder on you and your relationship and start doing what works.

Where are you at with your significant other relationship?

Very Poor Fairly Poor So-So Fairly Good Very Good

What's one thing you can stop doing that isn't working for you? (Stop holding grudges, criticizing, defining you partner in absolutes, using words like *always* and *never*, giving your partner the silent treatment, fighting)

Write down one thing you will stop doing:

Raising Children

Children are the lights of our life, so they say. And yet you'd never know it when they do something they aren't supposed to that make us mad. How quickly mean words or even actions fly out of us in those moments!

For years I worked with children in the foster care system who had been taken away from their parents because of some sort of abuse. Hopefully you have not had your children taken away, but when you think about how you handled that last upsetting interaction with your child, how did it go? Did

you respond or did you react? Did you let yourself get out of control and say hurtful words that actually caused emotional damage to your child?

Studies conducted over the years clearly connect parental discipline with a child's moral development. John and Julie Gottman's research show that the two predictors of how a child turns out is 1) the skill and ability to understand and manage their feelings and 2) how they get along with adults and other children. How you parent and how you discipline play a major factor in the development of these areas for your child.

So, how do you want your child to grow and develop?

I have spent a large percentage of my career teaching foster parents, adoptive parents, biological parents, and group home staff how to manage themselves when they are upset so they can actually parent in a way that truly helps their child to learn and grow from their own mistakes. Isn't that what we all want? Yet it's not what we do. We get emotional and work hard to make sure our kids know what *they did wrong*. And then we wonder why our kids behave so badly or turn out the way they do.

One couple came to me knowing that the way they were dealing with their son and daughter was not helpful (thank goodness for that) but not knowing what to do. At first each spouse just wanted me to tell the other spouse what they were doing wrong, because, as is the norm, they had very different ways of parenting. One was way too lenient, and the other was way too stern. As a result they were doing a lot of fighting among themselves. I started by helping them talk about why they had children in the first place and what they both truly desired for their children. Once there was a shared purpose, we then looked at how each of them had been parented growing up and how they were playing some of that out in the present. He was way too lenient because he never wanted his kids to feel how he felt with his abusive dad. She was too stern partly because he was too lenient and she felt she needed to "pick up the slack." She also thought that, although she was stern, she wasn't anything like her mother who was controlling and had overly high expectations, which resulted in verbal abuse when not met. Next we defined what they wanted the environment in their household to look like. I taught them how to manage their emotions when they were upset, and I reminded them that punishment in the upset moment is never helpful. Next we created some rules and structure. Finally I taught them a variety of ways to discipline so their children would actually learn from each incident, and I taught them other ways to be more emotionally

available for their kids. The one thing that both parents wanted more than anything was to have a peaceful home. And that is exactly what they created.

Where do you stand when it comes to parenting without damaging your children?

Very Poor Fairly Poor So-So Fairly Good Very Good

What's one thing you can stop doing that isn't working for you? (stop fighting with your partner over the kids, stop yelling at your kids, stop hitting your kids, stop parenting the way you were parented, stop trying to control your kids.)

Write down one thing you will stop doing:

Family Relationships

So let's be real, we love our parents, but there are things we hate about them. The truth is that for better or worse, our parents are our parents, with all their strengths and weaknesses.

When I work with a new client, I always ask them to share three strengths and three weaknesses of each of their primary caregivers as well as a few memories with each parent. This gives me a clearer picture of the relationship with their parents and the physical, mental, and emotional experience they had growing up.

In an ideal world, once we become an adult, our parents are able to continue to be support persons while allowing us to move into our own life. In a not-so-ideal world, they either become over-involved and try to control

us or they are so busy with their own life that they aren't really available for us. In most cases this is how we experienced them as we were growing up.

A client asked me to help her with a big frustration she felt toward her mom that had been consuming her for quite a while. For the past two years, her mom had a boyfriend, and there were two issues that bothered her. One was that her mother spent almost no time with her grandchildren, and the other was that during one of the family gatherings, the boyfriend had gotten drunk and said some mean things to my client's husband. She and I spent time connecting that her being consumed with this situation was tied to similar experiences she had growing up with her alcoholic father. Her mom had never defended her and focused more on her dad than on her and her siblings. Once she understood this, it reduced her anger, and she stopped obsessing about it and trying to change her mother. Together we came up with an effective way to communicate positive requests to her mother. In the end, though the boyfriend stayed, my client and her mom improved their relationship, and her mom started spending more time with the grandchildren.

Family relationships are almost always a point of discussion when I work with a client. Our parents and family members are part of our life, and when things don't go well, we work hard at trying to fix them. Often we try to get the other person to be different and then are constantly disappointed that they don't meet our expectations.

Where do you stand in your relationship with your parents and family members?

Very Poor Fairly Poor So-So Fairly Good Very Good

What's one thing you can stop doing that isn't working for you?
(stop trying to get your parent to be different, stop playing the same role you did growing up (i.e., trying to fix everything), stop holding a grudge)

Write down one thing you will stop doing:

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