

To be somebody, Should one have a purpose or wish?

by A. Loretta Patricia

Washington Irving once said, "Great minds have purposes, others have wishes". How true indeed! Aren't we irrational sometimes, hoping that our aspirations would materialize by themselves according to our dreams and wishes? It is a known fact that dreams and wishes are no more than just our desires. So how, then, can we be truly aspirational?

In life's journey, it is imperative to focus on the destination; however, this may not be possible if the destination is unknown. An ancient Indian sage, while teaching his disciples the art of archery, pegged a wooden bird and asked his disciples to hit the eye of the bird. Only one disciple was successful and when asked how, he answered, "I only saw the eye of the bird and nothing else". How often are we focused like that disciple?

Well, by now you might have guessed what the emphasis is on. You guessed right; GOALS! Why are goals important? How often does one board a bus or train without knowing where it is going? Not even once I am sure. However, sometimes the rare case may be. Just as much as we are aware of this fact, what would be the ramifications of journeying through life without a goal?

In the fairy tale, "Alice in Wonderland", do you remember the conversation between Alice and the Cheshire cat? Alice asked the cat, "Which way should I go from here?" Well, "that depends a good deal on where you want to get to", said the cat. "I don't much care where," said Alice. Then it doesn't matter which way you go," said the cat. How often do we find ourselves in a similar situation? Sooner or later, we would end up making a decision, but whether it is fruitful or not, only the outcome would tell.

Human desires and dreams are weak but can be strengthened when supported by the five D's. **Direction, Dedication, Determination, Discipline and Deadlines**, all of which when combined together differentiate desires from purpose. Certainly, our dreams can turn into reality if there is a deadline and action plan. Lloyd Jones, a famous author, once said, "The men who try to do something and fail are indefinitely better than those who try to do nothing and succeed." How often have we tried to set goals but have failed in the process? The reasons for this inadvertent failure could be one of the several factors: namely, having a pessimistic attitude, fear of failure, lack of ambition, fear of rejection, low self-esteem, procrastination, and lack of knowledge or ignorance of the importance of goals.

How often do we call to mind the answer to the question: "What is your main objective in life? Nine out of ten responses probably would be, I want to be happy, successful, financially sound", etc. These are

predominantly dreams or wishes without clear goals. Therefore goals must be **SMART - S-Specific, M-Measurable, A- Achievable, R-Realistic and T- Time bound**. Goals must be balanced as well. Life could be thought of as a wheel with six spokes, namely Family, Finance, Physical, Mental, Social and Spiritual wellbeing. If one of the spokes is out of alignment, then life goes out of balance.

William Darmon, a leading expert in human development, states that, "students actively pursuing a clear purpose reap tremendous benefits which are both immediate and could last a lifetime". They also benefit by acquiring positive traits such as gratitude, self-confidence, optimism and a deep sense of fulfillment.

Though it is easier said than done, it is vital to try, try and try again, for winners see objectives and losers see obstacles. All human beings have a purpose in life; however, the purpose is subjective. It doesn't matter who we are or where we are. What really matters is the direction we are heading and the destination known. I think it's good to be reminded that not everyone who has succeeded in life has had an easy road to success...Whenever you tackle something new, you take a risk and you have to be prepared to wear the possibility of failure.

Every time we embark on an adventure, either it may work well or flop, but it is worth the try. We have to be prepared to take the risk and work harder rather than be demoralised by people's opinions .

As educators we can help students develop a sense of purpose by eliciting from them what is most important to them and talking about our own sense of purpose as a teacher.

Being highly qualified might be the ultimate goal, but along the way one learns life skills, makes better friends, and imbibes values. By asking for help or seeking answers in different ways, this does not signal failure, but rather improves the journey. Students might also decide on changing their destination, but if they haven't attempted to make the journey, none of this would happen.

It is important for students to learn how to map out their journey, and accept their changes along the way. Of course, their journey might seem endless, or they might need to work harder than expected but the end result is as equally important as what they learn along the way. Have we influenced the journey and made it a fantastic trip or a miserable drudge? Well, then, to be somebody, does one need to have a purpose or desire? I guess only time will tell.

A. Loretta Patricia receives her Master's degree in Literature and Education. She has around 18 years of experience in teaching English across several educational boards encompassing various schools and colleges overseas. She is currently a full-time lecturer at the Institute for English Language Education at Assumption University.