

GROWTH STRATEGIES

5 Tips to Become a High-Achiever

Understand your threshold and exceed your goals.

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When working on a new project, many of us reach a breaking point and give up when things start getting difficult. Recognizing what makes you throw in the towel, and understanding your threshold is critical to exceeding your goals and pumping up your passion.

Social scientist Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi studies the behavior of highly successful people. He found that when high-achievers are performing at their best, they are all able to manage what he calls "flow."

What happens when someone is in flow?

1. Lost sense of time
2. It feels easy to perform (interesting to note since high-achievers are at the top of their respective skill heaps and bring complex skill sets to the table).
3. Lack of self-consciousness during the event, while feeling a better sense of self afterward
4. Feelings of elation and contentment, almost simultaneously.

So how do you become one of these high-achievers? Take note of your emotional state while you're starting a new venture or tackling a new skill.

Flow is the space between anxiety, frustration and boredom. When a person is in flow they are able to access deep wells of knowledge, skill and motivation. This is when high-achievers outperform others. Your skill level in relation to the challenges you face causes anxiety and boredom when trying to accomplish your goals. When the challenge is high and the skills are low, apprehension sets in and can dampen your motivation to continue. Yet, when the challenge is low and your skills are high, you're likely to get bored and have the tendency to give up.

Here are some quick tips for staying charged up and in flow:

1. When you begin a venture, the challenge of it keeps you revved up so that you can keep on humming along at extraordinary levels. As you become more skilled, the challenge is reduced. You might feel like you're losing your edge. If you're bored, handicap yourself. For instance, time yourself while doing tasks, be more critical about quality, add a more difficult element, start another division to your company or design a new product.
2. Entrepreneurs are notorious for overloading their plates. But, high-achievers have an instinctive feel for when enough is enough and they find a way to get the work done by offloading tasks. They surround themselves with people who are smarter than they are in a variety of disciplines. If you're feeling anxious, get help or take a break (you may have reached your breaking point and need a breather). Whatever you do, don't be a martyr and let the anxiety overwhelm you.
3. There is an interesting phenomenon that takes place when people get really, really bored. They circle back around to anxiety and find themselves trapped on a hamster wheel going nowhere. If you're feeling gnawing, unspecific anxiety and bored, it might be time to change

- directions entirely. It's time to rethink your life and professional goals.
4. Paradox alert! Work through the tedium. Much of what you need to do to become a superstar is repetitive--it will be boring. But there are those things you have to do in order to do what you want to do. For instance, you might not like getting into the bug-dirt around accounting, but if you're going to run a finely tuned company, it's something you have to push yourself to understand. Being bored is often a signal that you're doing something that is not interesting to you, but be smart enough to know when it's required of you, and then keep on going.
 5. Stay a little longer. Olympic Gold medalist, Peter Vidmar led the men's U.S. Olympic gymnastics team to its first team gold medal in 1984. He also scored a perfect ten to win gold on the pommel horse. He'll tell you the difference between his performance and that of his competitors' was miniscule--tenths of a point. What was his secret to edging out the other athletes? He stayed an extra 15 minutes after practice and did his routine one more time. Stay and practice a little longer and eventually it adds up to your own version of a gold medal. Read one more article, take one more class, have one more discussion or call one more prospect.

Flow isn't just for pro athletes. It's for anyone who wants to get to the next level. It's not as hard you might think to be a high-achiever. Pay attention to your emotional state everyday and adjust your skills and challenges accordingly. Stay just a little longer while everyone else is throwing in the towel. Succeed beyond your dreams. The gift you get from this new awareness is profound. It'll reignite your passion.