

We should all 'stop sucking' and strive to do better

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"Be yourself, but always your better self." ? Karl G. Maeser



'Stop sucking,' shouted the loose-lipped 17-year-old as he meandered up to his room.

His comment had nothing to do with the mechanics of using a straw. Instead, he aimed that particular barb at his parents for a lack of success in getting the results he was looking for. In our defence, we have to work within the confines of the real world and the limitations contained therein.

Yes, we'd love it if car insurance premiums were cheap and income taxes dropped for average Canadians. We'd be thrilled if we could buy a new car for our kids to share.

The boy's comment did resonate with me. Yes, he's right. We should all 'stop sucking.'

By that, I mean we should all up our game and ramp up our efforts in every aspect of our lives. We often excel at our jobs and careers, and even if we're veterans, we still come up with innovative strategies, efficiencies and approaches to make things better. It's funny how we can be so good at our jobs, and yet we fail when it comes to other aspects of our lives outside the walls that bind us.

I can write a 900-word article in 40 minutes, and yet I can't help my son with his Grade 12 math. I can discuss current political strategies at all levels of government, but I can't fix my lawnmower or washing machine. I can act as MC for an event and even speak to large crowds. But I can't always open a re-sealable bag.

'Excellence is the gradual result of always striving to do better,' Pat Riley said.

In some ways, I think society helps us reach our goals, or excel in certain areas. We have vast amounts of knowledge and power in our smart phones. We can order anything from appliances to cannabis online and have it delivered to our door in days.

We can't ignore what God gave us ? that three pounds of gray matter in our heads. It's estimated that our brains can produce upwards of 1 million chemicals, each with the sole purpose of accomplishing a specific task. The roughly 10 billion neurons can interact with others in a multitude of ways. For a computer to possess as many 'bits' as the human brain, it would have to be the size of Texas!

I am lucky in my job in that I get to meet a great many interesting souls. Many are accomplished and successful and I try to learn from them. Some were helped along the way by family members or mentors. Others put in countless hours of blood, sweat and tears to reach their dreams. Many are not satisfied to sit back and relax, but strive for even more, each and every day.

For us 9-to-5-ers, we have enough on our plates just to make it through the week. With payments and debt loads, coupled with car repairs, kids in school and aging parents, we have a lot to contend with. Our personal growth and perhaps a bit of our ambition, is left for our 'spare time.'

But I think it's in our nature to excel, or at least fine-tune our skills on a regular basis.

As I mentioned, I'm an old pro at churning out articles and designing a weekly newspaper. But each and every article is a new

challenge, a new surprise. Sure, I have all of the necessary fundamentals down pat, but I always have to find some new, fresh angle or approach. I have to find that elusive gem hidden in the midst of mountains of quotes and facts. I have to make it fun, both for me and for the readers.

When we look at 'excellence' and 'success,' there are many factors to consider.

Over the course of a decade, I have tried to discover how people view success and happiness. I have solicited input from hundreds of people from all walks of life. And I still ask the question from time to time.

One person said happiness is 'comfort' in everything 'health, spirit, mental attitude, relations and in our environment.

We will never complete our 'to-do' lists, another commented. Do things as they arise, and then close the file. Enjoy the company of others!

Success, according to one, is 'the ability to keep my family safe and happy.'

Success, according to one man, is to be 'unbounded by the dictates of convention.'

Seldom do these things revolve around money or personal finances. For the wealthy, making more money is not the ultimate goal. It relates to a sense of accomplishment, even peace and calm. Sometimes it centres around contributing to society or helping others. It almost always comes down to family and enjoying the fruits of our labour with our loved ones.

We all come into this world naked, cold and alone. We leave it in somewhat the same manner.

We have a finite number of days to fill the period in between with what matters most.

We can choose a filling of mediocrity, or we can spice up our lives with some zesty pickles and hot sauce.

I agree there's no sense in looking back and being critical of the mistakes we've made. That's not productive. What we learn along the way is, and can always be applied to new situations and new paths in life. If you must look back, keep one foot on the gas, I say!

Do better. And encourage others to do the same.