

From Grit to Gratitude: Getting from Where You Are to Where You Want to Be

(transcript from Laurie's talk on the Borrowed Wisdom telesummit, December 2016)

Most people wish their lives were better in at least one area: relationships, work/finances, health, or home. Suppose you find the courage to leave that crappy job or relationship. . .what happens when you're still unemployed or haven't found true love several months later? What if it takes much longer and is much harder than you'd imagined to get where you want to be?

At times like this, I feel like a hermit crab: having left behind the shell that's become too small for me, now hanging out in the sand, all naked, squishy, and vulnerable, just praying I don't get eaten by a seagull before I make it into that bigger, better shell.

A bunch of researchers at West Point did a big study on success. What they discovered is that the single, biggest indicator of who would achieve their goals wasn't intelligence level, education, or even how hard they worked. Those who succeeded were those who *persevered*. The researchers even developed a "grit" scale to measure long-term stamina.

As anyone who's stuck it out for the long haul knows, persevering can be absolutely manic. There are some days when you're chugging along nicely and feeling hopeful and calm, then other days, you're sliding backwards into sheer panic and doubt – or hurtling up and down between those two extremes. The good news is, after persevering through at least six major life changes, I realized that there's a clear, predictable process you'll go through every time. I mapped out eight distinct stages, including practical tools of how to move through each one. I don't have time to go through all of those stages now (they're available in my ["Now What?" seminar](#)), but I'd like to offer some effective, doable strategies of how to persevere until you obtain what you so deeply desire and deserve.

The first key question is, **"Is this still the right big picture goal?"** Ten years ago, I hated my life. I was in a workaholic job, passionless relationship, in poor health, and living in a place that never felt like home. So I ran off to the desert on a vision quest – without even knowing what that was – to take a hard look at my life. The culminating ritual of the quest is called "Crying Out for a Vision." In the ritual, you stay in a little 6-foot circle you draw in the dirt from sunset to sunrise, asking the Universe for your life purpose. So there I am on the last night of my quest, standing barefoot at the top of this cliff after having fasted for five days. No sooner do I step in my circle, than "Crash!" the sky turns black and opens up into a gale force hail storm, pelting me nonstop until dawn. It was like doing the Ice Bucket Challenge for 10 hours straight. But I stay in the circle, stomping my feet and calling out to the heavens, asking what I'm supposed to contribute to the world. The answer: Help as many people as you can to stop settling for less and live their fullest, best lives.

So I leave my high paying but stressful job, break up with Mr. Almost, move out of the city I hated, and start my new path. I'm not going to lie, this stretch of my journey has been way longer and at times much more grueling than that hail storm. But even on my worst days, when I'm feeling the most scared, depressed, and hopeless about myself and my future, I would never go back to where I was before, to that too-small shell. I wouldn't trade my heart-centered, passionate, purpose-driven life for ten times as much money as I was making before. I'm crystal clear that I'm on the right path. If I ever question it, I check in with my gut instinct, my intuition, to confirm.

That's not to say that I haven't occasionally needed to change tactics, which is the next key question: **"Am I still going the right way to get there?"** One of the biggest tactical changes I've had to learn is to let go of control and to stop trying to make everything happen in a certain way, on my timeline. Not only was I limiting my options, but I also kept feeling disappointed, angry, and frustrated each time my expectations or timeline wasn't met. My new mantra is, "This or something better," and I've been delightfully surprised with some of the opportunities that have come my way once I got out of the driver's seat and just opened myself to receive anything that is in alignment with my big picture path.

Another key strategic question is, **"Is it time to stop beating a dead horse?"** In other words, should you *stop* persevering, because what you're doing isn't working?" If you're trying to decide to get out of a challenging relationship or job, ask yourself whether it's juiced. When you juice a lemon or orange, you can see and feel when all the good juice is gone, and there's only empty skins and rind. It's the same with life change. If you're still learning important, growthful life lessons from the unpleasant job or relationship, you might need to stick with it a while longer to get out of it what you're supposed to learn. However, if you're just stuck in the same painful cycles again and again, and you're not learning anything new, or if it no longer feels true to who you really are, and your heart is only half in it, it's time to get out. Meanwhile, if you keep taking steps toward your goal that are not yielding fruit, it might be time to try something new or to try it in a new way. Remember Einstein's famous definition of insanity: "Doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results." Again, be mindful of whether the horse you decide to stop beating is a tactic to get to your goal or your big picture goal itself.

If you know that you're walking toward the right goal, and you're tinkering with the tactics, including letting go of control and any actions that aren't working, there's only one thing left to do: **trust**. Trust in yourself and your gut instinct to guide you. Trust that if you keep doing the right thing, you will receive your heart's desires or something even better when it's time, learning important life lessons along the way. I know it's really hard, especially when you can't see around the bend, when nothing is manifesting yet that validates all of your hard work and reassures you that you're going the right way. But quite bluntly, what other choice do you have?

Your other choice is to sit down in the middle of the bend of the road and to cry or scream, feeling sorry for yourself, blaming others, and shaking your fists at the sky because your life is not the way you want it to be. That is a sure-fire way to *not* get what you desire. Trust me, I

know this one from experience. Not that you might not need to do this at some point to take a breather, release some tension, and reassess. But as the West Point study points out, the *only* way to achieve your goals is through perseverance.

I'm going to share a little story from my most recent low-point. I was solidly in the "pit of despair" – that frustrated, angry, poor-me place of "Why isn't this happening for me? I'm doing all the right things. People who are lying and cheating are making millions of dollars, and I'm busting my butt to help the world, and I'm barely scraping by. This isn't fair!" So I decide to try a little *feng shui* to attract more prosperity into my life. I'm supposed to find something blue to put in the north end of my house, but the only blue thing I can find is a big clay pot out back filled with a half-dead mint plant. So I drag it up to the front porch, pick out all the dead stems and leaves, water it, and wait. I come back a couple weeks later, and the rest of the plant has died. "Oh great," I think, "This does not bode well for my prosperity." But as I lean closer to pick out the rest of the dead bits, I notice that the bottom of the pot is covered in tiny, green shoots, some of them just barely pushing through the surface. I immediately burst into tears, then laugh, realizing that sometimes we can't see the deeper shifts and powerful growth that's happening underneath and all around us. We have to look closer for hope. It was at that point that I turned it around. And as always happens when I go back to a place of love, hope, humor, and gratitude, all the right people and opportunities "magically" start popping out of nowhere to help me further along my path.

Let's do a little visualization together to bring this home. Everyone please close your eyes and put both feet flat on the floor. Take 3 deep inhales and exhales to get grounded. Think about that one area of your life that you'd most like to change – your relationships, work, health, or home. Now picture what your ideal situation would look like in that area. What do you see? Who are you with? Are you by yourself or all alone? How old or young are the people around you? What backgrounds and countries are they from? Any animals? What are you doing, if anything? Are you inside a building or out in nature? What do you hear, smell, or taste? How is your body temperature – hot, cold, comfortable? Most importantly, how are you feeling? Do you feel excited, peaceful, open, free? Spend a few minutes really *being* in your ideal situation, allowing yourself to experience and enjoy all that you truly want.

Now if this isn't already part of your vision, go ahead and find a way to add playfulness and humor into your ideal situation . . . life is supposed to be fun. Also go ahead and clear out any negative people that are trying to crash your party – your family, false friends, even your own ego; there's no room here for anyone who doesn't unconditionally love and support the real you. Finally, notice what you feel most grateful for right now.

OK, take a few last moments to notice any other details about your vision and to soak it all in.

Wonderful. Now open your eyes. I want you to remember how your ideal situation felt – this is your north star; it's what you're aiming for. No matter where you are on your road to shine – before the bend, in the middle of the curve, or just out the other side – remember: You deserve to have it all. Stick it out to have your ideal relationship, ideal work, ideal health, and ideal

home, or make the changes you need to make. Only by allowing yourself to be fully happy will you be able to contribute what you came here to do. The world is waiting for your gift.

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