

In Search of Celebration

By Judi Jerome, LICSW, LADC

"SUCSESSES: Past and Present, they scream out to me in search of praise and celebration". jj



It is an amazing gift to me to be a participant in the growth journey of so many remarkable people. I am also amazed, and saddened, by how often people with AD/HD lack self-recognition of all the remarkable successes they have courageously accumulated over their lifetime. Whether they were diagnosed early, or late, in life; whether or not they have ever worked with a coach, or been in therapy, to have reached adolescence, or adulthood, and have learned and used the 'over-compensating' skills that help them to function and live a full life, is a success filled with an abundance of skills and strengths.

Too often the focus seems to be on how you sabotage success because of difficulties with time management, organization, finances, and a host of other structuring deficits. Being angry with oneself over the negatives, instead of celebrating the positives, digs the hole that buries self-confidence. Losing sight of the strengths and skills you have gained, and that you use every day, is an important issue to address in order to end acts of sabotage.

We all have many strengths/skills/qualities that either come naturally or that we have developed over the years. Unfortunately, we aren't taught from an early age how to consciously recognize when we are using these strengths, and then give ourselves credit for them. We don't use all our strengths every day, but they are always at our disposal. I encourage my clients to use their strengths in the same way that I choose a pair of socks to put on, so I can stay warm and dry during all of this interminable rain. When faced with a problem, situation, or task, wouldn't it be empowering to pull out a written (*visual*) list of strengths, and 'pick' the ones we want to use to succeed?

When you are convinced that nothing you do is ever good enough, or that it doesn't pay to try because of how hard you have to work just to keep up, you are sabotaging the possibility of success. I have been told many times, by clients, that they did the homework, they just never handed it in; therefore, sabotaging success. How about the time you went online for some information on one topic, or to buy one item, and then ended up with 17 pages of resources to read, or sites to buy from? That's when you end up putting the entire project on hold, sabotaging success. Then there is the scenario where you succeed, and due to the (often unconscious) discomfort of maintaining this new, different, or lofty feeling of being praised or feeling proud (and knowing you may be expected to "keep up the good work", indefinitely and consistently perhaps?), you mess up, procrastinate, forget, or whatever the sabotaging behavior is, the next time around.

In reality, succeeding is a lot easier than failing. "Whoa," you say, "success takes a lot of hard work." Well, so does sabotaging success; actually, it is a lot harder!

Disorganization, forgetting appointments, arguing with people, procrastinating, losing belongings, always running at high speed because you're late, just to name a few exhausting traits, makes people feel *much* more drained than the gentle flow of consistently maintaining structure, follow-thru, completion, and success.

I earnestly encourage you to keep setting up your internal and external environment for success. Explore all your wonderful strengths, skills, and qualities. Each and every time you notice that you used one of your strengths, and say "yeah me", adds to that environment. And while you are at it, let's not forget about all those past successes that are overdue for a pat on the back. Take them out of your memory store, and put them into a parade of praise by writing them all down. An important part of growing with your successes is keeping a 'success journal'. When you write down your successful thought, feeling, or action, big or small, you seal it into the history of your life to remember forever. It will be helpful to take it out and read it on those days when you need a boost to remember how successful a person you really are.

A TIP

Make a strengths list. If you can't come up with at least 50, then it's time for a worksheet with strengths already listed on it. (I have a few different ones that I've collected over the years with well over 100 strengths on each.) Look around, check out some books from the library, do a Google search. Once you have a VERY large list, quickly go through it (don't sweat it, zip right through it), and check off the ones you know you have, whether you use them often or not. Remember, you do not use all your strengths every day, or even every week, but that doesn't mean you don't still have them.

The next step is to start working on the ones you have checked off by taking one at a time and purposefully using it day and night, at work and home, for 2-3 days. After you have used it on purpose for a couple of days, put another check mark on it, and move on to the next one. What generally happens is that after a while you'll find yourself doing something, and all of a sudden you'll realize that you just used a particular strength that you practiced a few weeks before. It is an exhilarating feeling. Smile! When you have finished going through the list of known strengths that you checked off, take a look at the ones you didn't check and *want to* develop, and start practicing with them. Make them your own. Mindfulness does matter, in order to be present in our lives, to recognize those strengths and successes that you are writing down daily. And don't forget the "yeah me" after every awareness. Enjoy the journey...

And a Confession...

There are times, like this morning, when those darn internet search pages start piling up to a point where I wish I had put on my raincoat, and gone to the store, no matter how much more it would have cost. After all, my time is worth a lot too. Oh, and since this is the second, or maybe third Sunday in a row that I did the same search for the same item, I obviously have not succeeded in ordering the part and putting it into my computer! Well, I guess that I am headed for the store.



Judi has been in private practice since 1990 working with a variety of issues, and specializing in teens and adults with AD/HD and co-morbid disorders, life cycle transitions, and substance abuse. Judi enjoys coaching teens and adults with AD/HD in all genres of life. She believes that each individual has potential within to achieve success beyond the current limits that problems such as time management, disorganization, morning madness and late night hyper-focusing may be imposing on their lives. Judi coaches people toward accomplishing their dreams as well as their goals. Her motto - Empowerment, growth and maintenance for positive life changes.

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