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## MANAGING FRUSTRATION

When things don't go your way and you feel powerless to change them, you get frustrated. If the tire's flat, you kick it! If the vending machine doesn't give us your change, you hit it! If the boss makes a decision you don't like, you complain behind her back!



When you fail to satisfy your deep desires or achieve important goals, the sense of frustration can at times be overwhelming. If you lose a big sale despite your best efforts, get passed over for a promotion, lose considerable money on a business deal, or suffer other major disappointments, it's natural to feel frustrated.

But it's also a waste of time and energy. Frustration is futile and destructive. It's a form of self-pity that corrupts positive attitudes and hinders achievement. In frustration some people lose their tempers. They lash out and say or do things they later regret. Others simply give up: they fail to finish the task. Still others withdraw and retreat: they refuse to communicate and cooperate. Because all of these behaviors limit personal growth and success, it's important to understand what causes frustration and what you can do to minimize it.

Whenever situations and people interrupt your agenda, upset your plans, or otherwise fail to meet your expectations, frustration can infect your attitude and plague your performance. For example, suppose you are excited and optimistic as you start your new job. You expect to soon be one of the top performers in the office. You can almost picture your boss praising your performance during a staff meeting.

But, it turns out that the learning process is more difficult than you anticipated. Some of your coworkers are less pleasant and cooperative than you would like. And your boss doesn't seem to notice your performance at all. Instead of praising you in the staff meeting, he asks you to go get him a cup of coffee.



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You're frustrated because your expectations aren't being met. Consequently, you begin to focus on the negatives—the people who let you down and the things that don't go right—and you lose your positive attitude. You become irritable, your relationships deteriorate, your performance suffers, and you think about quitting.

How can you protect yourself from tumbling down frustration's slippery slope to negativity and reduced productivity?

1. **Take responsibility!** Don't blame people and circumstances for what happens to you. Use setbacks and disappointments as opportunities to learn, not as reasons to complain and criticize.
2. **Set realistic expectations for yourself.** If your expectations are habitually too high, you're going to be frequently frustrated. Remember, one of the most important rules about goal setting is to set your goals realistically high and focus on the results not just the activity!
3. **Strive for excellence.** Striving for perfection may sound like a great idea, but it impedes your growth and productivity. If you're focused on perfection, you'll fail to make improvements because you'll be afraid to take risks. You'll miss deadlines because you're trying to do everything perfectly. You'll hinder your personal and professional growth because your desire to be perfect causes you to be overly sensitive to constructive criticism.
4. **Set realistic expectations for others.** When you expect too much, you set yourself up for disappointment and frustration. Instead of offering encouragement and support, you will tend to judge and criticize.
5. **Frustration cannot coexist with a positive attitude.** Strengthen your positive attitude by focusing on your goals and on the rewards you anticipate receiving when you achieve them. When you are drifting, frustrations can rise up like mountains, but when you are speeding along toward your goals, frustrations become merely bumps in the road.
6. **Recall past achievement.** Emotionally relive the positive moments of triumph from your past accomplishments. For reinforcement, refer to the Goals Accomplished section in your Action Plan. Success breeds success. Remembering your past successes will boost your confidence and refocus your attention on your goals.

