

How to Doggedly Pursue Your Dreams in the Face of Naysayers

What do you do if you have a dream, but everyone around you keeps telling you to be more realistic and to give up the dream? What if they want you to pursue a more “sensible” and traditional career route?

You ignore them. You shut out the naysayers, and you stay focused on your dream.



Photo by [WTL photos](#)

It’s the only way. Because in our lives, we will always have naysayers, we will always have negative people, and if we listen to them, we will never pursue our dreams.

Today we’ll look at how to do that, and to make those dreams a reality.

Reader [Valerie](#) asked me recently:

I’m barely 17 (turning 18 next February), and I have set goals for my life. But in the world that we live in, where everyone’s encouraged to get a steady job, find someone to settle down with, and have a family, I rarely find support for my “crazy” dreams. I want to live in Hong Kong, work in the fashion industry, and I refuse to get married before I turn 30, if I even find someone to marry.

I know that my goals and dreams are completely in my grasp, but with all these speeches about “the real world” that people my age hear constantly, I tend to doubt myself a lot. How can I stay true to myself and stay motivated?

Look at Valerie: she has a dream, and she’s ready to take the plunge, to take a risk, to change her life just to make that dream come true. She knows what she wants, she has a plan, she’s willing to do more than most of us are willing to do to get what she wants.

And yet, she has doubts, because dreams such as hers are not considered realistic. Those doubts, my friends, are what will stop any of us from achieving our dreams.

Doubts are The Enemy

We all have doubts, and they’re unavoidable. And sometimes, it’s good to be realistic, because you need to be able to analyze whether a dream is achievable or not.

But if the only thing stopping you is fears and doubts, and not some insurmountable obstacle, then you need to banish those fears and doubts.

Why? Because a doubt, as innocuous as it may seem at first, has a way of creeping its way into your subconscious, into the depths of your heart, like some kind of black and evil creature that has infiltrated your body. The doubt lingers at the back of your head, without you being aware of it, and will eventually conquer your dreams if you let it.

And when this happens, the doubt is more powerful than you realize. When you are making the tough decisions, like whether to apply for college or to go off to Hong Kong and pursue your dreams, your dreams will lose out, because of that doubt in the back of your head. When you think about yourself, your self-image will not be of that person you want to be, but the person that others want you to be.

Doubts will keep you in a job you hate, just because you're afraid to go do what you really want to do. Doubts will keep you with a person who abuses you, because you don't think you deserve better.

How to Banish Doubts in Three Steps

As doubts are so insidious, how do you beat them? It's three simple steps, but each one is a bit more difficult than they sound:

1. **Become aware.** Doubt gets its power mostly because it is in our subconscious, and we're not aware of the effects it has on us. Instead, we have to bring it to the forefront of our minds. And that means concentrating on our thoughts, and trying to search out those doubts and negative thoughts as they come up. The ones that say, "Maybe I can't do this. Maybe it's not realistic." If you make a conscious effort to be aware of these doubts, you can catch them and beat them.
2. **Squash the doubt.** Once you've become aware of the doubt, imagine that the doubt is an ugly little bug. Now step on it, and squash it with the bottom of your shoe. Not literally, of course, but in your mind. Exterminate it. Do not let it live and spread!
3. **Replace it with something positive.** Now that you've squashed the doubt, replace it with positive thoughts. It sounds corny, but trust me, this works: think to yourself, "I can do this! Others have done it, and so can I! Nothing will stop me." Or something along those lines, appropriate to whatever it is you're doing.

You have to continue to be vigilant, and be aware of your doubts before they stop you cold in your tracks. This is a constant process as you pursue your dreams, not a one-time thing. Doubts, like insects, will continue to come back, even after you've killed the first wave or two. You can't let them thrive and overcome you.

What to Do About Naysayers

So what about those external negative factors — the naysayers? Those friends and family and people in authority who tell you to stop dreaming, to be realistic, to take a more traditional path? Those who tell you that you can't do something?

You have to learn to block them out. Or, if you have a contrarian streak in you, learn to let those naysayers fuel your determination — make it your desire to prove the naysayers wrong!

How do you block out naysayers? The same way you block out doubts and negative thoughts in your own head: you squash them. OK, don't literally squash another person. But when they say something negative, or something that is likely to cause doubts in your head, take that thought (in your head) and squash it. Then replace it with something positive.

If someone is constantly bringing you down and constantly making you feel like you can't do something, you might consider removing them from your life. This sounds drastic, and it can be, but the truth is that having a life full of negative people will drag you down to their level, and stop you from doing what you want to do. I'm not saying you should get a divorce or never see your mother again (if they're the naysayers), but I am saying that you should pick your friends carefully.

Instead, surround yourself with positive, encouraging people. If you have friends like that, you can do anything.

How to Take the Plunge

So you've blocked out the naysayers, you've learned to become aware of your doubts and to squash them ... and

you're ready to pursue your dreams.

But you're afraid to take the plunge.

It can be very helpful to do a lot of research and to carefully plan your plunge. But once you've done that research and planning, you still have to take the plunge. How do you do that?

Imagine that you need to swim out to a boat on a lake, and you're standing on the dock, looking down at the icy cold water. You are afraid to dive into that water, but you know you need to take that plunge to get to your boat. So how do you do it? Do you go in one toe at a time? Do you stand there for awhile, waiting for the right moment? Do you wait for someone to give you a push?

No. You have to just do it — just dive in! You've already done all the thinking you need to do. Just dive in.

Once you're in, it'll be freezing, but you're in. You now have no choice but to swim to the boat. And once you've gotten to the boat, you'll be glad you took that plunge.

That's how it is with your dreams. You can't wait for the right moment to come along, or for someone to give you a push, or for the lake to heat up. Just dive right in!

Once you're in, you're committed, and you have to go for it. You don't want to turn back once you've taken the plunge. Now you're more likely to achieve your dreams.

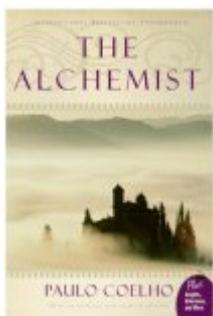
So plan it out, do your research ... but when you're ready, just dive right in. And don't look back.

How to Stay Motivated

How do you keep your motivation levels high in the face of adversity and obstacles that are sure to come up? Motivation goes up and down, and comes in waves. It's impossible to keep it high all the time.

Here are a few suggestions:

1. **Keep the end in mind.** Have a clear picture in your head of exactly how you want your dream to turn out in the end. Know where you'll be, what it'll look like, how it will feel. Know exactly what needs to happen for your dream to be a success — how will you know you've arrived? Keep this clear picture in your head as much as possible.
2. **Stay focused.** Don't get distracted by other goals or pursuits. If you are tempted to pursue other dreams, do so only with the awareness that you are abandoning your current dream, at least for now. If you don't want to do that, then fight off the temptation of those other pursuits. For now, just stick with this one goal.
3. **Get inspired.** Who else is achieving this dream, or other dreams? Read about them, talk to them, email them. Go to websites that inspire you. Read books that inspire you. Inspiration is one of the keys to achieving any dream.
4. **Celebrate any success.** Anything, however small, that you achieve is a cause for joyous celebration. Really. If you're writing a novel, and you've created a great character sketch, celebrate! If you've written your first few paragraphs, celebrate! Your dream will be achieved in baby steps, not in leaps and bounds. Every step is a cause for celebration ... with enough steps, you'll get there.



Recommended Book

If you're looking for a great book about pursuing your dreams in the face of obstacles, I recommend [The Alchemist](#)

by Paulo Coelho. It's a parable that's very well told and very inspiring.

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