

## One Life Goal: Achieved

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We need to teach children to set and work towards a major goal for their lives. Find the home site of author Bill Allin at <http://billallin.com>

The chief cause of failure and unhappiness is trading what you want most for what you want now.  
- Hilary Hinton "Zig" Ziglar, American author, motivational speaker (b. 1926)

While I am not fond of absolute pronouncements (they leave no room for exceptions), Mr. Ziglar's statement contains a great deal of truth.

Why do we trade long term goals for short term pleasures or desires?

This happens more today than ever before in history, likely because people have more opportunities to gratify themselves now rather than struggle to achieve long term goals that may or may not pan out later.

People accept jobs that have them working 75 to 90 hours per week, carry around laptops and cell phones, even grouse when they must turn their phones off while in a theatre, all to accumulate a high income they don't have time to spend effectively. They may lose their families and spend their income on stuff they would not need if they didn't work all the time. Their pleasure comes from buying, not from doing.

People take drugs for a few minutes of bliss, then forget from one time to the next the horrifying experience of regaining their undrugged senses after the fact. Their marriages, their families and their friendships eventually disintegrate, but they need that hit of pleasure for a few minutes no matter what the cost later.

People marry the wrong partners because they believe it will help them in years to come. They get the looks and recognition for a short time, but live years of misery later when it doesn't work out.

People buy products they see advertised--such as cosmetics, cosmetic surgery, fashion design clothing or upscale cars--despite the fact that these rarely achieve their intended purpose (real enjoyment) and often leave the buyer cash-poor, unable to engage in other worthwhile activities because they don't have enough money left. They don't "get it" that a \$100,000 a year income is the same as a \$20,000 a year income if both spend it all and have nothing left to show for it.

Why? The answer, I believe, is that we no longer encourage children to have long term goals for their lives as adults. Rather than urging them to determine what they want to make of their lives, what they want to accomplish with their time on this planet, our culture teaches them to buy for pleasure and recognition and work as hard as you must to get the necessary income (as high as possible) to do it.

In my personal life, I didn't have much in the way of goals as a young man. With my intellectual and physical impairments, social backwardness and emotional late development, I thought I would be lucky just to survive long enough to retire from something.

However, I did have one long term goal. One summer day when I was about 16 years old and working for the summer in a factory, a overheard one worker tell another "I never have conversations with people younger than 25 because they don't know anything." A quick self-examination persuaded me that I fit that, I didn't know anything, not much about any subject, no skills at any trade, no aspirations to get them, no hope.

I decided on the spot that one day I would like to know enough that I could speak with knowledge and confidence on some subject. As I had no idea which subject to choose, I decided that I had better gain a bit of knowledge on as many subjects as possible before I selected one to specialize in.

In the process of devouring information on a wide variety of topics over many years, I managed to neglect deciding which subject would be my specialty. Coincidentally, I became a teacher because teaching held more security for a man with a young family than the media work I had been in. That was an accomplishment in itself, since I was functionally illiterate at the time.

As getting an undergraduate degree, then a master's degree from a university brought in more money for a teacher in my region, I secured those as well. Still functionally illiterate. I became skilled at thinking through a subject for a paper, then searching out quotes in books I had not read to support my theses. (It was easy as I only had to read the quotes the authors of the books had quoted, not the whole of the books. Then I requoted the quotes and gave attribution to both authors.)

In my mid 40s, I learned to read for content and enjoyment. That improved my ability to accumulate more information and knowledge.

Eventually I became someone people turned to for information and answers. As my university experience specialized in sociology, people come to me for advice on subjects relating to the social sciences. I had reached my goal.

It had taken nearly 50 years from that first motivational prompt, but I had accomplished what few others had, achieved my life goal.

Looking around at people I know, I realize that few of them have life goals. Real goals they work towards. Most of them have more expensive cars than mine, have bigger homes than mine and pay taxes on higher incomes than mine.

But they aren't as happy. They don't understand why. So they go smoke some grass or get drunk and forget about it.

Remember, our job as adults is to teach the generations following us to make the world better, not to screw it up more than we did. Long term goals, life goals, are important.

Bill Allin

***Turning It Around: Causes and Cures for Today's Epidemic Social Problems***, a guidebook for parents, teachers and anyone who wants to teach children what they need to know (outside of schoolwork) to make successes of their lives.

Learn more at <http://billallin.com>

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Author: builder

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