

Internalizing Goals

The Power of Control - by Sgt. Steve

Recently, I was speaking with another Sergeant, and they told me about a situation that was on their mind.

THE SCENARIO

They have an Officer who works on their team, and the Officer came to them and asked to be nominated for Officer of the Month. The Sergeant had already been on the fence about nominating this Officer, but once the Officer asked for the award, the Sergeant started leaning towards not nominating the Officer and ultimately decided not to.

It's a whole situation, and the Sergeant was on the fence for many reasons, but the point is: **By seeking the accolade the Officer ruined his chances of getting it.**

The Officer is now unhappy due to his attempt to achieve something that he believed would make him happy. This happens to people all the time, in many different little ways. Have you ever not gotten something that you worked towards? Something you tried to earn, or achieve? Have you done things trying to tip the scales one way, and it turns out that you actually tipped them the other way?

How do we stop doing this to ourselves? How do we stop making ourselves miserable when it comes to achieving goals?

The Stoic Answer: Make Every Goal Internal

Only base your happiness and satisfaction on things that you can control.

For example, if our Officer who wanted to be Officer of the Month so badly had changed his goal to be internal he could have been happy either way. Instead of seeking the reward and telling himself "I'll be happy if I get Officer of the Month," he should have told himself: **"I'll be happy if I work hard to become worthy of receiving Officer of the Month."**

In that way the award becomes irrelevant. Either way, he wins.

Additionally, if you just worry about what you can control, you perform better. The time spent lobbying his Sergeant would have been better spent getting one more arrest, working on one more case. You never know, that might have made the difference and tipped the scales.

Outcomes of situations that are outside of your direct control are often a flip of the coin. When you attach your happiness or satisfaction to them, you are taking a 50/50 chance of being unhappy or dissatisfied. If you will just frame your goals in terms of things that you have control over (your thoughts, your actions) you will have a 100% success rate.

Don't seek awards → Seek to behave in a way that is worthy of the award.

Don't try to get respect → Be respectable.

Don't try to "get a promotion" → Seek to be worthy of the position.

Don't try to be rich → Try to earn more and spend less.

Don't ask to be loved → Be loveable.

Don't convince people that you are a leader → Go out and show them the way.

This one Stoic practice can drastically improve your life if you adopt it. This is how you have a good and positive relationship with all of your goals and ambitions, all your wants and desires. Make them internal.

**Amor Fati,
Sgt. Steve**