

ERIK FISHER AND JIM WOODS

A large, stylized target graphic is centered in the background. It consists of a large outer circle, a smaller inner circle, and a central bullseye. The target is overlaid with a grid of thin lines, creating a crosshair effect. The colors are shades of orange and red.

**READY  
AIM  
FIRE!**

A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO  
**Setting & Achieving**  
**GOALS**

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[Thanks](#)

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**Ready**

**Aim**

**Fire!**

A Practical Guide to Setting and Achieving Goals

By

Erik Fisher and Jim Woods

## Introduction

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We all have the same amount of time in the week—168 hours. But some people—you know, those really successful people who accomplish so many tasks that you think they are superhuman—seem to get so much more done.

How do they do it? Are they incredibly focused, disciplined robots?

What's the secret? Can you too be really successful? Can you be disciplined and still have freedom?

Yes, you can—without a doubt! Remove *impossible* from your vocabulary. It's time to accomplish goals you have only dreamed about. It's time to get healthier, start your business, write your book, or learn a new language.

Whatever you've been putting off, the time is now! Whether you are disorganized, frustrated, or overwhelmed, let's leave regrets in the past and instead take things one step at a time. Most goals can be achieved in 30 days. Start now, and you are that much closer to success.

In school you learned how to read, write, and do math, but you probably weren't taught how to set and achieve goals. This book is a step-by-step process to help you set goals in order to pursue what matters most to you.

Whether you want to start a business, write a book, or spend more time with your family, this book is for you. Each page gives you information, inspiration, and an action step to apply to fit the goal you choose to set.

This book is first in a series of three. This volume is dedicated to helping you focus on priorities and achieve goals. You can read this book in three different ways: all in one sitting, as a daily reading or entry per day, or both. The advantage to doing both is that you can first have an overview and then dive into the details as you work through the process of achieving your goal.

No matter which option you choose, you are encouraged to read this with a notepad in hand, to participate in the action steps, and you will experience intentional growth.

## Ready, Aim, Fire!

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All projects, goals, and endeavors have step-by-step processes. Think about a target. To hit the target you don't just randomly fire at it. Instead, you follow a step-by-step process—ready, aim, fire!

When you take intentional steps, one step builds on the other. This book starts at the very beginning and walks you through the process of choosing a goal and then taking you step by step through the process to achieve it.

The majority of projects can be simplified into three steps: the beginning, the middle, and the end. This concept can easily be applied to goals too: *Ready* is the beginning; *Aim* is the middle; and *Fire* is the end. This book will help you with all three stages, but you must do the work.

All three steps are important, and no step is more important than the other. It's when you follow the logical order that you have the most success. Let's look closer at each stage.

**Ready.** This stage is filled with preparation. It could mean doing your homework, taking time to rest, or spending hours in practice. A portion of the time will be spent waiting. Research is likely involved. This step is not glamorous. It means learning—which looks different for each of us. It is easy to get lost in this process because of lack of intentionality. A million rabbit holes and tangents await. Research—especially with the internet and tabbed browsing in particular—requires intentionality.

Getting ready requires work, so it's easy to mistake this step with the “Fire” stage. For a writer, it could mean writing on a blog as a way of preparing for a book. For a musician, it may mean learning new songs or recording them. Don't assume that this stage is an easy stage or shrug this off as not important. When you want to do something, you need to be prepared. You will face challenges ahead and have to prepare for them. The “Ready” stage is often time spent removing excuses and facing [resistance](#). Why else do you want to clean the apartment or do your taxes when you should be writing your novel or business plan?

**Aim.** This time is one of focusing and setting the scope. Zooming in. Committing. Saying no to other things. Looking at one target, not several. If you want to be successful, understand that the efficiency of multitasking is a myth. Sure, you can get more done—but in a mediocre way. Multitasking is the enemy of excellence. You do not have an endless supply of energy or focus. Both are finite resources. You can do only one thing at a time. It's that simple ... and that difficult.

**Fire.** This stage is a time of executing. It's “go time.” Putting in the work, not finding new targets. Action. You yourself have to do this; no one else can do this for you. It means closing the door and grinding through the work. Staying up late and getting up early. This step is what separates the professionals from the amateurs. Some like to talk about doing things; others like to actually *do* them. Execute—which means putting in the work—and you will quickly separate yourself from the rest.

This step-by-step process will look different for each of us, and that's fine. It's time to start accomplishing your goals!

## Why Set Goals in the First Place?

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Goals are essential to your success.

*“Give me a stock clerk with a goal, and I’ll give you a man who will make history. Give me a man with no goals, and I’ll give you a stock clerk.” [J. C. Penney](#)*

Goals give focus and direction.

Goals require intentionality. A ship doesn’t just leave the harbor and find the destination by chance. The captain has already chosen a port and has charted a course. When you have a goal in place, you know which direction to go.

Goals encourage growth. You should set goals that make you stretch in order to reach them.

Goals provide measurement. When you pursue a goal, you document the situation. If you fail, you can analyze the situation, learn from it, and move forward. If you succeed, you can look back and figure out how you achieved your goal.

To achieve your goals, it is essential to write them down. [This study](#) by Dominican University revealed that those who had written goals dramatically increased their success rate from 43% to 61% in contrast to those who did not write down their goals. If you write down your goals, create action plans for them, and have weekly accountability, the success rate goes up to 76%.

This book will take you step by step through the process from the development of a goal that matters to you to the fulfillment of it.

Make no mistake about it—success is found when you combine hard work, time, and intention with your goals.

*“Everyone wants to improve their life. We can have these big ambitions, but if we don’t break those down and set specific goals, we’re not ever going to get anywhere.” [Crystal Paine](#)*

You are at the beginning of the path. Just buying this book shows you are serious about intention and growth. It’s time to take some of your first steps. Ready? Good. Let’s go.

## Where Are You Now?

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Where are you right now in life? This is the first question to answer before anything else. If you know where you are now, you have an idea which way to go in the future.

Each day is an opportunity to grow and to move in the direction you choose.

Whether you are in college or married with kids, your life constantly changes. A college student with the first class at 11:00 a.m. can easily stay up until 3:00 a.m. Parents of a newborn reshape their sleep schedules around the needs of the child.

Each season of life requires different things. No one else will have the same schedule, needs, or goals as you. So with this in mind, customize what you would like to do to fit your current schedule. It may not be possible to accomplish all you want to do in this season of your life—and that's all right.

*"It may not be the best time for you. Once you determine this is the right time, make sure you aren't sacrificing something that is more important for something that is less important. Then you can talk about where a platform fits in. Maybe it fits in at night like it did for me after the kids are in bed, or on Saturday morning for a couple of hours before everybody's really up. It's a matter of scheduling it so you don't throw your life out of balance by focusing on one thing to the exclusion of everything else."*

[Michael Hyatt](#)

Do what you can right now.

**Action Step:** Take five minutes to write down what you are doing so that you can evaluate when the season you are in right now. Be realistic.

### Example

Dad — Infant son is teething, and toddler has a lot of energy.

Husband — Needs to help wife even more with kids.

Employee — Busiest season at work until fall, so a few more hours are required.

Writer — Write one blog post per week.

Member of church launch team — Attend monthly meetings, make phone calls, and send emails.

## What Are Your Priorities?

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Your priorities should be what drive you to where you want to go.

*“The life you have left is a gift. Cherish it. Enjoy it now, to the fullest. Do what matters, now.”* [L. Babauta](#)

Often there is a disconnect between what you think your priorities are and what you spend your time doing. You can name *God* and *family* as priorities, but if you spend all of your time watching TV, what are your real priorities?

*“Action expresses priorities.”* [Mahatma Gandhi](#)

How you spend your time shows what your priorities are.

Intentionally pursue what matters to you.

**Action Step:** Take five minutes to write down your priorities. What do you spend most of your time on? How does this match up with your priorities?

### **Example**

God

Spouse

Kids

Money

Health

Career

Hobbies

Fun

## Get More Perspective

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When you examine your priorities, you see them from your own perspective. Your emotions, stress, or even lack of sleep can mislead you. If you are filled with fear or doubt, it is hard to make rational decisions because your perspective is skewed.

*“We need a variety of input and influence and voices. You cannot get all the answers to life and business from one person or from one source.” [Jim Rohn](#)*

An outside perspective is needed to look objectively at the situation. Find someone who will be completely honest but has your best interests at heart. With this additional perspective, you can set a better goal.

You cannot see your own blind spots, but others can reveal them to you.

**Action Step:** Ask for input about your priorities from five individuals you trust. Do not just ask family members if you want the most accurate response. Include your coworkers, friends, neighbors, and colleagues. Yes, this can be scary to do—but it is definitely worth it.

### Example

Send a short simple email or text such as this: *Hi there! I need some help! Can you tell me what you see as my top three priorities? Thank you so much for your input!*

## Dig Deeper on Perspective

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Once you've received a response, ask yourself, "What can I do with this feedback? How can I figure out what to listen to and what to ignore?"

Look for common patterns or trends. Remember that you chose whom to ask and that you chose those individuals for a reason: you value their opinions.

If the answers seem to conflict with one another, ask for more information. Be specific. With each question you ask, you move closer to clarity and learning more about yourself.

**Action Step:** Analyze the responses you've received. If needed, follow up and ask additional questions. Write down your thoughts, and know that you are moving closer toward establishing your priorities. Once those are established, you can set a goal that is important to you.

### Example

Priorities given from feedback: (1) kids, (2) family, (3) writing, and (4) career.

If you want one of your priorities to be a daily devotional time with God or more quality time with your spouse, but it isn't one of areas mentioned in the responses, it is likely you have found a priority to focus on. Don't set a goal yet. Just make a note of it, and you can come back to it later. Remember—dramatic change doesn't happen overnight. Right now you are in the "Ready" stage, doing research so you haven't committed to anything yet.

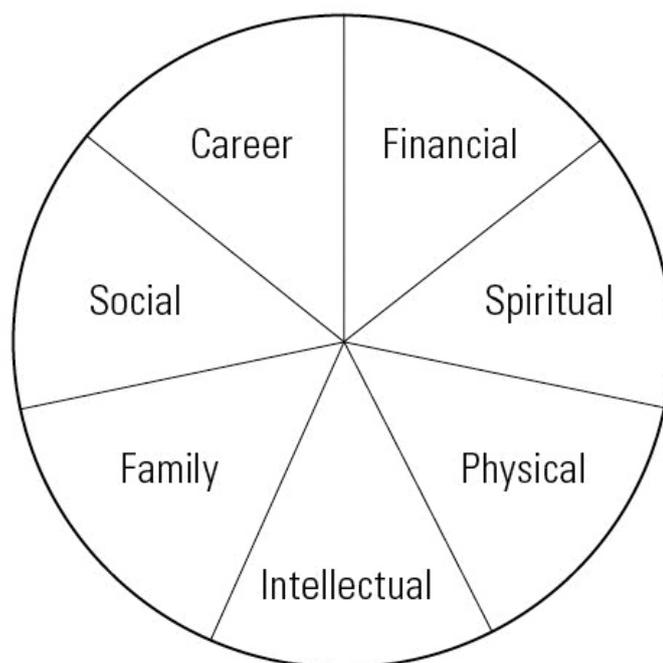
## This Is the Wheel of Your Life

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In this diagram each portion represents a specific area of your life.

Your life might not have seven parts to it right now, and that's completely fine. In a perfect world your life's activities would include doing something in each of the seven areas. But let's face it: if you want to start a business, going to parties is probably not very high on your to-do list.

This exercise is important to help you determine what area to set your goal in. And what you do in one area of your life impacts the others. For example, if you aren't healthy physically, it is hard to have intellectual growth and spiritual growth when you are sick or often tired.



**Action Step:** Draw your own wheel, and give each segment a number between *1* and *10* (*1* being unsatisfied; *10* being completely satisfied). Take no more than 10 minutes to do this. Use a timer if necessary.

### Example

Career — 5  
Financial — 8  
Spiritual — 7  
Physical — 2  
Intellectual — 6  
Family — 3  
Social — 9

## Looking Closer at the Wheel of Your Life

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Refer to your “wheel of your life” diagram you drew. Congratulations! Just by completing this exercise, you have done something the majority of people never do!

Let’s examine the wheel you made. Why did you give those scores? What feels most out of balance on your wheel? If this challenge feels overwhelming, feel free to focus on just one area of the wheel, and take some extra time for this exercise.

**Action Step:** Look at your results and dig deeper by writing out specifically what you are doing (and not doing) in each area.

### Example

Career — just received promotion but not very satisfied

Financial — sticking to budget and saving more

Spiritual — ushering at church, daily devotion and meditation, and weekly Bible study

Physical — not working out, eating junk food

Intellectual — reading a book a month

Family — quality time with kids but very little quality time with spouse

Social — parties, gatherings at church, meeting friends for dinner

## Reflection: What Needs to Change?

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The “wheel of your life” is a great tool to analyze your life, but keep in mind that it is impossible to change all aspects of your life at the same time.

*“Pick the one thing that’s going to make the biggest difference. Focus on the one area that feels like it’s dragging all the other areas down. As you come up with all these other ideas of things that you want to change, write them down and keep a running list and once you’ve implemented that one thing and it’s become a habit, it just happens without you thinking about it, then add in the next one, and make that a habit. Slow and steady, instead of trying to do everything at once.” [Crystal Paine](#)*

Let’s narrow things down. You probably know what you want to change, but let’s bring it to the forefront of your mind.

**Action Step:** Look at the two categories with the lowest numbers in your wheel. What would success look like for each of those areas? Now write down what it would take to change the score in each area from your current number to a 10.

### Example

Physical had score of 2. Success = optimal weight, lower cholesterol, having more energy, not feeling tired all of the time

Family had score of 3. Success = more attention on spouse; intimacy, good communication, time together on dates

Is it possible there is a common thread between the two categories that had low numbers?

In the example above, just having more energy and feeling better will very likely help increase communication and intimacy with your spouse. If you physically don’t feel well, you find it much easier to veg out on the couch and watch TV than to engage in conversation.

## Make a SMART Goal

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It's time to write down your goal. The goals with the most clarity are SMART goals, a concept from [George T. Doran](#).

SMART goals are easy to break into smaller tasks and to follow up on, since the goals are so specific.

**Specific** — Who? What? When? Where? which?

**Measurable** — How much? How many?

**Achievable** — Is it realistic?

**Relevant** — Does it matter?

**Timely** — Is it time sensitive?

*“A good goal is like a strenuous exercise—it makes you stretch.”* [Mary Kay Ash](#)

**Action Step:** Look over your notes, and write out your SMART Goal. If you are not sure what goal you want to set, don't worry! Go back to the “wheel of your life” page, and look at your priorities. One specific area will jump out at you. Give it 48 hours, and then write it down in a SMART way.

If you are still stuck after 48 hours, you can't ever go wrong with focusing on your physical health, as it affects everything you do.

### Examples

Lose 10 lbs. by working out on my lunch hour three times a week over the next 90 days.

Sell \$10,000 in hair bows at online Etsy store over the next 6 months.

Go on family vacation to Disney World in July by sticking to the household budget and saving \$10,000.

## What Fuels Your Goals?

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Many times if you don't achieve a goal, it is because the motivation was based solely on one thing. Life happens, and you get busy, distracted, or tired. Then it is really easy to lose focus.

*"We all need a carrot dangling there—something to be working toward. If you don't have a specific goal, good luck finding motivation."* [Bryan Allain](#)

What if you have not one, not two, but seven reasons to work on your goal?

*"Strong reasons make strong actions."* [William Shakespeare](#)

These reasons will support and encourage you while you pursue your goal.

**Action Step:** List the reasons you want to pursue your goal. Write as many as possible. Post this list somewhere you will see often so that it can remind and inspire you.

### Example

#### Reasons I am pursuing a goal of starting a business

I am starting a business to serve God.

I am starting a business to help others.

I am starting a business to use my gifts.

I am starting a business so that I can spend more time with my family.

I am starting a business to provide for my wife and kids financially.

I am starting a business to leave a legacy that matters.

I am starting a business to have fun and grow.

## Use the KISS Method

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Life is really complicated sometimes, isn't it?

But it doesn't always have to be that way. In the areas you can control, “KISS” your troubles away.

**Keep  
It  
Simple,  
Smartypants (or “Stupid,” if you prefer)**

Life is complicated because we often focus on things that cannot be controlled. Aim toward one goal and you are much more likely to succeed than if you try to hit several at the same time.

Why not treat your goals like the classic Nintendo® game Duck Hunt? The premise of the game was to shoot ducks with the gun-shaped controller. You fired at the two ducks released, not the ducks that had flown away. You focused on one target, shot at it, and then moved to the next one and shot it. If you aimed at two targets at once, you missed both almost every time.

Just work on the task at hand; don't worry about other things you want to do later.

Don't worry about another project you need to do a month from now or an upcoming task you have not done before. You will get to those later.

Simplify your current tasks, and continually narrow them down as you move forward. Do not widen the scope of your project, no matter what. Those great ideas that pop up when working on your goals are distractions, and they often mislead you.

Keep it simple—as simple as possible. “*Simplicity is the key to brilliance.*” [Bruce Lee](#)

Yes, you have a million great ideas you think you are ready to implement, but just pick one and do it.

Until you focus on just one thing, you will not finish.

**Action Step:** What is the one goal you need to focus on? What can you do to simplify it?

## Baby Steps Are Required

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It is easy to feel overwhelmed when you do something new, and this is completely normal. Take a deep breath and exhale. Are you still with me? Good. You can't do everything at once. You're not a robot, and it'll take time to reach your goal.

How can you sort through the confusion and move forward? Just take intentional baby steps. *"When eating an elephant, take one bite at a time."* [Creighton Abrams](#)

Instead of freaking out, turn your goal into bite-size tasks with definitive stopping points.

Achieve small daily victories. Don't worry about making the perfect order of tasks; you can always modify the order later. Just focus on the work at hand.

Success reinforces success.

**Action Step:** Break down your goal into tasks. What will you need to do? If you're not sure, start by writing down what you KNOW will have to happen.

### Examples

Goal: Go on family vacation to Disney World in July by sticking to a household budget.

#### Steps

Figure out cost.

Save amount of money each month for trip.

Find available discounts.

Cut expenses.

Increase income.

Goal: Lose 20 lbs. by working out on my lunch hour three times a week over the next 90 days.

#### Steps

Protect my lunch schedule.

Pack clothes for workout.

Figure out how many calories burned per workout.

Figure out how many calories I eat per day.

## Make a Project To-do List

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The last lesson mentioned the importance of intentional baby steps to achieve goals. Let's take the one step further and apply this concept to one of the biggest challenges—multistep projects. While a project with multiple steps is more involved than a one-time task, it doesn't have to be complicated.

Remember that all projects have a beginning, middle, and end.

Whether the project is building a bridge, writing a play, or starting a business, the project always has a beginning, middle, and end.

If you are stuck, start at the end and work your way backwards. Sort out your thoughts. Many of the things you want to focus on may be in the middle or end—so you don't have to worry about them right now.

Don't worry about the details yet—think about the big picture. You might view this as an outline, which is totally fine. It doesn't matter what you call it. Just focus on the entire process, and break it into stages or pieces.

Try to build a roadmap to completion, if you can. If you cannot put your thoughts in order yet, don't worry. The important step is to get them down on paper.

**Action Step:** Turn one of your projects into a project to-do list. This list will help you sort everything out and move forward.

### Example

*Writing an ebook*

Idea/topic

Outline

Rough draft

Editing process

Marketing/launch

Up for sale

## Insert Stopping Points

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Now that you have created a project to-do list, it's time to refine it more. You have to have limits in place, or you will not know where you are.

What is the smallest piece you can finish and feel good about?

Figure that out and you have the minimum daily requirement needed for your project to move forward.

It is much easier to do a specific task than it is to do an undefined longer project. When something lacks definition, it has the potential to grow before your eyes. When it grows suddenly, a project can spin out of control. Don't allow that—assign stopping points and you can make this a part of your daily routine.

**Action Step:** Create stopping points in your task list.

### Example

*Writing an ebook*

Choose idea/figure out topic

Outline — stopping point

Write rough draft

Chapters 1–2 — stopping point

Chapters 3–4 — stopping point

Chapters 5–6 —stopping point

Chapters 7–8 — stopping point

Edit

Edit chapters 1–3 — stopping point

Edit chapters 4–6 — stopping point

Edit chapters 7–8 — stopping point

Get beta readers and graphic designer

Select and email beta readers — stopping point

Book cover and formatting — stopping point

Find and select designer — stopping point

Conduct marketing and launch

Inquire about guest posts, interviews, and reviews — stopping point

Confirm and do guest posts/Interviews, and reviews — stopping point

Put ebook up for sale

Select service and schedule release date — stopping point

## Refine Your Stopping Points

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Figuring out your stopping points can be the messiest part of the process.

Some tasks will take longer than you expect, so give yourself space with time estimates.

The work you are doing must align with the time allotted, or you will set yourself up for headaches every time and also kill momentum, morale, and any progress. Don't let that happen! Change your time frames and move stopping points as needed. This is what was done below with the editing of the ebook. Instead of three chapters being edited at a time, it was revised to two chapters.

Some parts of projects do not have clean stopping points. It is your job to create them! For example, the "select and email beta readers" task, I did not receive emails in the same time frame. The task did not have a clean break because I had received only 7 replies of the 10 emails sent.

Give yourself some flexibility to make your project list complete. You can always label it with more information as I did below. Julie, Mike, and John did not reply to my first email, so I revised my project list as needed.

Give yourself enough space to finish the work. If you don't, you will get burned out. Expect some interruptions and know you have to be proactive to stay on top.

**Action Step:** Take some time to think about your task list, and revise your stopping points.

### Example

*Writing an ebook*

Choose idea/figure out topic

Outline — stopping point

Write rough draft

Chapters 1–2 — stopping point

Chapters 3–4 — stopping point

Chapters 5–6 —stopping point

Chapters 7–8 — stopping point

Edit

Edit chapters 1–2 — stopping point <— **originally three chapters**

Edit chapters 3–4 — stopping point <— **originally three chapters**

Edit chapters 5–6 — stopping point <— **originally three chapters**

Edit chapters 7–8 — stopping point <— **originally three chapters**

Get beta readers

Select and email beta readers — stopping point

Follow up with beta readers: Julie, Mike, and Jon — stopping point <— **details added**

Follow up again with beta readers: Mike — stopping point <— **details added**

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Have book cover designed and book formatted <— **originally part of previous section**

Find and select graphic designer — stopping point

Conduct marketing and launch

Inquire about guest posts, interviews, and reviews

Confirm and do guest posts/Interviews, and reviews — stopping point

Put ebook up for sale

Select service and schedule release date — stopping point

## Reflection: Process Your Progress

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It's been documented that [Benjamin Franklin](#) set aside time to ask two questions every day. In the morning he asked himself: "What good shall I do today?" and in the evening he followed up with "What good have I done today?"

So on that note, take some time to think about how far you have come in the pursuit of your goal. It's easy to focus on today or the future and not look back. Don't make that mistake. "*Follow effective action with quiet reflection. From the quiet reflection will come even more effective action.*" [Peter Drucker](#)

As you work toward your goal, it is essential to stop and gauge where you are. This step gives you perspective and can help you make wise decisions as you move forward.

**Action Step:** Take some time to answer these questions: *Are you happy with your progress? Is there any way you can avoid or minimize a weakness that is causing you trouble? Does something have to change for you to meet your goal?*

## Face Your Fears

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It can be scary to start new things. The voices in your head say things like “Who are you to do this?” or “Why do you think you can accomplish this goal? You’re a failure.”

*“Regardless of what you want to do, fear will always see you as wholly unqualified for anything you ever dream or attempt.” [Jon Acuff](#)*

Fear is made up of 99.99% lies. A lie with a hint of truth is still a lie. You can accomplish your goal and it is completely up to you and no one else.

Don’t have a conversation with your fears; talking with them will only make them grow as they attempt to rationalize with you. Instead, make a bold statement and get to work. Say: “Hi, fear! I’m going to keep hustling and pursuing my goal. If you want to stick around, that’s fine—but I’m completely ignoring you.” Fear hates hard work but loves procrastination. This truth manifests itself in thoughts like *Not today; I’ll do it tomorrow*.

**Action Step:** What fears are standing in your way? Write them down right now. Fear has more power when you keep it inside. When you write down your fear, the lies fall apart. Then debunk the fear and expose the lie. Now that you have confirmed that each idea is a lie, it’s time to get to work.

### Example

“You’re too old to pursue your goal.”

Such a lie. If you are still breathing, you are not too old to pursue a goal.

“You’re too young to do that.”

Just another lie. One minute, fear says you are too old to do something, and another minute, fear says you are too young. Fear is the ultimate liar.

“You are a fraud.”

We all struggle and fall short at times. Falling short doesn’t mean you are a fraud; it means you are human. No one is perfect. The message that you are a fraud is just a lie to get you to stop from attempting a goal in the first place. When this kind of fear pops up, its occurrence often is a red flag that you are doing something worthwhile.

“You will fail.”

Such an absolute. Fear does not know the future. This thinking is really a worst case scenario, and fear is lying to you. If you view your goal as an experiment, you will learn and grow by default. How then is it “failure”?

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