

Wounded Wolves - The Journey Forward - By Dr. Rick Johnson

2007-09-24

This is a story about finding your way. It's dedicated to any and all people that may have found themselves lost, confused, powerless, in a dead end career, going nowhere and those who may have lost sight of what they really want from life.

It's a story about 'Wounded Wolves' and making the journey forward. Forward to success, self esteem and pride. Maybe a few of you can relate to this as it's happening now. Or, maybe you were wounded once and remember the journey you had to make to create happiness and success in your life.

Being wounded can be a result of many things - a personal crisis, family life, a bad marriage, the way you were raised, poor life decisions, limited exposure to education and learning, and sometimes just being in the wrong place at the wrong time. It can even be just a matter of heritage and the socialistic environment that you become accustomed to as a child.

If you find yourself in this type of situation, often times your attitude suffers, you can't seem to make anything work. You lack focus and you often become paranoid. Optimism doesn't exist. In fact, you become very pessimistic and may even create the self-fulfilling prophecy of failure.

You become disappointed, disappointed in life, disappointed with your job, disappointed with yourself. You begin to dislike what you have become, but you don't really know what to do. You don't know how to change. You may even begin to dislike yourself.

Okay Stop!!!

That's enough with the Doom and Gloom. This isn't about feeling sorry for you. This is about creating 'The Journey Forward.' My very first mentor that took me under his wing at the prime age of 18 years old when I was in the military said these five words to me that I still remember today.

'Never ever - ever give up!'

So.... Let's start there. No matter what situation you find yourself in, make a pledge right now that no matter how tough the journey seems, you are committed, and you will not give up. Your journey may be simply creating a better career path at your place of employment. It may be starting your own business or it may be as extreme as grabbing yourself by the bootstraps and pulling yourself out of personal devastation. It doesn't matter what circumstance you are in. You can create a path forward if you are committed and you pledge to 'Never - ever - ever - give up.'

Let's begin discussing your journey forward by reflecting on another journey.

A number of years ago a 10-year-old boy roamed the streets of Toledo, Ohio. He grew up on those streets learning life's lessons. Like many of us, he came from a broken home. His daddy left him and his four brothers and one sister when he was five. His dad died when he was nine. He was the youngest, the baby of the family. You can imagine that times were tough, feeding six hungry kids wasn't easy, especially without a father figure. In fact, he was on welfare during his entire adolescent period until he joined the military at age 17.

At the age of 10 he sold newspapers in downtown Toledo. He crafted his abilities, his drive, on those streets. He didn't have a plan, he didn't have anyone to show him the way. He only had himself, and he had a best friend, a black kid, named Louie Jones. They didn't have a normal paper route like most kids, delivering to the same house every day in nice, quiet neighborhoods. This young boy and his friend, Louie, did what was known as blue jacking and their territory happened to be skid row. They carried a canvas sack filled with the Toledo Blade. The bag weighed almost as much as they did. They went from bar to bar.

If they couldn't sell a newspaper, they'd shine shoes. If that didn't work, they'd dance to music on the jukebox hoping the drunks and semi-drunks on skid row would throw nickels and dimes at them. In fact, it wasn't Michael Jackson who invented the moonwalk, it was Louie Jones who first did it in a little bar called the Erie Café in Toledo, Ohio.

At the time the young man didn't realize what life should be like. He knew he was wounded but he just didn't know how badly. They say ignorance is bliss, well, this young man's ignorance was only of his surroundings. He was quite an entrepreneur and became more successful on the streets as he grew, but he was wounded and heading for trouble. He started his first business at the age of 15 selling used car parts. He would take orders by day and fill them by night.

You need hubcaps for a '57 Chevy, not a problem, a carburetor for a '55 Ford, you'll have it in two days.

The young man didn't realize how deep his wounds were even though at times he would crouch down and hide behind trash cans and cars as he walked home from school until the rest of the kids were gone so they didn't see him go into that condemned house where they lived on the city dump.

His wounds could have gone deeper but then a life-changing event occurred, he graduated from high school and, at the age of 17, he had no clue what to do with his life. But he did know what he didn't know. He knew that if he continued on the path he was on he would end up in deep trouble, maybe even prison. In fact a juvenile judge explained that to him with crystal clarity. He knew he needed something to change the direction he was headed in. Something to change the path he was on. He was

offered the opportunity to join the military.

It was during the Vietnam Era and the military trained him in Jungle Survival, not a whole lot of different than the techniques he learned in street survival. Not a whole lot different than the techniques you must learn to be successful in business today. Those four years were filled with defining moments in his life. He had no idea what to do when his four years in the military were up.

As he left the military his wounds seemed to open a bit. Self-doubt started to creep in until he remembered those words from that old Sergeant.

'Son - if you want to really be successful in your life you have to want it so bad that it overcomes all the pain and guilt you have stored in your memory. And remember, Never - ever - ever - give up!'

Different Journeys

So What..... What does this journey have to do with you and your personal journey? In reality, nothing. Everybody's journey will be different. I only tell this story to let you know that you are not alone. Most people face some sort of crisis at some point in their life.

Let me share a few principles and guidelines that may help you if you find yourself in any type of difficult situation or you just want to accelerate your journey forward toward success as you define it.

I. Take Responsibility ---- for who you were, who you are, but more importantly - who you want to become. It really doesn't matter how or why you are in the current state you are in. You must take responsibility for it. Until you own it - you can't change it. So... the very first step is to look within and forgive yourself and relieve yourself of any guilt. People won't start respecting you until you respect yourself. Regardless of your situation, no one but you has the control over changing it. But, you have to want it so bad that it overcomes the pain and the guilt. Do something Your chance of winning the lottery is extremely remote. Don't create false dreams. Create productive dreams that have a better chance for success. The 'Law of Attraction' only works when you take action. Stop blaming other people or circumstance.

II. Avoid the Irrational Ghosts ---- Let go of your fears. Change is scary but if you create it, you can control it. Be a little bit of a maverick. Decide to take some calculated risk. Begin to look at all your options. Success principles, and there are hundreds of them, only work if you conquer your fears first.

III. The Time is Now ---- No change can occur until you do something. The beginning of your journey forward starts with you. You may have an angel looking over you but you must initiate success ---- no one can do it for you. Analyze your life, your career, your dreams and your realities. You need a clear purpose, a purpose that motivates you. Figure out exactly what you want to do with your life and call that your 'Destination.'

IV. Map the Journey ---- Nobody starts on a journey without some type of direction. You must go forward with focus, passion, and a sense of meaning. Begin by quantifying your goals. How will you measure success? What does succeeding mean to you? For some it's just a promotion to upper management. For others it means happiness and spiritual wealth and to others it may mean being the CEO. You define success for your life and only you can do that. Don't let anyone else set your standards for personal life achievements. Outline your purpose. Get off the path you are currently on. Every single one of us at some point in our lives feels stuck. Get unstuck. Start by investing in learning. Commit yourself to at least one hour a day of scheduled reading or other forms of education.

V. Write Down Your Goals ---- Write down at least three to five goals for your life, under each goal try to identify milestones along the way that can track your progress. And lastly, under each goal identify specific actions that you feel you must take to accomplish that goal. It's amazing how success rates multiply simply by defining goals and putting them in writing. List specific factors in your life that would allow you to generate the best methods in accomplishing your goals

VI. Execute ----- Some general once said, 'No plan survives contact with the enemy.' To me that means unless you begin to execute, you will never figure out what adjustments and changes are necessary to keep your journey on track to reach your destination. Remember, you're not alone. Many of us have been wounded in some form or fashion. Even the rich and famous in our society have wounds, some may be even deeper than ours. Begin executing by searching for a coach or mentor that can help you. Someone who has been there and done that. You will be amazed to find out how willing some people are to reach out and help you succeed if you are sincere, dedicated, hard working and willing.

It is Possible

This story is heartfelt because it is my personal journey. I am the young man who sold newspapers on skid row. I am the young man who has been inspired for a life time and whose heart holds treasured lessons and memories from the old Sergeant in the military. I Never-ever-ever gave up and I had to learn to forgive! I only reflect on it to let you know I wasn't born with a silver spoon in my mouth. I wasn't a member of the 'Lucky Sperm' club. Although I have the academic credentials, I am not an academic. I didn't complete my formal education in life until I was over fifty years old. But more importantly, I was wounded once and found my way forward. You can too. It may not be easy but it's doable.

Remember...Success isn't a gift. It just doesn't happen. Like the Wolf --- you must learn to lick your wounds. They will heal. But if you are going to create a journey toward success, you have to plan for it. We all live 24 hours each day. What you do with that time determines your success. Ask yourself if you really have defined your destination. Ask yourself if you have defined the map for your journey. Create a self-imposed respect for time. Learn to multi task. Treat time as an investment.

If that ten-year-old kid from Toledo who was headed for trouble can make it, so can you. Be a Lead Wolf. Believe in yourself, work hard, be committed and 'Never - ever --- ever --- give up!'

Thanks for listening, I hope I've opened a door for you that never closes.

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