

Conversations with self-8

Ambition vs. achievement

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Desire and achievement must strike a balance for you to feel fulfilled

Have you ever felt you are falling between two stools — one, the stool of ambition and the other of achievement? I have. Where does this feeling originate? How do we counter it?

Ambition arises because of desire and want; also because we are capable. Yet, when we do not give full rein to our potential and stop short of harnessing it, we stumble. Thus, when we set out to gain and do not, we feel short-changed.

Some of the crippling emotions of regret, lack of faith in self and discounting cause ambition to be misplaced and achievement to falter.

One of the ways to combat this is to learn to be content, to be at peace with what one has. When such a stance is assumed there is less stress and the gap between the extremes of ambition and achievement narrow.

Sven Goran Erickson, the famous erstwhile English football coach captures the four stages of ambition and achievement. When ambition or desire is much larger and achievement very small, the gap is wide. There is a sense of losing out. When achievement is larger and ambition small, there is a feeling of lack of joy in the achievement. One does not feel stretched. When both achievement and ambition are small, there is disappointment and perhaps apathy. Finally, when ambition and achievement are matched, there is fulfilment. The way out of this impasse of mismatched ambition and achievement is to have realistic desires and be content with what one achieves.

If we recognise our humanness and, therefore, our strengths and limitations, we aspire appropriately. In doing so, we will be rewarded with balanced achievement.

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