

The Rat Race Revolutionized (Part 1)

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The term “rat race” is symbolic of caged rats running around in circles or in a maze trying to escape to freedom. All the while, they make lots of noise bumping into each other, but getting nowhere. This picture also depicts individuals working harder and harder trying to get ahead while achieving less and less, like caged rats that run around in circles. It brings to mind images of frustration, worry, stress and unhappiness. The “rat race” phrase, commonly used in the 70’s and 80’s, has been revolutionized to a new modern-day terminology called “life-work balance”.

In the case of the caged rat’s lack of reasoning and intelligence, there were no designed plans to assist in creating an escape route from the trapped surroundings. The only strategy was to scurry around searching for an opening to freedom. Sometimes, in our human pursuit of success and happiness, we adopt the “rat race” mentality operating under a ‘trial and error’ mode. At best our efforts are experimental producing less-than-favorable results. Though we seek happiness and success, we often end up with frustrations, chaos and undue stress.

When we do a thorough examination of the rat’s situation, we are sure to discover key missing ingredients. Applying the right elements will avoid haphazard living and will move us to a more intentional focus that produces high-end results, less stress, and more fulfillment. No more lopsided approaches, scattering and scurrying around looking for answers, experimenting with the new “idea” for the week, and being on the run looking for answers to difficult situations.

In working with my business clients, I have discovered 5 principles that will help you to stay on track and leave behind the rat-race mentality. (Principles 1, 2, and 3 will be covered in this issue and principles 4 and 5 will be featured in December’s issue.) They are:

Principle 1: Know thyself

Start with understanding yourself through honest and in-depth search. Take a self-evaluation or [assessment](#) to get the ball rolling. Here you will acquire some insights about yourself, such as your view of life and things around you, the manner in which you interpret or process information, your interaction with people, among others. Another key piece is being aware of your spiritual gifts and talents; the things for which you are naturally gifted. This is all part of the process to assist you in becoming familiar with your strengths and capabilities.

Knowing and living your values are equally as important as knowing thyself. Become intimate and true to the things you value and believe in for they are key factors in making the right decisions. When you get to the stage of orienting your lives around your values, rest assured that outside pressures would not heavily impact you and you don’t have to apologize for saying no to things that are outside your value line.

Principle 2: Know where you are going or what you want

Now that you have a good sense of who you are, it is time to decide where you are heading in life. Even though the destination may span a wide radius, the principles can be applied just

the same. The Bible tells us that without a vision the people perish. Having a vision is imperative. Generally we tend to associate visions with corporations or other organizations. But having a vision is not limited to business; it can be extended to your life. It is a key ingredient in living a purposeful and meaningful life. [Click here for more on “A vision for your life.”](#)

Principle 3: Have a roadmap to get you to your destination

Take the vision and develop a plan for your life or your business or whatever you so desire. In creating the plan, include goals, timelines and strategies. It is important to spend adequate time blending and combining the right elements. Having a plan will keep you on track and on focus. This eliminates the desire to be all things to all people. Knowing what you desire and moving towards it is key in eliminating wastefulness and distractions. Often a gap exists between where you are now and where you want to be; a roadmap will help fill that gap.

Part two of “The Rat Race Revolutionized” will appear in December’s issue of “Transitions”

Call to Action: Each month a call-to-action task will be given to help with practical applications. This month’s call to action is:

- *Take the assessment, then write a sentence or two on something you discovered about yourself.*

Feel free to share your findings with me. I would love to hear from you.