

Hey, everyone,

In this week's Play Tip, we're going to talk about instant gratification.

This phrase often has negative connotations, but I'm going to talk about it in a more positive light. Most entrepreneurs, by nature, are goal oriented. This isn't a bad thing, of course—it's what enables them to realize their vision and have a big impact.

But there's a big potential downside to a goal-oriented mindset, and that is that you end up living in the future instead of the present.

Here's what I mean. We might say to ourselves, "As soon as I accomplish X, then I will take a break and reward myself." The idea is that we'll delay gratification until we have reached a certain goal.

But the problem is that we often forget or fail to deliver on those promises once we've reached that goal, since there is always a new goal to shoot for. We fall into a pattern where we work harder and harder to achieve our goals, employing all kinds of productivity hacks and time management skills ... continually delaying gratification until some future time that never seems to arrive.

We end up working longer and longer hours, focusing more and more on work at the expense of everything else, ultimately getting to the point where we no longer enjoy our lives or even our work. This is the curse of the entrepreneur, and it's why so many of us are miserable and dissatisfied.

So how do you escape this common trap?

We talked about one strategy earlier this week, which is taking time to celebrate your wins. This is crucial to having a sense of progress and momentum and not getting stuck in the constant sense of "not enough." It helps you to pause and enjoy having achieved a goal or milestone, before you move on to the next one.

But another important strategy is to stop delaying gratification until some future date. A lot of us become entrepreneurs because we want to create a future that is better than our present. The problem is that we often completely sacrifice our present experience for some idea of what the future might look like.

For example, we might think, "I'm going to work really hard now so that I can take it easy and really enjoy my life in five years." Unfortunately, it rarely turns out that way.

According to Peter Shallard, the "Shrink to Entrepreneurs," our unconscious mind is constantly scanning our future, based on the actions we carry out in the present, to see where it thinks we're going to end up.

But once our unconscious mind realizes that our future, at the rate we're going, is going to continue to be just as overwhelming—or even more so—than the present ... it hits the emergency brakes.

Consciously, you're just beavering away at your business, trying to implement all your productivity hacks. Then suddenly you find you just can't get out of bed, or maybe you catch yourself watching Netflix all day, or surfing the internet when you should be working.

This self-sabotaging behavior is the unconscious mind desperately trying to squeeze some pleasure out of the present. It realizes how crappy you're making your life with all this discipline and work. And it loses all faith and hope that you'll ever accomplish the "good life."

According to Shallard, the key to breaking this pattern is to start experiencing the pleasure and fun you're promising yourself in the future right now, in the present.

You need to prove to your unconscious mind that your future will be more pleasurable than a life of crushing work obligations and zoning out on Facebook and the internet as your only release. You need to condition yourself so that every burst of motivation you can conjure up is immediately followed by something emotionally rewarding. Something pleasurable.

We already touched on this back in Week Five, when we talked about the importance of integrating play into your weekly routine. Now you know why it's so important—not only to you as a person but to your continued success as an entrepreneur.

If you haven't done so already, go back and listen to the Play Tip from Week Five and make a list of all of your play activities. Also create a list of activities that are pleasurable and bring you joy. This could be simple things like taking a hot bath or getting a massage, or more adventurous activities like going kiteboarding or rock-climbing. If you need some ideas, check out the list of six ways to bring more pleasure into your life on page 263 of my book.

Then make sure to schedule at least a few of these activities into every week. If you do this, you'll be creating the life you wanted to live in the future right now, in the present. And that, in fact, is the best way to ensure that you'll have the motivation and energy you need to create that bigger future that you imagine for yourself.

Okay, that's it for now. Talk to you next time!