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How Do I Handle Unsupportive Friends and Family While Pursuing My Goals and Dreams?©

Relationships are at the core of everything we do, whether this is in our personal or professional life. When Relationships are more satisfying and encouraging, everything goes better. It is very common that when we pursue a personal or professional dream, that others in our lives may not be supportive, or may even be in opposition to our dream.

It helps to understand the varying reasons this might occur in order to open up possible solutions, without accidentally harming relationships that are important to us. Here's what I'll cover in this article:

- Common negative or mixed reactions from those in our lives
- How to handle these while moving forward in our pursuits
- How to build a support system both inside yourself as well as around you in order to strength and encourage you as you pursue your dreams and goals

My desire is to help you come up with practical and realistic ideas of ways to pursue your dream without damaging your close relationships.

1. Common Reasons Friends and Family May Be Unsupportive of our Goals

I'd love to share the underlying often unstated reasons others' in our lives may be unsupportive... There are many possible reasons, but underneath there is a common factor that is usually present no matter what specific reason it is.

A. The foundational reason people are resistant is that they feel left-out, not considered, or pushed aside. In reality we may have actually considered the impact on a spouse, child, or friend, but we often either don't tell them, don't include them in the process of brainstorming or deciding, and/or don't ask them **what they need** during the transition we are going through. Often, if we can communicate to the other person that we hear them and their concerns, and that we value them and the relationship, they will often get on board or at least reduce their opposition.

So, something you could try in this situation is to go to your loved one and say:

“I want you to know that I really care about you and your opinion and needs as I pursue my dream. I know that you may have felt not included or left out as I’ve been going like gangbusters. I’m so excited about pursuing what I feel like I am made to do, and I’ve probably not kept you in the loop. I’m sorry for that. What do you need to know that would help you feel included or valued as I take the steps to make my dream a reality? What would help you feel included in this process?”

B. The second reason those in our lives may be unsupportive is that the announcement of your dream may be a surprise to them, and may seem rash. This is easy to have happen if a lot of your processing has either been internal, or has not included them much.

Often we’ve been hanging back moving forward on our dream for years. Then, finally it all clicks...we get the courage, become solid in our convictions about our dream, then we pull the trigger...often suddenly and forcefully to those around us. It may not feel sudden to us...because we’ve been developing it inside, stewing on it, processing it for ages internally...then out it pops. For those around us it may feel impulsive, not well thought out, or even selfish, but for us it may actually have been very well thought out, and **is** considering those in our lives. Sometimes without meaning to, we may be trying to push our idea through, expecting them to not have any concerns of their own, which is pretty unrealistic, and can be devaluing to them.

So, something you could try in this situation is to go to your loved one and say: *“I realize that this dream of mine may seem like a surprise to you and not well thought out. I can see how it seems like this may have come out of thin air. I realized I haven’t shared with you step-by-step what my thought process has been, and I’m sure this has been hard for you. Would you be willing to let me share with you in full the thinking process I’ve gone through to go in the direction of pursuing my dream? When I’m through, I would like to listen to your encouragement and any concerns you might have as well.”*

C. The third reason a loved one might be resistant or unsupportive is they may be afraid....often for understandable reasons. If we discount their fears, their opposition will increase. It is actually **normal** for a loved one to fear several things...

- A change in you (become too busy, preoccupied, etc for them)
- Financial costs that affect them too
- You might grown and expand and won’t be interested in them anymore
- You may surpass them professionally
- Fear that you might fail and become discouraged
- Fear of change. It is important to understand that change is very hard for many, many people. For entrepreneurs, change is exciting, invigorating, motivating. For most people it is fear-inducing. We are the minority in this

regarding our positive reaction to change. It may be difficult sometimes for you to have empathy for the other person in this regard because your mindset is so different. The other person who is resistant needs empathy and understanding from us for how our dream is rattling their world. Often our dream shakes our loved ones out of their comfort zone.

If you think this might be the source of your loved ones resistance, have a conversation with them about it. It is important to have this conversation when you are open, and have an attitude of valuing the other person. If you are defensive or angry with the other person, I would wait until you are more centered. Following are a list of possible ways to start a conversation with your loved one.

“I know that all my ideas and dreams involve change, and costs to you as well. I don’t want to miss how you are doing in all this too. Pursuing my dream is important to me and so are you.

- *As you think of me pursuing my dream, are there any parts of it that make you nervous, or bring up fears or concerns? (Then listen)*
- *Is there a way to pursue my dream that also addresses your concerns?*
- *What are you afraid will happen as I am pursuing my dream?*
- *If you knew that these concerns were being addressed by both of us, would that help you feel more comfortable with this?*
- *What do you need in order to know that your concerns are being addressed as well?*
- *Have them fill in the blank, “If I knew that _____ would not happen I would be fine with you pursuing your dream.” You may be surprised by their answer. They may say you won’t love me anymore, you will leave me, or you will become bored with me.”*

2. Unexpected Benefits of Opposition:

First realize opposition is to be expected...don’t be surprised or deterred by it. Believe it or not, there are some unexpected benefits of opposition:

- It can help you clarify your dream or aspiration...
- It can strengthen your convictions...
- It has the potential to strengthen your relationship with the person who is unsupportive of your dream, as you go deeper to strengthen your relationship and value both you and the other person as you pursue your dream.

- It may help you consider relevant concerns or details that your loved one brings up that you might have overlooked on your own.
- It can help build your character and cause you to mature as a person.

3. How to build a support system both inside yourself as well as around you in order to strength and encourage you as you pursue your dreams and goals

It is so normal and natural to want validation, and support from those you love as you pursue your dream. It is important to **also** develop additional support with other friends and colleagues who will support and encourage you.

A. Increasing support from others besides family and friends:

- Join professional groups who are on the same path as you.
- Get online support
- Form or join a brainstorming group of colleagues in your area to give one another mutual support.
- Ask for encouragement from supportive friends (not from critical ones)

B. Building your own support system Inside Yourself:

It is really important to build a best friend inside who can encourage you for your courage, forward movement, and ideas no matter whatever someone else is saying. When we don't have this part developed on the inside, we will be very vulnerable to the opinions and criticism of others.

This is actually one of my passions and specialties...helping people become their own best friend by developing a strong nurturing and encouraging voice on the inside. One of the tools I'd love to pass on is how to counteract negative input from others by how you talk to yourself about it. Imagine a chart with three columns:

Negative input	What is the truth?	What truth can I say to myself to encourage and strengthen me?
You'll never be able to do it because you don't know anything about running your own business	It's true, I don't know a lot about the mechanics of running a business, but I can learn	The truth is: I am a quick study. There are lots of organizations like the Small Business Administration that give free training and classes. There's no reason I can't learn these skills, just like I've learned everything else. I can also get help

		from others. What I do have going for me will take me a long way...like my passion, my purpose, my vision, personality, and a fabulous idea!
You'll fail at this just like you have other things	It's true there are some things I've failed at before, and there are some things I've succeeded at.	The truth is I'm a persistent person, who doesn't give up just because of a few curves in the road. All successful people have encountered lots of failures before their big success. I will stay focused and determined. That person's comment has more to do with them than me.

In conclusion, it's expected to encounter lack of support or even opposition as you pursue your dream. Remember to consider the other people who are being affected by the pursuit of your dream by empathizing how this is affecting them, and come up with win-win solutions if possible. Gain additional support from others as well as developing a "Best Friend" on the inside who can encourage you, no matter what anyone else says, is key to the success of your dream as well as your relationships!

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