



## Relentlessness: Devotion To Achievement

by Esther Muller and Michael Williams, Ph.D.



Few activities in our lives reflect relentlessness. Relentlessness is a choice. We decide to continue or cease continuing. Relentlessness is fueled by desire; our desired to attain, arrive, or achieve. Desire drives us and relentlessness is the result of the driving. Relentlessness is framed in purpose, imbued with meaning, and employed to achieve our goals. Relentlessness is valued for its focus enabling us to channel our resources, and not stopping.

Choosing to be relentless involves sacrifice. Relentlessness of purpose requires our devotion and commit of resources to furthering an idea or achieving a goal. Once engaged we do not stop; our continuous, unrelenting relentlessness becomes the measure of our devotion and willingness to persevere. British statesman and author Sir Winston Churchill wrote "Continuous effort - not strength or intelligence - is the key to unlocking our potential." Continuous effort and unlocking our potential are key components for achieving goals.

Personal and professional developments are culturally reinforced and aspirational. We witness this reinforcement in marketing slogans such as the retired US Army declaration "Be all you can be in the Army." This aspirational invitation is meant to induce a state of creative tension between who we are today and our future possible selves. Its objective is to evoke a vision of a desired or idealized, in turn stimulate us to engage in self-development in order to achieve this vision of the future. While exciting, even inspirational, we must pose the question "do we possess the capacities and capabilities to be relentless in realizing this future." Again, choosing to be relentless involves sacrifice.

Let's briefly explore two types of motivation that enable relentlessness; intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.

### Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation

#### *Intrinsic Motivation*

Intrinsic motivation is when you want to do something. You are self-motivated to pursue an interest or develop a personal characteristic. The task is perceived as rewarding and enjoyable and this is motivation enough or committing yourself and resources to its realization. It is not working toward an external reward. Examples of intrinsic motivation include enrichment from reading a story, feeling satisfied from helping a neighbor, or interest in learning a new skill.

#### *Extrinsic Motivation*

Extrinsic motivation focuses on doing something in order to achieve a specific outcome. The motivation for undertaking the activity is externally generated. It is reward driven or pressured; not intrinsically desired or done for the "fun of it!" Examples of extrinsic motivation include earning money, achieving good school grades, or the threat of punishment.

Juxtaposing motivations and rewards establishes an Axis A - Motivations - What you're motivate to do versus what others want you

to do and Axis B - Rewards - What you want to get from or may discover through a course of action versus what someone else wants you to do. While a simplistic framing of motivation and reward, it provides a degree of insight and perhaps understanding of how relentlessness may develop and endure.

### The Big Five Traits Model

Another view of relentlessness may be found in The Big Five Traits, or Five-Factor Model of Personality Traits. The Big Five Traits Model (Costa & McCrae, 1992) presents five broad dimensions describing personality. Each dimension frames a range of possible and distinct personality traits associated with one of the five traits. Together, the five traits can be used as a guide to consider an individual's general behavior. The Big Five Traits include:

- Openness - Engaged in new learning and experiences evidencing reflection and imagination
- Conscientiousness - Demonstrates consideration for others evidenced by reliable and organized behaviors
- Extraversion - Energized through interacting with others evidenced by assertive and engaging behavior
- Agreeableness - Demonstrates friendly, sympathetic, and cooperative behaviors
- Neuroticism - Presents degrees of emotional instability and negate emotions

The Big Five Traits may influence our choice to become relentless. Combined with an understanding of motivation and reward, its concepts can enable informed decision making.

### Relentless and You

In his book *Civil Disobedience and Other Essays: Collected Essays*, American author Henry David Thoreau wrote "Most men lead lives of quiet desperation and go to the grave with the song still in them." Relentlessness can enable or disable our efforts to liberate our "song." Attorney and Capella University core faculty member Robert Bigelow reflects "My work in the law and education has offered me many lessons concerning the benefits and liabilities of relentlessness. Consider the following when planning the future; think carefully, vision expansively, and attempt devotedly."

Coaches can assist in decision making concerning the role of relentlessness in personal and professional achievement toward self-actualization.

As we write, get coached; Get results! ■

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