

Good morning, everybody. Dennis Engelbrecht, Digging Deeper.

Today I want to talk about setting goals and achieving them and I'm going to use myself as an example. The achieving them part of this is still out in the future, but I'm starting to feel really good and confident about achieving the goal. So, as I was moving into my semi-retirement phase, I felt like I had enough time and energy to pursue a goal of winning a gold ball, which happens in tennis when you win one of the four national championships in your age group. I'm aging into 70 and over this year for my tennis age group, and about a month from now, I actually have my first national championship coming up. So, I have my first opportunity to win that gold ball.

Now, I've always wanted to win the gold ball, but I never really set it as an immediate goal, which had any clarity around it and really had a plan to achieve it. And this is what's important about setting your goals and achieving them, is by gaining a great deal of clarity. And I think it's really helpful when you write it down. I know it was helpful for me in this case to write it down because I wanted to see it, okay, win the gold ball, win one of these four national championships in singles, very specific about what I wanted to do. But the reason I needed to write it down is, first of all, why is that goal important? Because if it's not really important, then I might not really follow through or do the things necessary. So, I had to examine, and I did this in writing, examine why is it important for me to achieve this goal?

And then as you might have guessed, this goal's very specific. I have to beat a whole bunch of other people to achieve this goal, and I've never achieved it before, so why now? Why is it important? And one of the reasons it's important is because there's a lot of good things that comes with it. In order for me to achieve this goal, I have to get myself in terrific physical condition, probably better than I've been in in 40 and 45 years. So, realizing, okay, this is the goal, but in order to achieve that goal, I have to do this. I also play a lot of other tournaments. I play husband and wife with my spouse, and there's rankings and all of those things. So, it helped me to establish some sub-goals, if you will, some subsidiary benefits. So, if I pursue this goal but I don't achieve it, what happens then? Is it a total failure or are there other things that I might achieve that would in and of themselves be fantastic?

And I realized, again, by writing them down that there were lots of things that were short of winning a gold ball that were also very worthwhile for me to pursue. So, if I don't achieve that, but I achieve great physical and mental health, and the mental health by the way, probably comes from competing because competition maybe more than anything else is what drives me internally. So, I'll have all this great competition. I might end up winning a gold ball in husband-and-wife mixed doubles, which we'll be competing in the first national in about three weeks for that. And even this last year, we already won a third place together. So that was a nice goal. I also might get a very good ranking and I can be proud of that, and I might get a second or third or fourth place and be very proud of that as well. So, all of those things are sort of subsidiary benefits.

In order to achieve those benefits, one of the other things that I'd advise for setting goals and achieving them is making sure you're sharing that goal with everybody who's affected by it or has to contribute toward it and be part and parcel of it. So very important in my case that my spouse was part of this because to achieve this goal, first of all, I'm probably traveling 10 to 12 weeks this year in order to play these tournaments. So, it takes a great amount of time, probably going to cost me \$30,000 to \$35,000 for all of the travel, equipment, training, everything else that it's going to take to achieve this goal. And if I don't share this with my spouse, and if I don't share this with my playing partners and other people that are going to be helping me achieve this goal, nobody knows where I'm going, what the direction is, and they can't contribute properly.

So, the next thing for achieving your goals is what are the steps? What's actually the steps, one, two, three, four, five, six, et cetera, that are going to help me get to this goal? Well, I already told you one of them was I had to get in supreme condition. I felt like to achieve this goal, I had to be the best athlete on the court. I had to be the quickest. I had to have

the best endurance. So, I started down that road. So that was very important. Now interestingly, sometimes you have to make course corrections. So, as I started to work on this and I started to work on it really at the beginning of last year for this current year, so that's an entire year of preparation, but what I found was I wasn't making the progress I needed to be making what was necessary. So, I went back to my written plan and I looked at, okay, which of these little things that I knew I needed to do am I falling short on? And there were several so I had to pivot. I had to make some course corrections.

The course correction I made which made the biggest impact is I actually hired a coach. And I had never had a coach, never taken a tennis lesson. So, I hired a coach to help me make the difference. One of the things I had to do was change my tennis habits. I had developed lazy habits, just not reacting to the ball soon enough, not getting in a good position with my body to hit the shots, not keeping my head down through the shot, just little things like this that all of these habits had become lazy, and I had to develop better habits. And I needed coaching in order to tell me what I was doing right, wrong, what to focus on, what to do better. So that made a big impact. The last four months since I hired a coach, just my improvement's been so much more dramatic. It's really astounding. I never thought I could improve at this rate.

And that's the other thing with achieving a goal is if it's not realistic, you lose faith and you stop taking the steps to get you there. I think a lot of people do that with diet plans as an example. But by seeing this improvement, now I have renewed faith. And so, all of this is sort of a feedback loop that helps me to achieve my goals. So very important to have the steps written out, have the purpose of the goal, have some review along the way. And then it does take dedication and perseverance. And for anybody trying to achieve their goals, those are just necessary elements. If you don't have those or don't demonstrate those, you're likely to come up short. And ultimately, of course, keep your eye on the prize. If you really want something and you really believe in it, there's probably a path to get you there. So set your goals, work on a good plan to achieve it, and I think you'll find happiness in life and in work. Dennis Engelbrecht, Digging Deeper.