

# Ditch the Old Dreams That Are Holding You Back

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by [Liz Funk](#)

You finally finished your novel, and all the literary agents who read it said it's a "strong start." But another year of wordsmithing doesn't interest you. Or perhaps you wanted to learn to code, but realized it wasn't at all a match for your core competencies.

All that's *fine*. But did you take a moment to fully acknowledge and digest why you decided not to do the thing you didn't do? Properly letting go of goals is a much more critical step in the self-growth process than we realize.

In her book, [The Fire Starter Sessions](#), self-improvement guru [Danielle LaPorte](#) coined the term "dream fatigue" to describe when you are no longer pursuing a goal or project, but the path not taken continues to be a distraction. LaPorte writes that you need to fully release these goals (and acknowledge any sense of disappointment or regret) to clear your mental clutter and go after your new, more meaningful goals.

"One of the great skills to have is the ability to let go of old dreams to make space for the new dreams," says [Gemma Stone](#), a psychologist in Alberta, Canada. "The feeling of dream fatigue is often that you're on a path, but you stop and look back. In your thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, you are moving in one direction, but part of you feels pulled in another. It can feel like you're not gaining traction on your current path, or that you're spinning your wheels. The first system is to realize that you're being pulled."

[Gretchen Hydo](#), a Los Angeles-based life coach, says that our ambitions can generally be grouped into three buckets: dreams and passions, good ideas and goals, and hobbies and interests.

"Dreams and passions keep us up at night," says Hydo. "Good ideas and goals can be described as 'I could do that' or 'I could make money doing that,' but are easy to walk away from. Hobbies and interests, you could pick up any time."

Hydo says this question helps people sort their old goals and articulate what's currently most meaningful: "Is it your dream or passion, or is it something you 'could' do?"

[Crystal Marsh](#) was a lawyer who decided to become a coach after she counseled a client against filing for divorce. Today, she helps clients get clear on what they really want in their careers.

One exercise that Marsh likes to use is to ask clients to imagine attending a celebratory dinner.

“You are the subject of celebration,” she tells them. “All the people you love and who have supported you will be there. There will be lots of champagne, and the food will be amazing. So, what are you celebrating?”

Marsh says that some people find this exercise scary and will only continue for a minute or two. Yet other people can go on and on—and it tends to bring clarity, fast.

Once you’ve found your focus, Stone says you need to prevent all the distractions and second-guessing.

She says, “Ask yourself, ‘If this is the path I’m devoted to, what are the beliefs, thoughts, emotions, and behaviors that I’m going to need on this path? What do I want now that I didn’t want before? What did I want then that I don’t want now?’”

Stone says it’s crucial to learn to say “no,” especially to yourself.

“Your ‘no’ creates space for your ‘yes,’” she says. “Maybe there are 10 dreams in front of you. If you say no to nine, there is space for that one to come alive and be successful. Take it all the way to where you want to be.”

Stone’s advice calls to mind [a popular Steve Jobs quote](#): “People think focus means saying yes to the thing you’ve got to focus on. But that’s not what it means at all. It means saying no to the hundred other good ideas that there are.”

When it comes to challenges frequently faced by entrepreneurs, it’s comforting when “there’s a Steve Jobs quote for that.” Letting go of some old goals could propel you to create the iPhone of your career, whatever that may look like for you.

*Submitted by Ruth Edge – Cardinia Shire Council*