



# Obstacles Are What You See When You Take Your Eyes Off Your Goals

By:  
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The bell sounded ending fourth period. Paul had about thirty minutes before he had to leave to meet Phyllis. He looked at the telephone as if it were a scorpion sitting on his desk. For ten years he had dreaded making this call. It was time, though. Paul closed his eyes and took a breath. “Dear God, I know it seems like I only pray when I’m in trouble. Please be with us both during this call, and guide me to say the right things.”

Paul knew his father had been sitting in the dining room of his apartment, because he answered the phone on the first ring. “Hi, Dad.”

“Hey, Paul! Great to hear ya. How’re the kids?”

“They’re great, Dad. Joan and I thought we’d have you over for dinner on Sunday. It’s been too long.”

“Love to. Tell you what, I’ll make one of my famous raspberry pies. You should see how plump and juicy those berries are!”

**KEEP A FOCUS ON YOUR REAL GOALS BY CREATING A MENTAL IMAGE OF THEIR ACHIEVEMENT SO REAL AND TANGIBLE THAT THEY BECOME MEMORIES OF THE FUTURE.**

“Sounds great, Dad. The kids will love it. Listen, I can’t talk long, but I’m afraid I have some bad news.”

Paul’s father didn’t interrupt the silence, so he continued.

“Things haven’t been too good at the school lately— big time money problems. I’ve got a meeting with the bank this afternoon. I think they’re going to foreclose the mortgage

on the school. Probably the one on the house, too. Kind of funny, huh, Dad? Here I am thirtysix years old and still bouncing checks.”

“It happens. Will the bank extend you credit or let you pay interest-only for a while?”

“They already did that, Dad. I’m afraid we’re talking fiscal rigor mortis here.”

“What about your big donors? Could they help? Or maybe the public schools. You know, you really take a burden off of them. They ought to pitch in when you need help.”

“Listen, Dad, it’s really too late. That’s all stuff I know I should have done, or done better, a long time ago. But at two o’clock the bank’s gonna shut me down. And you know what? It’s probably for the best.”

*“Obstacles are what you see when you take your eyes off your goals.”*

Every time it was as though Henry Ford’s old aphorism was a freshly unearthed diamond. “I remember the first time you told me that, Dad. I still didn’t make the track team, and Becky Johnson never went out with me.”

“Those weren’t your goals, Paul. You went to law school and married Joan. Those were your *real* goals. And now you’re doing something with your life to make a difference. That takes a lot of courage.”

Paul laughed. “Sometimes, Dad, the line between courageous and crazy is pretty fuzzy, and which side you’re on is only evident in retrospect.”

“Well, of course you’re crazy, Paul, but you always have been. Runs in the family. But you’re also brave as hell. You know, your mother was very proud of you. And

I am, too.”

**THE LINE BETWEEN COURAGEOUS AND CRAZY IS OFTEN EVIDENT ONLY IN RETROSPECT.**

“I know, Dad. Thanks.”

Paul’s father cleared his throat, the way he always did when he had something important to say but wasn’t sure quite how to say it. Paul waited, not terribly displeased at the prospect of being late for Phyllis Nesserbaum. He had a good excuse.

“When your mother was ill, we decided to put her life insurance proceeds into a rainy-day fund. It’s not very much. It was twenty-five thousand dollars four years ago, and

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to tell the truth I haven't looked at a statement since, but it's something higher than that now. Sounds to me like you've got weather problems at the school."

Paul couldn't remember the last time he had cried.

"Yeah, Dad, the roof's leaking pretty bad." "You still at First National?"

"At least until two o'clock."

"Okay. I'm gonna call Burt right now and have him make the transfer into your account so that it's there by two. I hope the weather clears up soon."