

## Overcoming barriers in life

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### What holds women back?

The reality of many women's lives makes 'traditional' conceptions about work and careers (i.e. that work is central to one's identity, the main way to meet one's needs, can be separated from other aspects of life, and that progression is linear and rational) problematic. Not only can the working environment present barriers to women's success but other issues may inhibit progress as well.

### The Types of Obstacles You May Face

There are three types of obstacles that you will likely face along your journey towards your goals. These include personal obstacles, environmental obstacles and social obstacles. Each is outlined separately below.

#### Personal Obstacles

Personal obstacles are related to our psychology, behaviours and state-of-mind. They can include limiting habits, debilitating emotions, fears and beliefs. These obstacles prevent us from moving forward towards the attainment of our goals and objectives because of the thoughts that we tend to dwell upon every day. These thoughts naturally prevent us from making effective decisions and undertaking the actions that will help us create the momentum we need to get to our end destination.

Here is a list of personal obstacles that could be preventing you from moving forward in your life:

- Lack of pain
- Lack of discipline
- Lack of knowledge
- Lack of inspiration
- Lack of desire
- Lack of skill
- Fear of change
- Fear of failure
- Feeling unworthy
- Procrastination
- Perfectionism
- Disorganization
- Pessimistic thoughts
- Too many time constraints
- Too much complacency
- Too much blaming of self and others
- Too many excuses
- Too much complaining



Identify if any of these obstacles are currently preventing you from getting what you want most out of life, and choose today to take control of your thought patterns and begin making better and far more effective decisions.

### **Social Obstacles**

Social obstacles are related to people who either do not cooperate with you, sabotage you, or are simply incompetent and unable to fulfill the responsibilities assigned to them. You will go out of your mind if you try to control everyone's behavior, decision and action. Instead try to subtly influence people and understand their needs, motives and desires. Only in this way will you successfully improve your chances of maneuvering through the social obstacles in your life.

### **Environmental Obstacles**

Environmental obstacles are often unexpected conditions, occurrences and circumstances that you have very little control over. Because these events and circumstances are unexpected, we are often ill-prepared and unable to deal with them effectively. When you plan for the future, you gather a better understanding of the possible scenarios and consequences of your decisions and actions. Planning also gives you insight into additional resources you may need to help you overcome environmental obstacles that lie on the journey ahead.

### **Questions to Help You Overcome Your Obstacles**

Given below are a series of questions that help to gain new perspectives and understandings about the circumstances in life.

#### **Question the Problem**

What are the indications that this is a problem for you? How do you know this is accurate?

#### **Question the Origins of Problem**

How did all this start? Who or what perpetuates this problem?

#### **Identify the Details**

When did it happen? How did it happen? Where did it happen?

#### **Determine the Consequences**

What would happen if you ignored it? When could it become a bigger problem? What could lead to this specific outcome? How does this affect you? How does this affect others? How does this affect life? Could resolving this cause other problems?

#### **Take Control**

Whose behaviour do you control? What aspects of this problem can you control? What aspects of this problem can't you control? How must you respond to what you can't control?

#### **Identify the Positives**

What is happening that is good? What would you like to have continue to happen?



**Gain Perspective**

What are your assumptions about this? How are your assumptions contributing to the problem? What is another perspective you haven't considered? Who has successfully overcome this? What can you learn from this person?

**Expand Your Options**

What could you do differently? Who could assist you? Where haven't you looked for a solution? How will you know when this problem has been resolved? What is your criteria for success?

**Tips to overcome barriers**

**1. Stay focused on the positives instead of the negatives.** No matter what obstacles have come my way, staying positive has allowed me to overcome them. When I was in tenth grade, I had to miss 29 days of school in order to have major back surgery, where seven vertebrae were removed due to spinal cord compression. I knew that the back surgery was crucial and I found a way to make up the school work that I had missed. Staying positive allowed me to keep up with my classmates and graduate on time.

**2. Don't ever give up.** When I first moved out to Los Angeles after growing up in Boston, I went on one hundred job interviews before starting my current position. If I wasn't right for those one hundred positions, I knew there still had to be an opportunity out there for me.

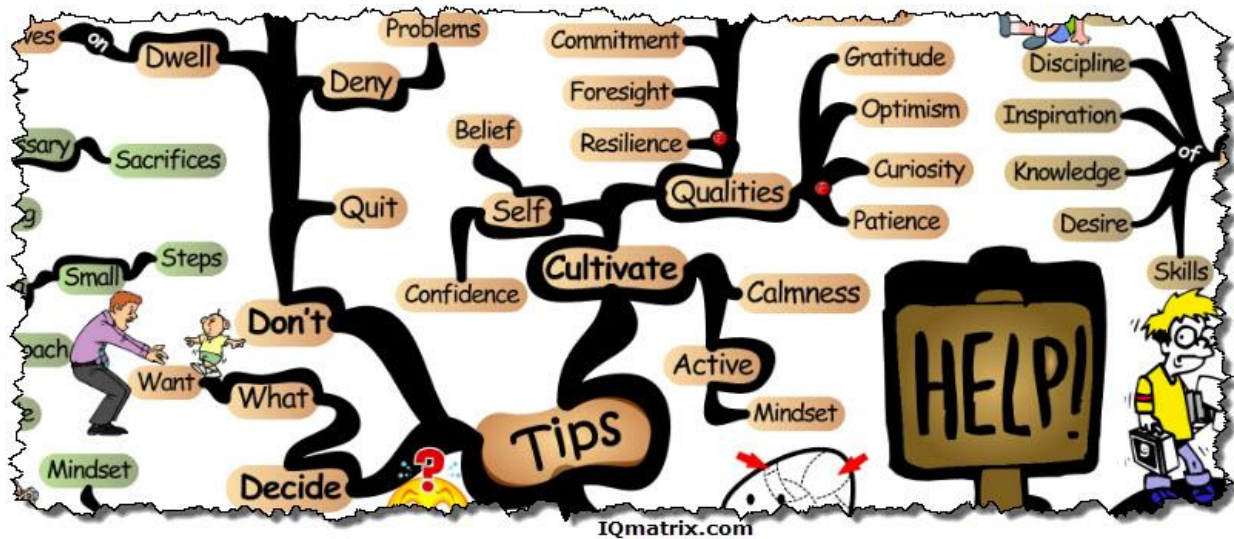
**3. Challenge yourself and try new things every day.** As soon as I wake up in the morning, I encounter a new challenge — whether it's trying to reach something high in the kitchen or volunteering to participate in an optional pitch lunch at work. As long as you try, that's all that matters in the end.

**4. Each day you should ask yourself if you're happy.** If there's something that's making you unhappy, you should find a way to make change. I find myself unhappy whenever I'm surrounded by negative people. Now I'm more cautious of the people with whom I surround myself.

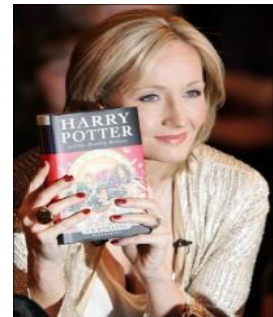
**5. Smile.** A smile goes a long way. Whenever people are staring or laughing at me for whatever reason, keeping a smile on my face causes them to wonder why I don't react.

**6. Don't compare yourself to others and find time to celebrate your little accomplishments.** I always set my own goals. Although we all wish we could get there as fast as it seems others have, I've found ways to enjoy the journey and celebrate each little success on the way. After missing almost a whole season on the youth soccer team, due to my back surgery during the spring of my sophomore year in college, I found a way to play in the last game of the season. I never scored a goal but participating was just as important to me. After long recovery, this was a huge accomplishment for me.

Next time you're out and about, try to find someone to smile at and say hello to. If they look like they're struggling, try to help them out. Take the chance to learn from them.



**Living example- J.K Rowling-** The woman behind the popular Harry Potter series was a single mother living on welfare when she wrote the first book of the series. She was rejected by 12 different publishers before selling her book for a measly \$4000. The work was an international hit and Rowling went on to write 6 more books for the series, which sold into the hundreds of millions of dollars, and was adapted into a huge blockbuster film franchise. Rowling is now the 13<sup>th</sup> wealthiest person in Britain, even wealthier than the Queen.



### Quotes to remember

- We were all brought to this earth for a reason and have the ability to do whatever we want with our lives.
- The truth is that everyone struggles in their everyday life in one way or another.
- It's about staying positive and making the best of what you have.
- Our real disabilities come from the inside.
- If you have never failed you have not tried anything new.