



What does success mean to you?

Have you ever wondered about what success means to you? I mean, what it really means? Not just the definition, but rather what it *feels* like to be successful, to achieve something of significant relevance *to you*? I think for people with ADHD, like me and maybe you, the very word and the meaning of success is alien. We have read about it and heard about it and yet, rarely have we identified with it.

Are you successful?

If that seems like a loaded question, it's not, but I think to a lot of us, it seems that there may be some hidden implication within the question itself. If you say yes, then you are lying and displaying conceitedness! How dare you! Bow your head in proper shame. That's not the voice from someone else; as a matter of fact it's not a voice at all. It's a perception that many of us have. It's a rather solid perception too, because without hesitation we can back it up with a long list of failures that will cut us to the quick faster than we can even think. But, there's more to it.

ADHD is so widespread and common, that sometimes we forget how unique and complex it is. We forget that ADHD affects us beyond the normal range of symptoms that are involved. ADHD can have such a profound effect on our lives that too many of us become unable to identify ourselves with anything that we have done which is, or at least could be, considered successful.

Since I have created ADDer World I have met so many wonderful and, by what seems like all rights, successful people with various educational degrees – Associates, Bachelors, Masters and PhD's and I have met Mother's and Father's, husband's and wives', business owners and website designers, authors, bloggers and coaches, mentors and the list goes on...

And yet, I have rarely met those that feel they are successful.

At every level, most all of us seem to be doing the same thing – *striving!* But, for what?! That's the question.

You could, for a moment, consider that in our culture to admit success is wrong, it is an unwritten rule – but no, it's more than that, for me and others it's a belief grounded within us and it comes from our very nature and if we don't do something about it, no matter what we do, no matter how far we go or how much we achieve, we will never feel that we have been successful. Yes, the other shoe may very well drop tomorrow, but what you do today does matter, it does have significance and it is okay to admit that you did something well, perhaps very well, indeed. Just because tomorrow may bring with it mistakes and maybe a blunder here and there, it still does not negate something good we did today or yesterday! That's easy to read, I know.

We beat ourselves up so much in preparation for our missteps to come that we hardly ever appreciate what we have accomplished. Some of us are striving so desperately for some unknown goal that we almost never stop and say – 'Wow, I did that!' I have won pool tournaments, but before I sunk the last ball I was already thinking of my ranking and how I could make it to the next tournament (hotel fair, paying for gas, entrance fee etc). It was never enough, but I tell you what – when I *lost*, I took full credit immediately, there was no hesitation to chastise and belittle myself.

Those of us with ADHD, most of us are so used to not meeting expectations and failing to accomplish the most mundane of things that we are relentlessly chastising ourselves. The crux of it is that a lot of us accomplish so much that others, looking on from the outside must think we are delirious with a need to overachieve! Then, and this is an important one for me, there's the fact that what others consider achievement or success is not what we always feel or believe is successful. Awards and trophies may mean nothing to us, but a simple thank you may mean the world. I remember as a child that I was on a bowling team that was always number 1 and friends would think I was some kind of awesome bowler, but in reality, for the longest while, I was terrible at it and it was my handicap that helped my team! I knew the truth, so being on a number 1 team really didn't mean as much to me as some think it should have. Winning a simple game of marbles in the backyard meant much more to me than being on a number 1 team in something I wasn't really that good at! But nobody cared that I could play a mean game of marbles, even though at that time in my life playing marbles was the most delightful experience *for me*.

It's easy to learn that the things that make us feel successful don't mean all that much to anyone else. Besides, all the trophies I won as a child, which was recognized by others as successes were destroyed right in front of my eyes because I failed in other things of greater importance. I couldn't win for losing and why should I identify with success when it is going to be used against me anyway? Doesn't it seem that life and success feel that way more often than not? But, alas, we often feel as though we should give up and yet *we don't*, but we strive and strive for what? Why don't we take a sincere moment to answer that to ourselves, forget for a moment what others may want of you or what others think you should be doing with your life.

What do *you* want?

What does success mean to *you*? Can you identify with success?

Why do we all too often fail to recognize we have achieved something?

You know what I think – I think it would help if we stop for just a day, or at least an hour, from listening to the chatter about how we could be better, how we need to improve, how we need to get help, because, basically those things are beating us up like there is no tomorrow. The message comes in very clear, *we get it: We are never enough, we are messed up, and we have a disorder! We get it already.* How about we take a moment to recognize the things we have done well, the things we have accomplished! Write them down, shout them out and then tomorrow, we can go ahead and continue the self improvement we all seem to invest our lives in, all the while, sadly, ignoring what really matters to ourselves – even though we think that’s what all the so called ‘self improvement’ is about.

You know what I am going to do today?

I am going to go play a game of marbles.

What does success mean to you? Can you define it?

By Bryan Hutchinson

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