



Are you being pushed towards success by a force that is not entirely under your control?

Dr Shyam Bhat

Don't be driven. Be the driver

You are probably the sort of high achiever who has little time for frivolous nonsense. Sure, you might party hard on weekends, perhaps play a round of golf or two, spend some 'quality time' with the family, but for the most part, you are oriented towards tangible results. You are constantly aware of the ticking clock and are propelled onwards in your life by a need to excel. You are competitive. You often compare yourself with others, and with yourself – with your past achievements, with as yet unrealised goals. You cannot help but feel a twinge of jealousy if a peer gets a promotion before you do, and occasionally, you might look at your boss and think, "I could do a better job. When will my time come?" All the while, you are aware of your juniors, who are even now nipping at your heels, increasing your sense of urgency.

This is your inner world, one of restless desire, of relentless striving. People probably refer to you as being 'driven', a high compliment in our contemporary corporate culture.

But since you are taking a few minutes to read this article, and this is your space for reflection, let me ask you this: If you are driven, what drives you?

Is it possible that you have always been driven by fear? The fear of insignificance, of annihilation, of mediocrity, ceaselessly pushing you, ever onward, not allowing you to breathe. Yes, you are successful – fear often propels people to success, especially when combined with talent and discipline, but like an engine that is feeding off the wrong kind of fuel, fear ultimately clogs up the system. Sooner or later, the soul begins to hurt. "What is the point of all this?" the soul whispers to you in the quiet

of the night. Victories bring momentary respite but the need for success is a bottomless pit, swallowing everything you feed it, reducing it all to meaninglessness. Like a drug, the fear that drives success is difficult to give up. As one senior executive I saw in therapy put it, "If I let it go, then I might just sit around and do nothing."

Ironically, at the root of all fear is the fear of giving up fear – "Without this driving force, will I be complacent and ineffectual at work?" And so, the cycle goes on.

But consider the artist who creates art for the sake of art itself, consider that he or she wakes up in the morning enthused not by the results but by the process, the joy of putting paint on canvas. The truly inspired artist is a pure expression of the energy of creation, creating art for art's own sake, although success, the kind of meaningful authentic success you really crave, has a curious way of arriving at the door of a person who is not seeking it.

So don't be driven. Focus instead on the doing, on the process, on the joy of creation and of being alive. You will be inspired, you will be even more of an inspiration to those around you. Of course, people won't understand your newfound energy and might say, "You seem so driven." Upon which, you might want to tell them, "I am not driven. I am the driver."

A psychiatrist, integrative medicine specialist and writer, Dr Shyam Bhat lives and works in Bangalore. He combines western medicine and psychiatry with eastern philosophy and spirituality in the domains of mind-body wellness, stress management, work-life balance, and leadership.

Visit him at www.shyambhat.com