

Fire versus Rage: Motivation in Rejection

What motivates you? That questions asked all the time when you read self-help guides or are in discussions about finding what your future thing to do is. What is more interesting to me is what motivates you in the hardest moments.

A Personal View of Motivation in Rejection

When I was in Grade 5 I was in an enriched learning program. The bonus learning program meant that a handful of students get to hang out in the library for 4 hours a week rather than traditional classroom learning. We did things like logic puzzles, learned the periodic table, and studied things that were outside the normal curriculum.

The challenge at one point was to learn the greek alphabet and be able to recite any letter from flash cards as practice with the goal of reciting the greek alphabet from Alpha to Omega from memory in just one week. Did I mention I'm also dyslexic? I struggled more than normal on certain tasks and was also a little on the lazy side (still am). End result is that I got three quarters through the alphabet and mixed up order of letters twice. What was the punishment? Back to regular class and pulled from the program because of "lack of commitment".

Rejection sucks, now what?

I remember the pain it created. I was torn up inside about why I let myself miss out on this opportunity. That was an important part of dealing with it. I didn't blame anyone. I was just upset that I missed an opportunity that I knew I could do. So, now what would I do about this?

The next day I came in to the teacher (Mr. Fitton...I still remember how you motivated me) and I asked "can i have a quick discussion with you?". He very kindly said yes, and I recited the alphabet from end to end without missing a beat. I then wrote it on the paper while saying it and explained that it was writing it over and over again that helped me learn, more than the flash cards.

End result: I was back in the program and we then spent the next few weeks of enriched program time studying the effect of learning for short, medium, and long-term memory and memory training techniques.

Fire versus Rage: Thank you, Jason Fried and Tim Ferriss

Listening to the Tim Ferriss podcast recently with Jason Fried brought this moment to light again for me. Jason Fried, co-founder of Basecamp, developer, and author, shared stories of his youth and how when he was rejected from a development award that it didn't create rage for him, but it created fire. The difference is important.

Rage is reactive, and spiteful. It's the same emotion that is usually associated with blame. The world isn't out to get you. Interactions you see every day on social media proves that people are possessed with a little too much rage sometimes as they continuously seek opportunities to be offended and to initiate a blame game. Motivation by rage is unhealthy.

I remember this from many years ago in talk radio and there was a lot of ire about Howard Stern. Love him or hate him, what was interesting was this:

Researcher: The average radio listener listens for eighteen minutes a day. The average Howard Stern fan listens for – are you ready for this? – an hour and twenty minutes.

Kenny: How could this be?

Researcher: Answer most commonly given: “I want to see what he’ll say next.”

Kenny: : All right, fine. But what about the people who hate Stern?

Researcher: Good point. The average Stern hater listens for two and a half hours a day.

Kenny: : But... if they hate him, why do they listen?

Researcher: Most common answer: “I want to see what he’ll say next.”

There’s some gold in there. Much of today’s time for people is being spent rage-listening or rage-watching or rage-reading news and social media. Not healthy.

Fire, on the other hand, is about taking that rejection or failure and finding a truly self-initiated motivation to not let that negative experience hold you back. If anything, it should propel you forward!!

I highly encourage you to listen to the podcast which can be found here: <https://tim.blog/2018/07/23/jason-fried/>

This is a great motivator and a reminder of how everyone learns and evolves differently. What makes us able to help each other is not how things are when they go well, but how we react when things are bad. My most powerful forward-moving moments have been propelled by harsh lessons which could have easily taken me off my path. I chose to use that motivation to create my fire to drive getting past it.

Find your fire, and stop with the rage.