

I Want To Be At The Top

By Nayanna Chakraborty

Life is a constant struggle to achieve the unattainable. The world outside our domain seems like a jungle and those who believe in the statement – ‘survival of the fittest’ are usually at the top.

Being competitive is a learnt behavior. We are not born with this trait but are groomed into it. It behaves like a small implant that creeps into our system, disguised as a cell component and remains rooted to our central nervous system. It grows and feeds on our every emotion.

Initially, it performs as an ego booster, putting us high on the popularity charts, making us believe that conquering the world is easy. It is highly addictive. The mind and body become victims of this power drug and the ego acts as its deep-seated supplier. Rarely do we find the ego mellow down in its control.

Nothing tastes sweeter than the flavor of success and I became its victim at kindergarten when I won my first sack race. My prize was a white ceramic plate with a golden border and bold lettering in the centre stating - “Winner”.

This trophy was placed in my room, always reminding me of my victory. It seemed to work like a silent motivator lurking somewhere in my subconscious mind. I woke up gazing at it and slept staring at it. I sometimes felt that maybe the ceramic plate had some special mind controlling powers. Step by step I marched ahead, winning all the accolades of my academic life. The adrenalin rush that I experienced when the principle announced my name as the top ranking student of the year, in front of the entire college, I felt invincible. It was a sensation that can never be matched with the thrill of a bungee jumping or skydiving event. After this, there was no turning back. I continued to prove my supremacy in every aspect of my life. Soon I was competing with my own self, battling each day to beat the narcissist inside.

My personality transformed into a pompous, overbearing person who people started to avoid. I pretended to the world that I was confident and in control but inside I was always insecure. Heavens forbid if anyone else was praised besides me. I would make sure that never happened. The limelight was always supposed to be only mine.

Craving for attention seemed to be my sole reason for living. Stress and conflicts were my constant bodyguards. Every morning, when I opened my eyes I wondered, “What will happen when my luck runs out? How will I survive? Surely I will have a nervous breakdown someday.” The relentless pursuit to outshine others gave me both pleasure and pain. My mind and ego enjoyed a symbiotic relationship. They were my constant source of reinforcement and self destruction.

But there are some positive benefits of being competitive. It makes us work harder, helps in identifying our shortcomings and creates an interest to excel. It functions as a reality check indicator and monitors our progress when we compare ourselves with our peers. We involuntarily develop a feisty attitude. The thrill of competing adds variety and excitement to our otherwise routine and monotonous lives.

So the question still lingers on, is competing good or bad? Well ... this depends on one's approach to life. For those who believe that competing is everything in life, they should remember that it is definitely lonely at the top. And others who feel that winning is not always important should not be written off as complete losers.

I ranted and struggled through rough torrents but in the end, I realized that happiness and being content with what we have brings immense satisfaction. To maintain this everlasting bliss we need to know that whatever happens ... is for the best. With this belief, my journey through life has become smoother and more secure. Those out there who you are in a hurry to reach to the top may find this advice too sissy. So keep ranting and raving. Some day, when your time comes, you too will realize what makes you genuinely happy.

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