



## Coaching Works *Monthly*

In Irons

May 2007

### Tools and Tips

By being able to identify when you're blowing wind into your own sail, you can leverage more of your time and energy towards real progress in life.

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***When in doubt, close your eyes, take 10 slow, deep breaths, and reassess. Often, this small shift in perspective is just enough to get you going again in the right direction.***

### Food for Thought

***Opportunity, like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder.***

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### In Irons

Yesterday, I'd hoped for a productive day at work. Finishing an overdue article was my top priority. I'd been challenged of late, having wrestled with a number of topics, yet unable to hit any nail on the head, each time I tapped at the keyboard.



So there I was, back at it again. After a few of hours of typing, I'd realized that I'd gone full circle, with nothing much to show for it (other than feeling frustrated, tired, and stuck). I call it blowing wind into my own sail.

Once I understood what I was doing, it was time to call it quits. I went home, talked with my wife, vented my frustration, and went for a run. Out of the blue, clarity arrived. It was time to sail in a different direction, with a brand new topic.

So now I'm back on the keyboard, "in irons". In sailing, this term is used when the wind completely stops, while out on the open water. Without a motor, it also means getting nowhere fast. Interestingly enough, some of life's most insightful moments and meaningful conversations can take place, on board a boat where no wind is available.

In life, being in irons simply means having lost touch with the direction you're going, even if you think you're getting there. In other words, it's an opportunity to tune in to the direction you really want to go, and identify how to most effectively arrive.

Whether it's being stuck in a dead-end job, having lost the vision for your marriage, or being overwhelmed with the demands of your business, being in irons is a window of possibility. Once the breeze stops, the chance to experience intimacy with yourself, those around you, and your surroundings, can provide powerfully illuminating clarity and perspective about your vision, mission, and goals, and the strategies used to achieve them.

Unfortunately, this experience tends not to be valued in our highly driven culture. Instead, the lack of forward progress implies the need to exert even more pressure, to insure successful results. Well, not exactly. As yesterday's experience revealed, the harder I typed, the more I spiraled in on myself. Perhaps you can relate.

With that in mind, being able to both recognize and leverage being becalmed on the high seas, is key, in order to manufacture something from "nothing". Otherwise, a boatload of huffing and puffing will prevail, generating plenty of intensity inside the sail, but no real movement towards your desired goals. The following list should help you to recognize some of the more common signs of being in irons:

- feeling overly discouraged, frustrated, exhausted, stressed, and/or overwhelmed
- a persistent lack of enthusiasm, energy, motivation, and creativity
- loss of focus, clarity, and vision
- repeating the same behaviors, while hoping for different results
- a series of false starts
- little or no return on investment (ROI) of time, energy, emotions, or money
- blowing wind into other peoples "sails" (i.e., being overly controlling, manipulative, and critical of others)

Here are a few simple, yet highly effective strategies, which will help put meaningful wind back into your sail:

- taking a time out from the person, placed, or situation
- redirecting energy elsewhere
- meditating
- exercising
- spending time in nature
- nurturing religious/spiritual beliefs
- sharing thoughts, feelings, and perspectives with a trusted confidant
- identifying the opportunity in the situation
- hiring a coach

As I discovered yesterday, getting locked in irons isn't hard to do. Having the right strategy in place, once the wind stops blowing, however, will spell the difference between time spent spinning in circles, and time well spent. Here's to your success!

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