

It Only Takes a Nitty-Gritty Reason to Succeed

by Jim Rohn

Wouldn't it be wonderful to be motivated to achievement by such a lofty goal as benevolence? I must confess, however, that in the early years of my struggle to succeed, my motivation was a lot more down-to-earth. My reason for succeeding was more basic. In fact, it fell into the category of what I like to call "nitty-gritty reasons." A nitty-gritty reason is the kind that any one of us can have—at any time, on any day—and it can cause our lives to change. Let me tell you what happened to me...

Shortly before I met my mentor, Mr. Earl Shoaff, I was lounging at home one day when I heard a knock at the door. It was a timid, hesitant knock.

When I opened the door I looked down to see a pair of big brown eyes staring up at me. There stood a frail little girl of about 10. She told me, with all the courage and determination her little heart could muster, that she was selling Girl Scout cookies. It was a masterful presentation—several flavors, a special deal, and only \$2 per box. How could anyone refuse? Finally, with a big smile and ever-so politely, she asked me to buy. And I wanted to. Oh, how I wanted to!

Except for one thing.

I didn't have \$2! Boy, was I embarrassed! Here I was—a father, had been to college, was gainfully employed—and yet I didn't have \$2 to my name.

Naturally I couldn't tell this to the little girl with the big brown eyes. So I did the next best thing. I lied to her. I said, "Thanks, but I've already bought Girl Scout cookies this year. And I've still got plenty stacked in the house." Now that simply wasn't true. But it was the only thing I could think of to get me off the hook. And it did. The little girl said, "That's okay, sir. Thank you very much." And with that she turned around and went on her way.

I stared after her for what seemed like a very long time. Finally, I closed the door behind me and, leaning my back to it, cried out, "I don't want to live like this anymore. I've had it with being broke, and I've had it with lying. I'll never be embarrassed again by not having any money in my pocket." That day I promised myself to earn enough to always have several hundred dollars in my pocket at all times.

This is what I mean by a nitty-gritty reason. It may not win me any prize for greatness, but it was enough to have a permanent effect on the rest of my life.

Unless you change how you are, you'll always have what you've got.

My Girl Scout-cookie story does have a happy ending. Several years later, as I was walking out of my bank where I had just made a hefty deposit and was crossing the street to get into my car, I saw two little girls who were selling candy for some girls' organization. One of them approached me, saying,

"Mister, would you like to buy some candy?"

"I probably would," I said playfully. "What kind of candy do you have?"

"It's almond roca."

"Almond roca. That's my favorite. How much is it?"

“It's only \$2.”

It couldn't be! I was excited. “How many boxes of candy have you got?”

“I've got five.”

Looking at her friend, I said, “And how many boxes do you have left?”

“I've got four.”

“That's nine. Okay, I'll take them all.”

At this, both girls' mouths fell open as they exclaimed in unison, “Really?”

“Sure,” I said. “I've got some friends that I'll pass some around to.”

Excitedly, they scurried to stack all the boxes together. I reached into my pocket and gave them \$18. As I was about to leave, the boxes tucked under my arm, one of the girls looked up and said, “Mister, you're really something!” How about that! Can you imagine spending only \$18 and having someone look you in the face and say, “You're really something!”

Now you know why I always carry a few hundred dollars on me. I'm not about to miss chances like that ever again. And to think it all resulted from my own embarrassment, that when properly channeled, acted as a powerful motivator to help me achieve.

How about you? What nitty-gritty reasons do you have waiting to challenge and provoke you into change for the better? Look for them—they are there. Sometimes it can be as simple as a brown-eyed girl selling Girl Scout cookies.