

The Thread of a Dream by Denis Waitley

When I was researching the history of the building of the Brooklyn Bridge as a major illustration for the ideas of success and motivation, I became engrossed with the story of how the first bridge was built over the Niagara River near Niagara Falls. You see, to build a bridge over a giant gorge, first you have to get a line over the canyon, from one side to the other. Easier said than done at Niagara Falls.

The engineers couldn't cross the river in a boat to take the line from one side to the other because the boat would go over the falls. And the airplane hadn't been invented yet. The distance was also way beyond the bow-and-arrow range, which had been a common method at the time of getting the first line across to build a bridge.

The designing engineer, Charles Ellet, pondered the question until he came up with a revolutionary idea. He decided that, while solving the problem, he would also have some fun and generate some publicity for the project. Ellet sponsored a kite flying contest and offered five dollars to the first person who could fly a kite across the gorge and let it go low enough to the ground for someone to be able to grab the string. In 1849, five dollars was a prize similar to a small lottery today. The boy who won the prize relished his accomplishment until his death, nearly 80 years later.

It all began with an idea and one thin kite string. The kite string was used to pull a cord across, then a line, then a rope. Next came an iron-wire cable and then steel cables, until a structure strong enough to build a suspension bridge was in place.

I'm struck by how that string is like a single thought. The more vivid and clear the thought, and the more you come back to it, the stronger it becomes—like the string to the rope to a cable. Each time you rethink it, dwell on it, or layer it with other thoughts, you are strengthening the structure on which to build your idea, like building a bridge over Niagara Falls. But unlike a kite, there is no string attached to how high and how far your goals may take you. They are limited only by the power of your imagination and the strength of your desire.