

John C. Maxwell: 5 Reasons Why Dreams Don't Take Flight

Recognize the things that trap our dreams—and overcome them.

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A lot of us never see our dreams come true. Instead of soaring through the clouds, our dreams languish like a broken-down airplane confined to its hangar.

Through life, I have come to identify five common reasons why dreams don't take flight:

1. We have been discouraged from dreaming by others.

We have to pilot our own dreams; we cannot entrust them to anyone else. People who aren't following their own dreams resent us pursuing ours. Such people feel inadequate when we succeed, so they try to drag us down.

If we listen to external voices, then we allow our dreams to be hijacked. At some point, other people will place limitations on us by doubting our abilities. When surrounded by [the turbulence of criticism](#), we have to grasp the controls tightly to keep from being knocked off course.

2. We fall into the habit of settling for average.

Average is the norm for a reason. Being exceptional demands extra effort, sustained inspiration and uncommon discipline. When we attempt to give flight to our dreams, we have to overcome the weight of opposition. Like gravity, life's circumstances constantly pull on our dreams, [tugging us down to mediocrity](#).

Most of us don't pay the price to overcome the opposition to our dreams. We may start out inspired, but through time we fatigue. Although never intending to abandon our dreams, we begin to make concessions here and there. Through time, our lives become mundane, and our dreams slip away.

3. We are hindered by past disappointments and hurts.

In the movie [Top Gun](#), Tom Cruise plays Maverick, a young, talented and cocky aviator who dreams of being the premier pilot in the U.S. Navy. In the film's opening scenes, Maverick showcases his flying ability but also displays a knack for pushing the envelope with regards to safety. Midway through the movie, Maverick's characteristic aggression spells disaster. His plane crashes, killing his best friend and co-pilot.

Although cleared of wrongdoing, the painful memory of the accident haunts Maverick. He quits taking risks and loses his edge. Struggling to regain his poise, he considers giving up on his dream. The incident nearly wrecks Maverick's career, but he eventually reaches within to find the strength to return to the sky.

Like Maverick, many of us live with the memory of failure embedded in our psyche. Perhaps a business we started went broke, or we were fired from a position of leadership.

Disappointment is the gap that exists between expectation and reality, and all of us have encountered that gap. Failure is a necessary and natural part of life, but if we're going to attain our dreams, then, like Maverick, we have to summon the courage to deal with past hurts.

4. We lack the confidence needed to pursue our dreams.

Dreams are fragile. They will be buffeted by assaults from all sides. As such, they must be supplied with the extra strength of [self-confidence](#).

In Amelia Earhart's day, women were not supposed to fly airplanes. If she had lacked self-assurance, she never would have even attempted to be a pilot. Instead, Earhart confidently chased after her dream, and she was rewarded with both fulfillment and fame.

5. We are missing the imagination to dream.

For thousands of years, mankind traveled along the ground: by foot, by horse-and-buggy, by locomotive and eventually by automobile. Thanks to the dreams of Orville and Wilbur Wright, we now hop across oceans in a matter of hours. The imaginative brothers overcame ridicule

and doubt to pioneer human flight, and the world has never been the same.

Many of us play small because we do not allow ourselves to dream. We trap ourselves in reality and never dare to go beyond what we can see with our eyes. Imagination lifts us beyond average by giving us a vision of life that surpasses what we are experiencing currently. Dreams infuse our spirit with energy and spur us on to greatness.

Never stop dreaming!