

The GROAN™ model

G = goal
R = reality
O = obstacle
A = analysis
N = next steps

G is for Goal

As a rule, your goal is the target you are aiming for – the desired end result rather than the process you are planning on using to get there. Check whether your goal is a result or a process and adapt it accordingly.

R is for Reality

OK, so you know what you want. Where are you in relation to that? What resources do you have? Who can you ask for help? What have you tried so far? What have the results been?

OA is for Obstacle Analysis

At the heart of the GROAN™ model is the obstacle analysis grid™ – a way of separating out the nine major categories of life obstacle and choosing appropriate responses and interventions accordingly. Most people find that while all the categories are somewhat relevant, their major life obstacles consistently fall into one or two of the 'obstacle areas' on the grid.

Information	Skill	Belief
Health/Energy	Other people	Motivation
Time	Money	Fear

The obstacle analysis grid™

Information

Consider this example – your six year old son is in tears, insisting that the report he was supposed to do for his school and had been putting off until the last minute was ‘stupid, boring, and too hard’ (words I’m sure those managers and leaders among you have never heard from your colleagues and subordinates!).

You ask him what part of the assignment he didn’t understand, and he said ‘all of it!’ After a few more questions, it became clear that what was making it so difficult for him to finish his report was neither a character flaw (like laziness) nor a physical problem (like dyslexia) but a simple lack of information – he’d never seen a report and he genuinely didn’t know how to do it.

You show him a few examples of reports his sister has done as a ‘model’ and to your surprise he goes to his room and an hour later appears proudly clutching ‘all about the black rhino’.

Skill

Sometimes what's stopping us is a lack of skill – in other words, we're just not good enough at what it is we're supposed to be doing to succeed. You can consider that each of the nine life obstacles also represents a skill set – a set of useful behaviours that could be learned and mastered. If you feel you can only focus on developing strengths in one obstacle area, focus on this one – learning how to learn and developing the skill of developing skills!

Belief/possibility

"What, sir! You would make a ship sail against the wind and currents by lighting a bonfire under her decks? I pray you excuse me. I have no time to listen to such nonsense."

Napoleon Bonaparte to Robert Fulton, inventor of the steam engine

My favourite quote about impossibility, besides M Bonaparte's aforementioned comments, comes from author Barry Neil Kaufman –

"All dreams appear impossible until someone makes them happen."

Barry Neil Kaufman

However, there are occasions where what holds us back is more to do with the laws of nature than the law of the self-fulfilling prophecy (beliefs!), and it is useful to acknowledge those limitations early on in any endeavour.

Health/energy

I recently had my first and only migraine, and while I will admit to marvelling at the 'inner light show' that my brain was providing me, I was equally amazed at the prospect of trying to do anything remotely functional while it was going on. Phrases like 'If you don't have your health, you don't have anything' may overstate the case slightly, but the phrase 'If you don't have your health, you tend not to do anything' seems to be fairly accurate.

My personal definition of health comes from the Hawaiian tradition – 'Free flowing energy'. The more freely flowing my energy is, the healthier I am; the more restricted my energy (and when would now be a good time to take a deep breath and relax? :-), the more dis-ease I experience in my body and mind.

Other people

At the centre of the grid is 'other people', because there is virtually nothing worthwhile we can achieve in life without them. The question is to what extent are we seeing the people in our lives as resources or obstacles.

There are a gazillion (do a search at Amazon if you don't believe me!) books on how to improve and enhance your relationships – while you're working your way through them, try the simple 'trick' of increasing the levels of attention, honesty and acceptance you give to others and prepare to be amazed at how quickly even your most 'difficult' relationships turn from energy drains into energy-building assets.

Motivation

Somehow, the concept of motivation seems to be inextricably linked in our collective unconscious with the symptoms of adrenaline addiction. We need our 'fix' each morning, so we plug a cassette into our car radio and let Tony Robbins set us up for the day.

My experience with people who cite motivation as a key obstacle area is that they are generally up against one of three things:

- Inertia – an object at rest tends to stay at rest.
- Learned helplessness – the idea that nothing they do will make any difference so why do anything at all.
- 'Shoulds' – those things we know we ought to do because someone else told us so.

Time and Money

I often lump time and money together because they have so much in common. Both are generally viewed as limited resources controlled by others. And most problems that are associated with both time and money can be solved by consistently taking one frightfully simple action:

Not sure how much you're spending?

Write it down!

Worried about missing an appointment?

Write it down!

Wondering whether the money you're earning is worth the time you're spending?

Write it down!

Why is writing things down so important when it comes to time and money? It's because they don't really exist! Both are man-made, abstract constructs originally designed to make our lives easier but often resulting in making our lives far more complex. And as anyone who's ever slept through a philosophy class can testify, trying to hold abstract concepts in our minds is exhausting.

Writing things down relating to time and money helps to take them out of the realm of the abstract and bring them down into the realm of the concrete, where math replaces myth and the secret of wealth turns out to be so boring (spend less than you earn and let compound interest do the rest) that no-one ever believes it could be that simple.

Fear

"Fear is the mind-killer. Fear is the little-death that brings total obliteration. I will face my fear. I will permit it to pass over me and through me. And when it has gone...there will be nothing. Only I will remain."

from *Dune* by Frank Herbert

Fear is a psychosomatic response to negative expectancy – that rush of adrenaline we release when we expect something bad (in other words something we do not want) to happen. Faith is a psychosomatic response to positive expectancy – the rush of endorphins we release when we expect something good (in other words something we want) to happen.

If you want to overcome the obstacle of fear, there are three basic paths:

- Psyche – learn to re-direct the movies you make in your mind.
- Soma – learn to use the chemical factory that is your body to your own advantage
- Expectancy – learn to manage your expectations (or if you're feeling particularly daring, why not enjoy the moment and drop expectations altogether?)

N is for Next steps

Once you've identified the key obstacle area for yourself, you can immediately begin to leverage it by studying that area and gradually (or quickly) implementing more effective systems and strategies. Every action you take and change that you make in the area of your major life obstacles will reap multiple rewards.

An unexpected bonus to using the obstacle analysis grid™ is that the diagnosis can also be 'the cure' – just becoming aware of where we're stuck is often enough to 'unstick' us and allow us to refocus on our goals and dreams.

How to apply GROAN™

Give yourself a score from 1 to 10 in each of the nine areas, where 1 means this is an area of total weakness for you and 10 means this is an area of total strength. Once you have identified the areas of weakness plan action to overcome them. Sometimes just knowing what they are considerably lessens their strength as an obstacle. If the obstacle has not dissipated, then form a goal and plan the steps you need to take to remove it. A good way of doing this is to break the goal into smaller and smaller chunks. Ask yourself 'can I do this tomorrow?' If the answer is 'yes' then go ahead and carry out the action and then take the next step. If the answer is 'no' then ask yourself 'what can I do tomorrow that will lead me closer to my goal/remove the obstacle?'

Using GROAN™ with your team

When people tell you about their problems, ask questions that help you identify which of the nine obstacle areas their problem most naturally fits into. Remember, just because someone tells you his or her problem is 'procrastination' doesn't mean the obstacle is 'motivation'. You need to probe a bit. The following nine questions will serve as a useful guide

Are they experiencing a problem because...

1. They don't know what to do? (information)
2. They know what to do but they don't feel capable of doing it? (skill)
3. They don't believe it can be done? (belief/possibility)
4. They don't have the energy to do it? (health/energy)
5. Other people stand in their way? (other people)
6. They just don't seem to care enough? (motivation)
7. They don't have the time? (time)
8. They don't have the money? (money)
9. They are scared? (fear)

*from [Michael Neil http://www.supercoach.com/](http://www.supercoach.com/)