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Help available to find and fulfil your innate potential

LifeTime - Anne Hailes

By Anne Hailes

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NEW COURSE: Dr Michael Paterson OBE will encourage people to learn more about themselves in a new six-part course called Achieve Your Maximum Potential which begins in Belfast next Tuesday

WE all have it. Some people realise it. Others discover only a part of it. It can make or break a lifestyle. Potential.

That little thing deep inside just waiting to be excited into action, to accept challenges and to succeed.

We're all born with potential but often we need someone to find it. This is so obvious with children, especially at the moment when primary 7 pupils are facing tests and an uncertain future.

They need security and parents who will give them confidence and encouragement so they can forge ahead and show their potential.

Dr Michael Paterson OBE is a clinical psychologist, entrepreneur and chief executive officer of TMR (Trauma Management and Recovery) Health Professionals.

He is a master when it comes to teaching you about yourself, how to change negative patterns and improve personal development and he tells a story that sums up determination to succeed.

When Richard Branson was a little boy of eight he and his friend decided to make their fortune selling Christmas trees.

They planted seeds and were delighted when the green shoots appeared.

Then came the rabbits and ate the shoots.

But instead of giving up, the two boys shot the rabbits and sold them to the local butcher.

Two little boys reaching their potential in a given situation.

I don't know about his friend but certainly Branson went on to fulfil his business potential and is still breaking new ground.

"Tell children they are capable of great things – give them hope," Dr Paterson advised.

"Explain how important education is to their future and encourage them to take advantage of it.

"Set goals, expect obstacles and learn how to overcome these."

In a new six-part course – Achieve Your Maximum Potential – beginning in south Belfast next Tuesday, Dr Paterson will be looking at this subject and encouraging students from all backgrounds to learn more about themselves.

“To change stultifying negativity and to identify what it is you want to achieve in various areas of life,” he said.

“Then I’ll ask you to dig deeper and think of five more.

“The journey to a goal starts with one step but it can be lonely and demoralising working on your own.

“It’s much more stimulating working with the benefit of group support.

“Often someone else will spot your potential and give the encouragement required and talk it through, help you to work towards it and suggest how to become more productive and successful.

“When you work with other people it provides a platform which you can use as a springboard.

“When it comes to potential, ambition is important because you have to keep sight of your dream.

“Be aware that people might want to steal your dream by putting obstacles in your way, perhaps because they are jealous or because they feel you’re not capable or the time isn’t right.

“In the United States entrepreneurs are encouraged.

“Here more often there’s an attempt to drag you down.”

This happened to the American Les Brown when he was a boy.

He was mistakenly declared ‘educationally mentally retarded’ in his school in Florida.

He could not concentrate on his schoolwork and his teachers had given up on the boy – he was a ‘failure’.

He was a twin and he became known as DT, dumb twin – a label that destroyed his self-esteem.

But his mother didn’t give up on him and kept encouraging and inspiring the boy and today he is one of America’s greatest motivational speakers.

He goes into schoolrooms and instils the word ‘greatness’ into little minds struggling to achieve.

“There’s greatness in you,” he tells them and so gives them a belief in themselves.

It is considered that, despite his not having formal education or training, he has achieved greatness in his chosen subject.

Like Dr Paterson, Mr Brown’s message is about talents and skills that lie dormant, walls you hit when you try to achieve and the need to find someone to help you over those walls.

“Persevere,” Dr Paterson said. “Make your dreams happen because you care about them more than anyone else so go for it.

“Be it personal relationships, career moves or your social life, it’s up to each one of us to make the best of what we have been given.”

Not as easy as it sounds, especially for people from this part of the world.

We live a parochial life where someone is sure to know your mummy or your maiden aunt and if you get above your station, it will be reported back.

So we are a shy people and don't like to make a fuss or let anyone down.

Despite this, you can still have determination to reach your potential.

Take an example. Perhaps you want to work in Africa to help people with Aids or HIV.

But there's the mortgage, the children, your work all holding you back.

What do you do? Get involved with a charity, raise money for them, take an active interest, accept any chance of travelling to Africa even for a couple of weeks to help out in an Aids centre.

It won't take you away from your responsibility at home but will give you an idea if this is a dream you want to pursue and perhaps some day, even if it is after retirement or when the children are grown up, you will have that chance to fulfil your potential.

Perhaps you want to start a business of your own. Some people have achieved this through identifying a product, developing skills and a business plan and then using eBay as a shop window.

It's different for everyone but Dr Paterson says it is absolutely possible to identify an achievable goal, work towards it and succeed.

Did you read about Harraby Athletics' under-14 football squad? They were bottom of their English youth league table since their formation in 2006.

They lost their first match 19-0 and went on to lose another 89 games in succession.

Then last week Harraby won 3-2 when playing Edenvale Hawks. "Pure determination has got us there," their coach Brett Preston said.

"The boys have been prepared to stick at it and been willing to learn."

Can you imagine their joy as a dream comes true and potential is attained?

n For details of the Achieve Your Maximum Potential course, phone 028 9064 4217.

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