

## COMMUNITY

# Family Counseling Service: Learning to Focus on Your Vision

BY LARRY DEAVERS

**M**aking change in your life always involves risks. Change is uncomfortable, and when the discomfort becomes too much, we tend to let our minds focus on what we are giving up, rather than what we had wanted to achieve when we started. Doing something new can be intimidating because we may not know how it will turn out. Often, we choose to remain in a painful situation because, at least there, we feel as if we know what the threats are and how to handle them. We can even convince ourselves that we have more control over our circumstances than we really do as a way to make us comfortable staying where we are.

Think of how many risks you have already taken over your life that enabled you to develop new skills, open new doors, or have new experiences. Most people who learn to skate begin by holding onto the rail and making their way around the rink a few times. The rail gives them comfort and more control over this new experience. However, most people don't keep holding onto the rail forever. To enjoy the freedom of skating, you have to let go of the rail and risk falling. And, most likely, you will fall a few times. But you learn a little more with each step and, eventually, you figure out how to skate.

Many changes we would like to make in our lives are the same way. They may be intimidating at first. They may require us to change what we are comfortable doing. The comfortable old habits that may have held us back from achieving our vision will have to be left behind. For you, that may mean giving up your comfort food, alcohol, laziness, or working too much. In your relationships, it may

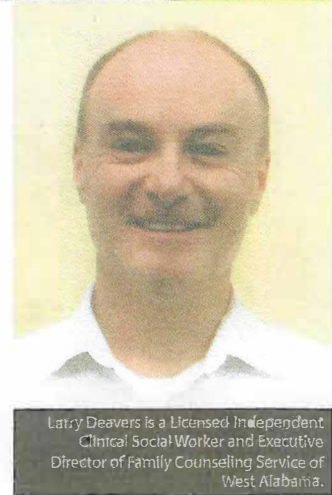


mean giving up insisting that others do things your way or trying to control the choices that others make.

We each have comfortable, go-to habits that we bring out to help us deal with stress, anger, exhaustion, loneliness, fear, or self-doubts. When we are ready to make a serious commitment to improving ourselves, we will always have to give up something. What usually stalls our efforts is when that thing we are giving up becomes the focus of our attention. There will be a period when the drive to go back to our old habits to deal with these feelings may seem overwhelming. But, the intensity of that drive will diminish over time. It's almost like launching a boat from the beach and having to get past the surf to get to calmer water.

For a period of time, you may have to

daily re-commit yourself to your personal vision, keeping in mind what you are working towards, rather than what you are leaving behind. A daily mantra, a personal affirmation, or a picture that reminds you of what you are working for can make a huge difference in your success as you seek to string together one good decision after another on your path to your vision.



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