



New Beginnings

**It's never too late to
start again!**

A 7 Day Challenge

Debbie-Ann Pottinger

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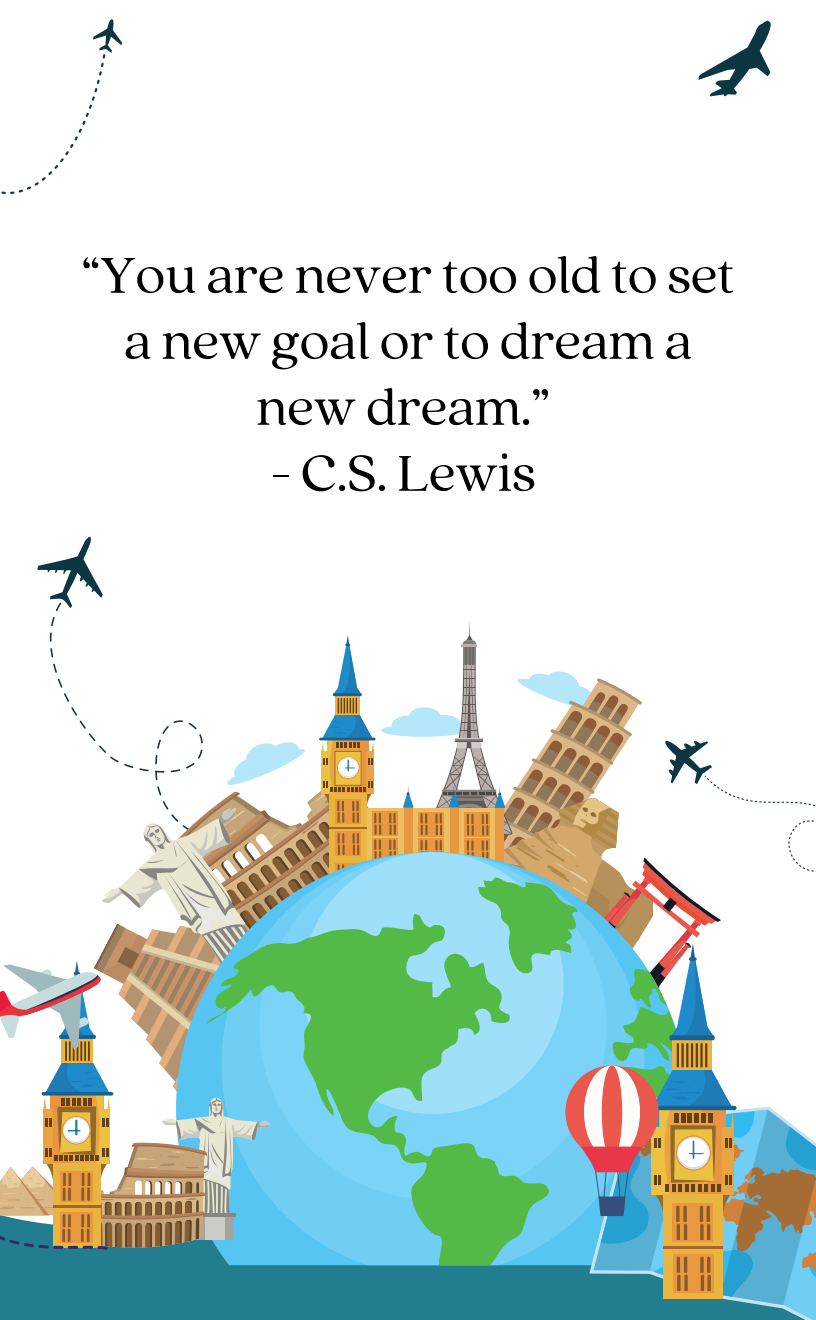
First Published in 2020
Revised in 2023; 2026

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“You are never too old to set
a new goal or to dream a
new dream.”
– C.S. Lewis



Lesson#1: Pursue Your Passion

I love children and I enjoy working with them. In fact, I became a Sunday School Teacher at the age of 15. In between preparing and executing lessons, my desire to work along with children grew more and more. So it wasn't a surprise when I decided to pursue a Certificate in Child Psychology. However, the lecturer didn't really lecture; he just told short stories about his childhood and expected us to relate them to all the theories of psychology. Luckily, I am an avid reader, so I read ahead based on the course outline and made my own notes. This was also my first exposure to tertiary level education – I was used to going to class and taking notes by dictation but I was thrown right into the deep end. I could either swim or drown. I must admit that it was easier for me to read and complete the assignments because I was doing something that I love.

So my first lesson is “**Pursue Your Passion**”. It would be much easier for you to complete your educational journey or anything for that matter if you enjoy what you are doing.



Do a personality test to find out jobs for which you are best suited.

“If you feel like there’s
something out there that
you’re supposed to be doing,
if you have a passion for it,
then stop wishing and
just do it.”
– Wanda Sykes



Lesson#2: *Dreams won't become a reality if we don't work at them*

After completing my certificate in Child Psychology I felt a sense of accomplishment. But I wasn't sure about the next step so I reached out to a former mentor. She advised me to pursue a Bachelor of Arts in Theology with a minor in Guidance and Counselling. She explained that I would be able to acquire knowledge about Guidance and Counselling and also receive a theological foundation. I am a Christian so it sounded perfect.

During my first year at the Jamaica Theological Seminary (JTS) I got very high grades and met a lot of persons. My network not only widened but I also began to see the world from a whole different perspective. The discussions were very intellectually stimulating and the practicum experiences were an eye-opener. I have always loved the field of education but actually working at a school as a "member of staff" allowed me to see first-hand what school life was like. I loved it but soon realized that it was a lot harder than I thought. Nevertheless, I did my best.

Lesson #2 – “Dreams won't become a reality if we don't work at them. Pursuing your passion won't be a walk in the park, you still have to work hard to achieve your goals.



Research the qualifications necessary for the job(s) for which you are suited. Use this information to search for educational institutions that offer courses you need to accomplish your goal.



“The heights by great men
reached and kept were not
attained by sudden flight, but
they while their companions
slept, were toiling upward in
the night.”

– Henry Wadsworth
Longfellow



Lesson#3:

On your journey, life may throw you some curveballs!

While at JTS, almost all of my Saturdays were spent at the Library. Additionally, every night I came home and studied until the wee hours of the morning. I wanted to maintain my grades plus graduate with high honours. I had already planned that after graduation I would move right into a Master's in Counselling Psychology. By the look of things, I would have my bachelor's and my master's degree before I was 30 years old. I looked around my classroom at some people who were in their 40s and 50s and I wondered why they were just getting their first degree. I was in my early twenties and very focused. I just couldn't understand how they could have waited so long to go back to school. Little did I know that there was a curveball waiting for me around the corner.

In my final year of college, I was faced with financial difficulties, and I had to take one of the hardest decisions of my life. I was at the final semester of my final year, but I could not continue anymore – I just could not afford it. So, I dropped out of college. So near and yet so far. I had almost reached the end, but life happened.

Lesson #3 – “On your journey, life may throw you some curveballs!

You may be going on very well but look out for those curveballs. If you’re not prepared, they will knock you down flat.



Make a 1 year plan using the S.M.A.R.T Goals acronym.



1. Specific (What do you want to accomplish?)

2. Measurable (How will you know if you have successfully met your goal?)

3. Achievable (Do you have the skills required to achieve the goal?)

4. Relevant (Why am I setting this goal now?)

5. Time-bound (What is the deadline for this goal?)

S.M.A.R.T. Goal (Write your goal statement based on your answers to the questions above).



“I can’t change the direction
of the wind, but I can adjust
my sails to always reach my
destination.”
—Jimmy Dean



Lesson#4: Sometimes rejection can be a good thing

My first job was as a Telephone Operator at an international company. I held that position for a little over 10 years. Although I enjoyed it, I felt that there was something missing. I felt that I had more potential than just answering the telephone (not that there is anything wrong with that). As I got older, I wanted more, so I applied for a new job at a prominent school. This job seemed like the perfect answer. I developed new skills and people valued my talent and expertise. Then an opportunity came for me to move to a higher level. I was excited and I thought about the possibility of getting my very first promotion. However, shortly after the interview I knew that I was not selected. I just had that feeling. As if not being selected wasn't bad, I was asked to train the person who got the position I had applied for.

I was hurt, heartbroken and disappointed to say the least. But then I learned that I fell short by just one point in the interview. This point was taken off based on my lack of qualifications for the job. This experience prompted me to go back to school to further my education. I also vowed to myself that not having the requisite qualifications would never be a reason that I was not selected for a job. I would continuously improve myself by engaging in lifelong learning.

Lesson #4 – “Sometimes rejection can be a good thing! If I had received the job, I would probably get complacent and not strive for more. Sometimes rejection helps us to do some introspection and see the areas in which we can improve ourselves. Don’t stay knocked down, learn your lesson, and get back up again!



Share your goals with someone you respect. Ask the person if they can be your accountability partner to help you stay on track.



“Life is 10% what happens to
you and 90% how you react
to it.”

– Charles R. Swindoll



Lesson#5: It's never too late to start again!

One day I met one of my former lecturers. I was happy to see her, and I could tell that she was happy to see me as well. She introduced me to a Post Graduate Diploma Programme being offered by her current institution. I was embarrassed to tell her that I had not completed my first degree. She left the information with me and asked me to complete the application and she would submit it on my behalf. When she left, I perused the document and realized that they offered a degree programme that peaked my interest.

I pushed past my pride and procrastination and decided that the time had come for me to “get back on the horse”. Approximately, six years had passed since I had decided to take a “break” from college. When I tried to restart the degree at JTS so much time had passed that the programme had been revamped and I would have to do more than a semester to complete the degree. By that time, my interests were also different, and I decided that it would have been best for me to do something that I would enjoy. Looking back, sometimes I wonder if I should have completed that degree and then do a master’s degree in the area of my choice, but I said to myself I am young, I have time.

I also decided to leave my job at the school and take another job at another educational institution. One which I thought would catapult me further into achieving my life goals. There were some people who discouraged me from starting a degree at my age. They said it would take me a long time to finish. Nonetheless, I told myself **lesson #5 – “It’s never too late to start again!”**



Review your goals. Choose one of the goals on your list and make the first step towards achieving it. For example, if your goal is to go back to school, complete the application process.

A photograph of a hand holding a tablet computer. The screen shows a digital application form titled "APPLICATION FORM" in bold, black, uppercase letters. Below the title is a section header "PERSONAL INFORMATION" in bold, black, uppercase letters. The form contains several input fields with labels: "Last Name", "First Name", "Middle", "Address", "City", "State", "Phone", and "Email address". The fields are arranged in a grid-like structure with horizontal lines separating them. The background is a plain, light-colored surface.

“The journey of a thousand
miles begins with
a single step.”
- Lao Tzu



Lesson#6: Don't give up!

In the final year of completing my first degree I had an unfortunate incident. I applied for a payment plan for my tuition. However, after paying the fees, I was told that I was quoted the wrong amount. To make matters worse, I had only one day to pay the outstanding balance, or I would not be able to continue my educational journey at that institution. I was distraught. I had already taken a year's leave from college, and this was my second time pursuing a first degree.

One the way home from school, I cried. I didn't care if passers-by saw me. I could not hold back the tears – they flowed freely down my face. I thought to myself, “maybe I am not supposed to get a degree; surely this must be a sign that getting a degree is not for people like me”. As I reached home, I plopped down in front of the computer. This was my regular routine as I worked every night to complete assignments. I could not type one word. What was the sense anyway? Where would I get the money from to pay the outstanding balance.

Then something prompted me to post on Facebook "I need a miracle". I thought my friends would offer prayer and words of encouragement. Little did I know that the miracle was already on its way.

A former coworker who I had not heard from in years called and asked me what kind of miracle I needed. At first, I was hesitant to tell her the truth because we were not that close. But she pressed and I eventually gave in. Afterwards, she said, “What is your account number, I am going to send you the funds right now”. I could not believe my ears – just like that – I received my miracle.

Lesson#6 – “Don’t give up! You may not receive a financial miracle like I did. However, I guarantee you that if you do not give up you will be rewarded. Many times, along the journey, I was faced with different circumstances but I made up my mind that I would not give up this time. I would complete what I had started, and I am glad I did.



Create a journal of your educational journey. Write down your thoughts along the way. At the end of each entry find an inspirational quote to encourage you. If you feel like giving up while you are pursuing your goal, read an entry from your journey to encourage yourself.



“Never give up, for that is
just the place and time that
the tide will turn.”

- Harriet Beecher Stowe



Lesson#7: Achievement is a great feeling!

It took me about five years to complete my degree. In the middle of my second year, I was faced with financial difficulties and I had to take a year's leave. During that year, I felt like a failure, I thought – “not again”. However, this time I maintained my promise and took a break for only one year. Completing my practicum was also challenging. I could not get enough time from work to pursue dedicated hours of practicum. Fortunately, some of my work activities could be used toward my practicum hours.

When I handed in my final assignment, I felt such joy. Finally, I finished! All those hours of hard work, pain and stress had paid off. I was on the graduation list (Woot Woot!). Some people told me not to attend the graduation ceremony because it was not important. However, for me, this marked a great accomplishment. I felt that I had earned that moment of going on the stage to accept my degree. I would not celebrate quietly. I wanted the world to know that I had achieved my goal.

On graduation day, I sat in the wrong row, and I had to push pass a lot of graduands to get to the top of the line. By the time I reached the top of the line, the announcer had already moved on to another name,

but I would not allow her or anyone to stop from going on the stage. I remember the look on her face – her eyes said “seriously, are you really going to stand there”. My eyes responded, “Yes, please call my name!” When my name was called, and I stepped on that stage I learned **lesson #7 – “Achievement is a great feeling!”**

I was so overwhelmed about meeting Professor Errol Miller; I just stared at him and shook his hand. Then he looked in my eyes, smiled and said, “look in the camera”. I laughed at myself and then did just that.



Make a note in your journal of each milestone achieved. Celebrate your achievements along the way. Make a promise to yourself that you will not stop until you have achieved your goal. Remember to keep your promise!



“Desire is the starting point
of all achievement, not a
hope, not a wish, but a keen
pulsating desire which
transcends everything.”–
Napoleon Hill



It doesn't end here.....

After you have achieved your goal, don't stop there. As long as you are alive, there is always room for growth. So, celebrate your achievements but do not get complacent. Make a new goal and commit yourself to continuous improvement. Some goals may be short-term, while others are long-term. Some goals can be achieved in a day, a week, a month or even a year. Other goals may take you a few years to accomplish. Whatever you do...keep moving!



“Successful men and women
keep moving.
They make mistakes, but
they don’t quit.”
– Conrad Hilton



All her life Debbie-Ann was told that she had a lot of potential and for a while she believed it. Well, until things didn't work out for her when she started college. It took her almost 20 years to complete her first degree. Along the way she encountered many challenges including being rejected for a job promotion, dropping out of college and then making the hard decision to go back to college at the age of 34 years old.

In New Beginnings - It's never too late to start again, Debbie-Ann reveals 7 life lessons she learned while pursuing her bachelor's degree. She also shares 7 challenges to encourage readers to continue on the path of their educational journey.

This 7 day challenge is a moving testimony of a woman who had a dream in her heart and a faith that inspired her never to give up. If you dropped out of high school or college or if you tried multiple times to complete your diploma or degree, Debbie-Ann's story will encourage you that it's never too late to start over!



Debbie-Ann Pottinger is a faith-centered Author, Speaker, and Mentor dedicated to guiding women through emotional healing, spiritual renewal, and identity restoration. Her own journey—from trauma and heartbreak to transformation and purpose—fuels her passion for walking alongside women facing marital pain, separation, or divorce. With compassion and clarity, she equips women to rebuild their faith, reclaim their worth, and live out the legacy God designed for them..