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## Victims of Success

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YOUR past success could be holding you back.

That, in essence, is the argument that Marshall Goldsmith, an executive coach, makes in *The Conference Board Review*, the former *Across the Board* magazine.

"Any human will tend to repeat behavior that is followed by positive reinforcement," he writes. "The more successful we become, the more positive reinforcement we get - and the more likely we are to experience the success delusion: I behave this way. I am successful. Therefore, I must be successful because I behave this way."

That could be delusional for a number of reasons, Mr. Goldsmith argues. For one thing, your past success could have much more to do with your being in the right place at the right time, than with anything you did. For example, if you were part of a winning team, you might receive recognition out of proportion to your actual contribution.

Then there is the very natural tendency to remember our successes and minimize - or rationalize away - our failures.

A result of all this is that it becomes very hard to change the way we deal with the world.

"Overcoming the success delusion requires vigilance and constantly asking, 'Is this behavior a legitimate reason for my success, or am I just kidding myself?'" Mr. Goldsmith writes.

Another way to achieve positive change is to ask "the key people" in your life how you can improve, and actually listen to what they have to say.

"Realize that your first inclination may well be to believe that they are simply mistaken. Accept the fact that your belief in your previous success is probably overstated."

**AMBIVALENT AMBIVALENCE** Having mixed feelings about your job is actually a good thing, Psychology Today reports. "People who are ambivalent about their jobs tend to be more creative. The brain interprets these mixed emotions as a sign of being in an unusual surrounding, and responds by employing creative thinking skills."

If you like your job, and want to create the same effect, the magazine suggests "creating an atypical working environment."

It does not predict how your boss will react.

QUITTING TIME. When is it time to leave your job? Anna Maltby offers a checklist in Men's Health:

¶ You feel your work doesn't matter.

¶ You are challenged in the wrong ways. The biggest problems you have to solve should draw on your best skills. If you are great at sales and you are spending all your time doing administrative work, something is wrong.

¶ You don't fit in. "You don't necessarily have to like your co-workers, but you do have to share key personality traits."

¶ You keep complaining about the same stuff. "If you are unhappy for the same reasons day after day, year after year, that is a bad sign."

¶ You haven't been promoted in three years. Ask for a promotion, or move on.