

Lower the Bar to Get Ahead

Shôn Ellerton, March 26, 2024

If everybody had such high standards of mental and physical attributes, getting ahead would be that much more difficult.



Photo from Unsplash by Larry George II

Imagine being a regular business jetsetter armed with a flashy new platinum airline card giving you access to exclusive airport lounges around the world. Would you want anyone else without a platinum card to be given access to one of these opulent lounges, even if they paid a one-time fee to gain admittance?

Probably not.

Now let's shift this paradigm of thinking to the world of our physical and mental health and, in general, our well-being.

You may be surprised, but let's explore this a little more.

All of us, during our many phases of life, undergo competing against each other. Without competition, there is no progression. Especially in a field of study, sport, hobby, or some other popular activity. In the world of art, cinema, and sport, for example, only the very tiptop at the vast pyramid of all those who try to attain the status of being famous will succeed.

Competition is fierce and it is inherent in human nature and any movement to try to eradicate competition is utterly pointless, because, those who try and want to succeed, will succeed, because they've beaten the competition.

Now how does this relate to our health and well-being?

It does so, enormously.

I've written various pieces on our state of mental and physical health covering diet, exercise, relaxation, and ways to overcome problems and challenge ourselves.

But then it struck me.

What if *everybody* had the perfect mind?

What if *everybody* had the perfect body?

What if *everybody* had the perfect job?

What if *everybody* had an endless supply of resources at their disposal?

What if *everybody* had the best voice?

What if *everybody* had unwavering confidence and charisma?

Some of these qualities may be immutable or pre-existing. For example, not everyone may be blessed with the same number of limbs, or be as tall, or start out life in such an advantaged way that getting ahead is just so much easier than someone who has not.

However, there are many qualities, which are mutable or changeable, but require a degree of hard work and discipline to achieve them. Such qualities include improving one's physical and mental health, the ability to learn new things, and, in general, being a better person.

So, if *everybody* had all these great qualities which were earned through hard work and discipline, or simply sticking to regimes which don't harm them, imagine how high the bar would become!

In the world of education, being admitted to a prestigious university would be very much harder if everybody was an 'A' student. In the world of pure meritocracy in which other deciding factors are not considered, we adjust our rankings by the use of bell curves in which the top few percent are selected while the remaining bulk is discarded. After all, no university can accept everyone if demand is greater than supply.

The same reasoning applies throughout the professional world. If all those being interviewed for a position have all the best credentials, experience, charisma,

professionalism and charm, the chance of being selected will be undeniably more difficult.

It is also the same within the social world, for example, of being selected to play in a sports team or joining some sort of club or society. If all those who turned up to a soccer tryout played like David Beckham, not only would it be terribly difficult to get noticed, but also likely that it's not going to do any favours in boosting your confidence.

And, of course. The world of dating, albeit with a twist. And here's a story that happened to me many years ago as a young man.

During my twenties, I remember the Friday nights after work in which a group of us guys would amble down to the pub and then to a nightclub. It would start off rambling on how crap the work has got or how to fix the world's problems over successive pints of beer. The conversation would invariably veer towards forming a strategy on how to attract the attention of some girl sitting amongst other girls doing essentially the same thing we were doing but with more girly drinks rather than pints of beer.

I further remembered a conversation betwixt ourselves which got quite interesting.

It came during that most awkward of moments when none in the group had quite enough confidence to make any move but at the same time, we started to notice other guys, many of which were decidedly more fit, handsome and confident than any of us start to make moves. We were both impressed and disappointed that they had the audacity and courage to grab a few chairs from the surrounding empty tables and join the girls.

We then went on this hypothetical discourse on what would happen if all the other guys in the room were simply godawful ugly with absolutely no confidence whatsoever. Now, surely, this would help boost up our confidence and give us a better chance. However, it occurred to us not too long afterwards that this way of thinking was flawed on two accounts. First, it occurred to us that the reverse situation could apply. In other words, what if most of the girls were unattractive in the classical sense? Second, and most importantly, we underrated ourselves and did not have the courage to advance on the situation. Moreover, it wasn't especially the case that the other guys were more fit and handsome, but rather, we lacked the overall confidence.

This raises two very different scenarios whether it is advantageous for one to be above all the others in terms of mental and physical attributes or not.

In those scenarios where there are teams working together to make a victory, for example, sports or warfare, it is far more advantageous for *everybody* within that team to hold the highest attributes of physical prowess and mental acuity. However, for those scenarios where one with high attributes is competing with society or the *general* population, for example, obtaining a job or being selected to be a representative in politics, or securing a place on a sports team, it is decidedly to one's advantage if few others can match these attributes. Within the world of dating or mating within the animal kingdom, it becomes a little blurred because the two sides may peg each other in terms of holding the same quality of attributes, thus, cancelling each other out.

Ultimately, we can capitalise on those who are delusional in claiming that, generally considered, undesirable attributes, is only natural and should be celebrated. One such example is the so-called *fat acceptance* movement targeting those who struggle to maintain a desirable weight. Despite our wealth of knowledge that maintaining an acceptable weight is desirable for our physical and mental health, this movement aims to dispel such notions by openly stating that there is simply nothing wrong with being morbidly obese. Social media, in particular, Tiktok and Instagram, have been major communication vehicles in spreading such misinformation to the malleable masses.

One can liken the whole movement to the fable of the Fox Without a Tail by Aesop. The story goes when a fox lost his tail in a mantrap. He joined his skulk, or group, of fellow foxes, many of which laughed and jeered at him for having no tail. However, the wily fox made a motion that having no tail is a good thing and tried convincing the rest of them that removing their tails would make them more free, light and more able. One of the wisest of the foxes came before him and asserted in the strongest possible terms that none of them would do such a silly thing and merely pointed out that simply because he lost his tail, asking everyone else to chop off their tails is both self-serving and vindictive. Moral of the story, of course, is not to take advice from those who seek to lower you down to their own level. Unfortunately, in the world of social media along with its walls of anonymity and censorship, that wise old fox would not have had much of a chance.

Still, there are other movements not entirely dissimilar to the Fox Without a Tail fable. For example, the absurd notion that working out, exercising, and, in general, being fit is right wing, as reported by many left-wing outlets such as [Politico](#) and [MSNBC](#). While reading such articles, the easily duped of us could make reasonable sense of what they are trying to convey, but remember that these stories are cherry-picked. It would be crazy to think that those on the left side of politics have no intention of being fit and healthy whilst those on the right are all health nuts.

To put a final word in all this, perhaps it's not such a bad thing that these bizarre and utterly crazy movements are in place. What it simply does is generally lower the bar thus easing competition making it easier for those who *do* try hard to be rewarded in life.

After all, why would I want every Tom, Dick and Harry to join me in the Platinum Lounge?