

URL: <https://stvp.stanford.edu/clips/stop-kidding-yourself>

Bernard Roth, author of "The Achievement Habit: Stop Wishing, Start Doing, and Take Command of Your Life," explains how the reasons we give when we fail are just excuses. The real failure is in not deeming enough importance to the everyday tasks that confront us, the Stanford engineering professor says. Once we are honest about that, behavior change will follow.



## Transcript

- But I will never change my behavior if I don't tell myself that I really don't know the reason.. Now let me explain where my epiphany comes from.. My epiphany comes from a board meeting in Berkeley.. I was on a startup company, I was on the Board of Directors.. And we'd have regular meetings.. And the company didn't fail, but did quite well, so I had to keep going to meetings.. And I was always late.. I was always late, always.. And I'd come in and in those days it was Highway 17.. And I'd come in, I'd say, "Oh the traffic on Highway 17 was terrible." And they'd all say, "It's okay Bernie, "we're just glad nothing happened," and all that..

And it's okay.. And I knew it wasn't okay.. I mean these are people who have lives and all that.. And I was just holding them back.. And of course I realized what it was is, I wasn't leaving enough time.. And I wasn't leaving enough time since I didn't give them enough valance in my life.. It wasn't important enough to me.. So I realized I ought to make a decision.. I either resign from the board, or I ought to be there on time.. And being there on time was as easy as getting out of bed..

And it was just simply not doing.. In those days we had a teletyper in my office which you'd do email.. Not doing a few extra emails.. Not making phone calls, no cellphones in those days.. Believe it or not.. Not making a few extra phone calls.. And not talking to a colleague in the hall as I was leaving the building.. And leaving enough time, so even if there was.. Imagine that traffic in Palo Alto, and traffic in Berkeley, and traffic on Highway 17, I'd get there on time.. Once I got that epiphany, it changed my whole life..

I used to be the person who was always late to everything.. Now I'm the pain in the ass who starts everything on time...