



Conquering a Selling Slump

By Dr. Sheila Murray Bethel (Thank you, Sr. Sales Director Debbie Barnes, for sharing)

If things look especially bleak right now, try to remember that there is always a slump -- coming, going, or here and now. Slumps are a simple fact of life for everyone who sells. They are an inevitable part of the economic cycle, no matter how good you are, no matter how hard you are working.

Fortunately a slump doesn't have to cost you time, anguish or money. I have trained over 100,000 salespeople in the last twenty years. When I ask the high achievers what makes them successful, one of their top answers is that they understand slumps.

Seven Sure-fire Steps to Slump-Breaking

All slumps, even those initiated by global disasters, come down to one thing: you and how you react.

- Step 1: Stop. After you've decided you're in a slump and identified a possible source of trouble, your first step is to do nothing. Stop. Break the circle. Give yourself a little space. Relax, pamper yourself, have some fun.
- Step 2: Go back to basics. Next make a list of your basic selling skills, the automatic things that you are comfortable and happy doing. How can you apply these basic skills to your current situation? I love selling over the telephone -telemarketing -- so I get out my client lead sheet, pick up the telephone, and start calling. The pleasure and momentum usually carries me right out of the slump. Don't try harder. The more you push, the worse it will get. I know. I've been there. Your goal is to ease up. Get the pressure off by using the pleasurable basic skills that make you feel like you're really accomplishing something.
- Step 3: Don't judge yourself. Even if some misguided soul once persuaded you that self-harassment is essential for success, firmly turn off any negative messages. You don't need them right now! Perpetuating the distress cycle is the worst thing you can do. Instead do something positive.
 - Concentrate on some other parts of your life that are going well. (That's why it is important to have a life outside the office!)
 - Talk with a wise friend who can offer a more detached overview of the situation and give you some perspective.
 - Gain more perspective through new knowledge -- read, attend seminars, talk to new people with different viewpoints.
 - Stop criticizing. Be kind to yourself.
- Step 4: Stop competing with others. Compete only with yourself. Ask yourself, "How much better can I be this week/month/year than I was the last one?" Act systematically to build on what you already have instead of reacting to what others are doing.
- Step 5: Practice positive self-talk. All sales people love to share war stories. It seems a harmless enough pastime and you may even feel you are ridding yourself of negativity with this litany of horrors. But your subconscious mind hears your fish stories and files them away for later playback. If you say "I'm just no good. Terrible day. Terrible product. Terrible company," your subconscious mind says, "Well, it must be true."
- Step 6: Don't make decisions. However tempting it may be to try to break out of your vicious circle by doing something wildly different, don't make any major decisions when you are distressed. I've learned over and over that when we are in a selling slump our judgment is not always accurate.
 - Step 7: Go see some happy clients. This is a fun one. Drop in on a customer who likes you. Guess what they do? They say nice things to you; "This is a great product. You made things better for me." There you were, doubting yourself, doubting your company, doubting your product. Then you hear someone else saying good things and your subconscious mind says, "Well, maybe I'm not so bad."

When you've broken out of your own stress-depression cycle, you are ready to assess the facts and fallacies of what's really happening. If a shifting market or economic downturn has triggered a real industry-wide or national slump, you are now in a powerful position, ready to counsel your clients and guide your business through the crisis. You have conquered the selling slump.