

## Depressed Teen Turns Low Self-esteem Into Life Of Achievements For Himself And Others

By Deborah Lassiter

As we close 1993, people are once again thinking of resolutions and goals for the new year. Most people, unfortunately, don't stick to their resolutions and will be renewing the same goals in 1994. Mario Pinardo is a man in our area who has made it a personal mission to help people master the art of achieving personal goals and realize more of their full potential.

At the age of thirteen, says Mario, "I was the chubbiest and shortest kid in the class. I had the dorkiest clothes from the 'husky' department, I wasn't very athletic because of the clubbed foot, I had low grades, low self-esteem and was very unhappy."

One day, Mario got fed up and decided to take control. He listed everything he wanted to change about himself and his circumstances. The list turned quickly into a wish and want list for his life. Then he set his mind to achieving these goals. "By the time I was sixteen, I had accomplished almost everything on the list. I started working out and lost weight, earned the money to buy a motorcross dirt bike and had accomplished achieving a pilot's license. I first soloed in an airplane a year before I drove a car. My dad had to drive me to the airport so I could fly. But unfortunately at the time, I had no idea I could apply the same methods towards achieving higher grades."

Mario told his guidance counselor that he wanted to be a commercial pilot, but was told he could never be a commercial pilot because he didn't have the math skills. I thought people who were smart were just born that way and achieving higher grades didn't seem possible. He crossed commercial pilot off his dream list.

The next year he told another guidance counselor he wanted to become a veterinarian, but was told he could never be a vet because he didn't have the science grades. "I was told I was not college material and I was too much of a dreamer. I was laughed at by friends and adults, when I shared my goals."

Determined to be a success without an education, Mario went into stand-up comedy in 1977 and continued for five years. It wasn't until Mario was out of high school for two years that he started reading books on personal development and started to believe he could set goals to learn and obtain an education. He entered college and by the fourth semester was on the Dean's List.

"The message in schools back then and still in many schools

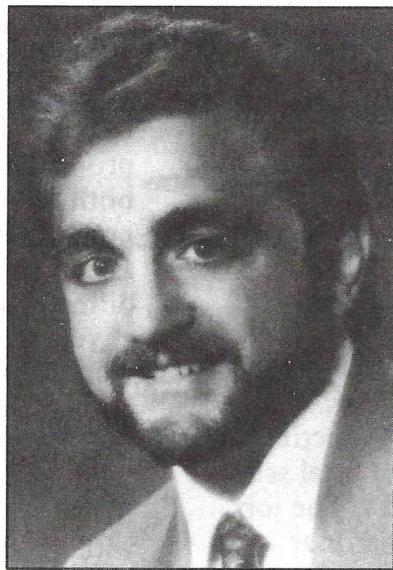
today is that kids are told what they can't do. I was one of thousands falling through the cracks. Kids learn early on, in the third or fourth grade, what's expected of them and after that they rarely try to succeed beyond those expectations," Mario said.

For several years, Mario tried to find a way he could get the word out to others about goal setting and tapping into your personal potential. He then came across courses in personal development from an international

institute. He purchased rights to offer the courses and started Achievement Dynamics in 1985.

Mario added his own weekly workshops on all different aspects of personal growth from "How to Stop Procrastinating" to "Assertiveness Training". Achievement Dynamics works with transformation, not just information. It's important that people continue to grow and realize more of their potential. One seminar doesn't do it. Change takes time. I like to think of Achievement Dynamics as a health spa for the mind. Helping people choose and develop attitudes that will guarantee their success in all the

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# Depressed Teen

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areas of their lives, not just business.

Mario's program involves a ten step system plus the weekly support workshops designed to help people make personal choices for their lives and understand their priorities.

"Most of our limitations exist only in our minds. When you believe in your own

potential, you have more interest in becoming the author of your own novel for your life and not ending up the character in someone else's script."

In February of 1986, Mario volunteered workshops to seniors at Camden High School. At the end of the school year, one of the teachers wrote that "seventy percent" of his students involved in the workshops had increase their grade point average and kept it up the rest of the year.

Mario is now conducting programs at several local school systems for teachers. The job placement coordinator at Camden High, Karen James, has just completed the course and meets with Mario monthly. "I feel it's an excellent program I have been more motivated myself to achieve personal short-range goals and am now setting long-range goals. The teachers are very excited about applying the lessons to their personal lives, as well as teaching their students."

"I feel it will help inner-city youth. The 1986 workshops really made an impact. Those student s carried the lessons into the work world which is very important."

Mario has introduce Achievement Dynamics to

several school districts including Haddonfield, West Deptford, Pennsauken, Gloucester Township, Glassboro and Bishop Eustace. He also has done workshops at Rowan College of New Jersey, Camden County College and Burlington County College.

"My two biggest goals are to open achievement centers in the inner-cities and to someday get personal goal setting on the curriculum in New Jersey's school system," Mario said.

At Bishop Eustace, Vice Principal Cy Bliestein and several teachers have subscribed to the Achievement Dynamics process and feel it is beneficial in both their professional and personal lives. "The program affects each individual differently and lets you proceed at your own pace. The teachers work on the program individually and then apply it in the classroom where it helps them become better teachers. Mario has a very positive way with people."

Both teachers and students at Haddonfield High School have attended Mario's workshops during Student and Staff Wellness Days. Superintendent Dr. Barry Ersek said, "teachers who took the Ten Step course wrote letters of commendation and student ratings of the workshops were high." "Mario at first had to first convince me that he was totally committed. He has a sincere interest in working with the schools and has followed through extensively," Ersek said.

Mario's wife, Renee, works with teenagers in Camden. She is a director of a youth enrichment program called

"The Bridge", where teens come to talk and help support each other through difficult times. Through role playing and group dynamics, Renee teaches the teenagers how to better express themselves and deal with situations. She helps instill self-esteem and respect for themselves and others. "She was a troubled teen herself and now works with over 12,000 teenagers a year." Mario said. The Pinardos have a sixteen year old daughter, Maria, and live in Westville.

Achievements Dynamics, is based from an office on Kings Highway in Cherry Hill and now has a staff of eight associates and 1,400 clients. The clientele is very broad from athletes, professionals and business owners to homemakers and people in transition. "I believe Achievement Dynamics can help anyone who is open to new ideas and wants to improve. Mastering personal goal setting is the single most important process anyone can learn."

"Achievement builds self-esteem and self-esteem builds achievement. It puts the positive cycle in motion. It goes back to the old missionary statement. If you give someone a fish you give them a meal, if you teach them how to fish you give them food for the rest of their life."

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