



INTRODUCTION

When you hear someone say, “That really *gets my goat*,” they’re not usually talking about an actual goat. Most often, they mean that they’re very annoyed. The source of that annoyance could range from bad traffic to an unpleasant encounter. This useful idiom, apparently American in origin, springs like many figures of speech from shadowy beginnings, difficult to track down.

The expression first cropped up in common usage in the great boom years of early twentieth-century America when the country itself was a constant stew of self-invention and expansion, a rich time for linguistic coinage and the creation of slang. The influx of immigrants and non-native speakers of English only added to the mix, and many of the colorful phrases we take for granted today probably began their lives as corruptions of standard English, misunderstood and repurposed by these new Americans. It’s been suggested in this context that the word “goat” is very likely a corruption of “goad.”



Another possible source of its derivation is an old French phrase, *prendre la chèvre*, which translates literally to “to take the goat.” Owning a goat was no small thing to a French peasant who might well depend on its milk and meat, so stealing somebody’s goat in this context would mean robbing that peasant of income and food. Some etymologists have made note of the fact that goats were frequently used as companion animals for nervous racehorses, which might lead an underhanded competitor to steal a horse’s favorite goat before a race in order to unsettle the horse and throw the race; thus, “get my goat.”

Regardless of its origins, the expression “gets my goat” is something that resonates with all of us. Our daily lives intersect with a diverse group of people from different backgrounds who have unique opinions and personalities. The fast-paced, stress-filled schedules we maintain open the gate to allowing people and circumstances to get our goats. As you read this book, I will present ideas to help you herd your goats, lock your gates, identify people who may hunt your goats, retrain your goats, and follow nutritional (mental) advice on what to feed your goats.

I wrote *Hide Your Goat* to help you, the reader, maintain a positive and healthy attitude regardless of who you are, where you have been, and where you are heading. No one is immune to goat-getting; the infection can spread quickly, and those who discharge the poisonous toxin are masquerading as family members, friends, neighbors, coworkers, and a variety of other people. They believe that misery likes company; if they are unhappy, they think, why shouldn’t they share the feeling? They are elusive, prefer not to march alone, and affect every institution of society. The venom they eject produces byproducts of bad attitudes, including resistance to change and personality conflicts. They hunt down upbeat people and, without regard, challenge the upbeat folks’ outlook and question their



positions on everything positive. They cost plenty in terms of productivity and morale, and they make life tough for everyone. They delight in getting your goat!

For the most part, these “goat hunters” are self-doubting, insincere, and, in a lot of cases, not even aware of the type of people they really are. Worse yet, they do not realize the unconstructive impact of their behavior or how other people truly perceive them. The people who accept the behavior of these other individuals are, more often than not, accepting a reflection of themselves. The challenge we all face is that, whether we like it or not, these people are family members, so-called friends, neighbors in close proximity, or coworkers who are not retiring anytime soon. So, how do you survive all this negativity? Hide your goat!

Just where do you hide your goat? It all depends on what you believe gets your goat, or, shall I say, pushes your buttons the wrong way. You are the person who chooses, every day, how you will respond to people and circumstances. You are the person who either has enough self-esteem to accept what life throws at you, or you are the person who feels a need to even the score. I wrote this book to help you rise above the dust of the daily battle that chokes and blinds so many of us when everything seems to be going wrong. Life’s experiences will either make you bitter or better, stronger or weaker. The next time you are overwhelmed by misfortunes, hide your goat and let those events make you better and stronger.



HIDE YOUR GOAT



STRATEGIES TO
STAY POSITIVE
WHEN NEGATIVITY SURROUNDS YOU

STEVE GILLILAND

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