

THE POWER OF FOCUS

- Hitting the snooze alarm several times in the morning before getting out of bed.
- Working long days with no exercise or taking regular breaks.
- Not spending enough time with your children.
- Relying on fast-food or ready meals Monday to Friday.
- Eating at irregular times of the day.
- Leaving home in the morning without hugging your wife, husband, children and/or dog.
- Taking work home with you.
- Being glued to your phone when having dinner with your spouse.
- Making reservations at the last minute (restaurant, travel plans, theatre, concerts).
- Not following through on requests as promised.
- Not taking enough time off for fun and family—guilt free!
- Having your mobile phone on all the time.
- Not deleting old emails.
- Controlling every decision, especially the small stuff you need to let go of!
- Procrastinating on everything from filing taxes to cleaning out your garage.

Now check yourself out by making a list of all the habits that keep you unproductive. Block off an hour so you can really think through this process. And plan it so you won't be interrupted. It's a worthy exercise and will give you a strong foundation for improving your results in the years ahead. In fact, these bad habits, or obstacles to your goals, really act as a springboard to your future success. Until you clearly understand what is holding you back, it's difficult to create more productive habits. The Successful Habits Formula at the end of this chapter will show you a practical way to transform your bad habits into successful strategies.

Another way to identify your unproductive behavior is to ask for feedback. Talk to people you respect and admire, who know you well. Ask them what they observe about your bad habits. Look for consistency. If you talk to ten people and eight of them say you never respond to important emails on time, pay attention. **Remember this—your outward behavior is the truth, whereas your inner perception of your behavior is often an illusion.**

If you are open to good honest feedback, you can make adjustments quickly and eliminate bad habits permanently.

YOUR HABITS AND BELIEF SYSTEMS ARE A PRODUCT OF YOUR ENVIRONMENT

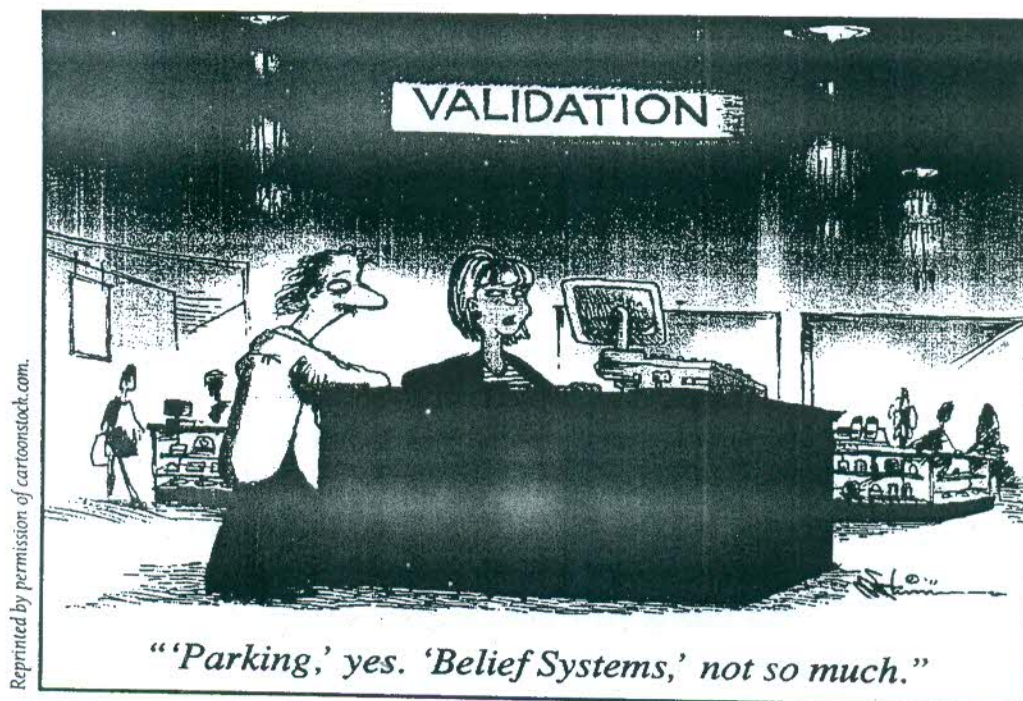
This is an extremely important insight. Understand that the people you hang around with and the environment you live in strongly influence what you do. A person brought up in a negative environment, continually subjected to physical or verbal abuse, has a different view of the world than a child reared in a warm, loving and supportive family. Their attitudes and levels of self-esteem are different. Abusive environments often produce feelings of unworthiness and a lack of confidence,

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not to mention fear. This negative belief system, if carried into adult life, can produce all sorts of unproductive habits including drug addiction, criminal activity and an inability to mold a steady career path.

Peer pressure also plays a negative or positive role. If you hang around people who are always complaining about how bad everything is, you may start believing what they say. On the other hand, if you surround yourself with people who are strong and positive, you're more likely to see a world full of opportunity and adventure.

Even if you were unfortunate enough to have a severely disadvantaged background, you can still make changes. And it may only take one person to help you make the transition. An excellent coach, teacher, therapist, mentor or positive role model can dramatically impact your future. **The only prerequisite is that you must commit to change.** When you are ready to do so, the right people will start showing up to help you. In our experience, that well-known saying, "When the pupil is ready the teacher appears," is true.



How to CHANGE Bad Habits

STUDY THE HABITS OF SUCCESSFUL ROLE MODELS

As mentioned before, successful people have developed successful habits. Learn to observe what those habits are. Study successful people. As well-known business philosopher Jim Rohn said, "They leave clues." What if you were to interview one successful person every month? Take him or her out to breakfast or lunch and ask lots of good questions about their disciplines, routines and habits. What do they read? What clubs and associations do they belong to? How do they schedule their time? If you listen well and take good notes, you'll have a wealth of powerful ideas in a very short time. And if your request is sincere, truly successful people are happy to share their ideas. They enjoy the opportunity to coach people who are genuinely interested in improving their lives.

JACK AND MARK:

When we finished writing the first *Chicken Soup for the Soul* book, we asked all of the bestselling authors we know—Barbara De Angelis, John Gray, Ken Blanchard, Harvey Mackay, Harold Bloomfield, Wayne Dyer and Scott Peck—what specific strategies would be required to assure that our book would become a bestseller. All of these people were generous with their ideas and their insights. We did everything we were told. We made a habit of doing a minimum of one radio interview a day, seven days a week, for two years. We retained our own publicist. We sent out five books a day to reviewers and other potential opinion

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molders. We gave newspapers and magazines free reprint rights to our stories. We offered motivational seminars to all of the people responsible for selling our books. In short, we asked what our bestselling habits should be and we put them into action. As a result, we have sold 500 million books to date worldwide. (To put this into perspective, at this writing, the entire Harry Potter series has sold about 450 million copies in at least seventy languages.)

The trouble is, most people won't ask. Instead, they come up with all sorts of excuses. They're too busy, or they rationalize that successful people wouldn't have time for them, and how do you find these people anyway? Successful people aren't standing on every street corner waiting to be interviewed. That's right. Remember, it's a study. That means you need to be resourceful and come up with ways to find where these successful people work, live, eat and hang out. Make it a game. Have fun. It's worth it! (In Chapter 5, which focuses on the habit of Building Excellent Relationships, you'll discover how to find and contact successful mentors.)

Here's another way to study successful people: Read their autobiographies and biographies. There are hundreds of them. These are wonderful true stories packed with ideas, and the books are in your local library, in bookstores, and downloadable online. Read one every month, and you'll gain more insights in a year than many university courses could offer.

Also, be alert for special documentaries that feature successful people. Another habit the three of us have developed is listening to motivational and educational audio programs when we are driving, walking or exercising. If you listen to an audio for thirty minutes each day, five days a week, in ten years you'll have been exposed to over thirteen hundred hours of new and useful information. This is a habit that almost all of the successful people we know have developed.

Our friend Jim Rohn said, "If you read one book every month about your industry, in ten years you'll have read 120 books. That will put you in the top one percent of your field." Conversely, Jim wisely noted, "**All the books you haven't read won't help you!**" The internet is a wonderful source for inspirational videos, music, apps, and training programs. All this terrific information is out there waiting for you. So feast on it, and watch your awareness soar. Pretty soon, if you apply what you learn, your income will soar too.

DEVELOP THE HABIT OF CHANGING YOUR HABITS

People who are rich in every sense of the word understand that life is a learning experience. It never stops. Learn to constantly refine your habits. There's always another level to reach for, no matter how good you are right now. When you constantly strive to improve, you build character. You become more as a person, and you have more to offer. It's an exciting journey that ultimately leads to fulfillment and prosperity. Unfortunately, sometimes we learn the lessons the hard way.

LES:

On a routine visit to my doctor for a check up, I learned that my triglycerides were a little high as was my "bad" cholesterol. I was also advised to lose ten pounds of weight as my body mass index (BMI) was creeping outside the normal healthy adult range of 20–25. So what do you do when the evidence is there in black and white? Two choices. Ignore the numbers or start thinking about the consequences down the road—diabetes and heart disease quickly came to mind.

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I've always believed in taking preventative action when it comes to my health. Waiting until a crisis occurred was never very appealing to me! However, I had allowed myself to slip into a few bad habits and ignored some early warning signals. It's easy to make excuses when you are busy in your business. I decided a few changes were necessary concerning my daily eating habits. Upon reflection, I realized my sugar intake was high. My healthy breakfast (I thought) consisted of three mixed cereals and three or four portions of fresh fruit. A nutritionist informed me this was far too much sugar to start my day. First wake-up call! On further reflection, I realized I was consuming more soda and high sugar drinks than normal. And in times of pressure deadlines at work, chocolate and cookies had become my daily comfort food. Adding this all up resulted in a case of the blindingly obvious! Too much sugar—more body bulge—negative test results.

Dear reader, if you find yourself in the same boat, take heart: there's a simple solution. For me, the new habits were to cut out the chocolate and cookies cold turkey and spread my eating throughout the day with smaller portions. And guess what happened? I lost sixteen pounds in two months and my triglycerides were back to normal, as was my BMI index.

My energy is great, I'm more focused and more confident now that I've taken better control of my health just by making a few adjustments. Was letting go of the sugary drinks and chocolate really tough to do? Surprisingly not, although I still enjoy an occasional cookie. I mean, life is meant to be enjoyed, right?

The big insight for me was to not become complacent regarding these important aspects of my life. Complacency precedes dangerous consequences. Stay alert!

The point of this story is to illustrate how life will always give you consequences related to your actions. So before you embark on a specific course, look ahead. Are you creating negative consequences or potential rewards? Be clear in your thinking. Do some research. Ask questions before you start any new habits. If you do this, you'll enjoy more of life's pleasures, and not be screaming for morphine to kill your pain!

Now that you understand how habits really work and how to identify them, let's conclude with the most important part—how to permanently change your habits.

As well as making a list of your bad habits, here's a few questions to stimulate your thinking.

- **Are my financial habits helping me reach my most important financial goals?**
For example: Financial Freedom, that is, having the choice to do whatever I want without worrying about the cost.
- **Are any of my current health habits jeopardizing my future wellbeing?**
For example: no exercise and consuming high calorie foods.
- **What communication habits do I need to improve?**
For example: better listening, speaking clearly, being empathetic, less controlling.
- **What habits do I have that may be hurting my family relationships?**
For example: not paying attention, being self-centered, perfectionism.

The Successful HABITS Formula

This is a step-by-step method to help you create better habits. It works because it's simple. You don't need complicated strategies. This template can be applied to any area of your life, business or personal. If applied consistently, it will help you achieve everything you want. There are three simple fundamental steps:

I. CLEARLY IDENTIFY YOUR BAD OR UNPRODUCTIVE HABITS

It's important that you really think about the future consequences of your bad habits. These may not show up tomorrow, next week or next month. The real impact could be years away. When you look at your unproductive behavior one day at a time, it may not look so bad. The smoker says, "What's a few cigarettes today? It helps me relax. I'm not wheezing and coughing." However, the days accumulate and twenty years later in the doctor's office, the X-rays are conclusive. Consider this: If you smoke ten cigarettes a day for twenty years, that's seventy three thousand cigarettes. Do you think seventy three thousand cigarettes could have an impact on your lungs? Of course! In fact, the consequences can be deadly. **So when you examine your own bad habits, consider the long-term implications. Be totally honest. Your life may be at stake.**

Tobacco use is the leading preventable cause of death. On average, adults who smoke cigarettes die fourteen years earlier than non-smokers. Source: CDC

2. DEFINE YOUR NEW SUCCESSFUL HABIT

Usually this is just the opposite of your bad habit. In the smoker's example it would be, "Stop Smoking." What are you actually going to do? To motivate yourself, think about all the benefits and rewards for adopting your new successful habit. This helps you create a clear picture of what this new habit will do for you. **The more vividly you describe the benefits, the more likely you are to take action.**

3. CREATE A THREE-PART ACTION PLAN

This is where the rubber meets the road. In the smoking example there are several options. Read how-to-stop-smoking literature. Start hypnosis therapy. Substitute something else when the desire for a cigarette arises. Place a bet with a friend to keep you accountable. Start a fresh air exercise program. Use a nicotine patch treatment. Stay away from other smokers. The important thing is to make a decision about which specific actions you are going to implement.

You must take action. Start with one habit that you really want to change. You can apply this to any area of your life. Focus on your three immediate action steps and put them into practice. **Remember, nothing will change until you do.**

BEING AMBITIOUS

Excellence depends on ambition, the will to do well. Ambition motivates you to constantly challenge yourself. It's the drive that helps you realize your dream. Have grand expectations—even immodestly high ones—and believe in them. Only when ambition prevails over inhibition is excellence truly possible.



Excellence is the gradual result of always striving to do better.
Pat Riley, National Basketball Association coach

High expectations are the key to everything.
Sam Walton, founder of Wal-Mart

It is a wretched taste to be gratified with mediocrity when the excellent lies before us ...
Isaac D'Israeli, writer

... The world is your oyster ... I grew up thinking that despite the obstacles presented by the swine, I would be successful no matter what I did.
Hunter S. Thompson, writer



Have a goal

What is your greatest vision of yourself? In five years? Ten years? Twenty? Forty?

Vision is perhaps our greatest strength ... it has kept us alive to the power and continuity of thought through the centuries, it makes us peer into the future and lends shape to the unknown.

Li Ka Shing, chairman of Cheung Kong (Holdings) Limited and Hutchison Whampoa Limited

Ask yourself these questions and answer them honestly: What do you want? And how will you know when you get it?

People really do have their own solutions. The problem is, either they don't know how to discover them, or they avoid discovering them. But if you want to come up with good decisions for your work and your life, simply ask those two questions—because it all comes down to very simple things.

Richard Leider, author, speaker, and counselor

The man without a purpose is a man who drifts at the mercy of random feelings or unidentified urges and is capable of any evil, because he is totally out of control of his own life.

In order to be in control of your life, you have to have a purpose—a productive purpose.

Ayn Rand, writer and philosopher

It was my life's ambition to see a book I had written on a shelf in a bookshop. Everything that has happened since has been extraordinary and wonderful, but the mere fact of being able to say I was a published author was the fulfillment of a dream I had had since I was a very small child.

J. K. Rowling, writer

You need to develop a very clear picture in your mind of how you want and expect to work and live ... The more clarity you bring to the decision, the better the decision will be.

Several years ago, I worked with a man who came to a very clear picture of what he wanted in his life: He wanted to own a sports team. Once that became clear, he worked out, step by step, what it would take to reach that goal: "To own a sports team, I have to amass great wealth. To do that, I have to be an entrepreneur. To do that, I have to learn about running a business—and it needs to be in an industry where there's a great deal of upside potential." As he worked out the logic, it not only made a lot of sense, it also helped guide his decisions.

James Waldroop, management consultant and co-founder of Peregrine Partners

People ask how can a Jewish kid from the Bronx do preppy clothes? Does it have to do with class and money? No. It has to do with dreams.

Ralph Lauren, designer

Set your ambitions high

The higher your expectations, the greater your chances of excellence in whatever you set out to do.

You know the story of the farmer who in his backyard had chicken, and then he had a chicken that was a little odd looking, but he was a chicken. It behaved like a chicken. It was pecking away like other chickens. It didn't know that there was a blue sky overhead and a glorious sunshine until someone who was knowledgeable in these things came along and said to the farmer, "Hey, that's no chicken. That's an eagle." Then the farmer said, "Um, um, no, no, no, no man. That's a chicken; it behaves like a chicken."

EXCELLENCE

And the man said no; give it to me please. And he gave it to this knowledgeable man. And this man took this strange looking chicken and climbed the mountain and waited until sunrise. And then he turned this strange looking chicken towards the sun and said, "Eagle, fly, eagle." And the strange looking chicken shook itself, spread out its pinions, and lifted off and soared and soared and soared and flew away, away into the distance. And God says to all of us, you are no chicken; you are an eagle. Fly, eagle, fly. And God wants us to shake ourselves, spread our pinions, and then lift off and soar and rise, and rise toward the confident and the good and the beautiful. Rise towards the compassionate and the gentle and the caring. Rise to become what God intends us to be—eagles, not chickens.

Desmond Tutu, cleric, activist, and Nobel Peace Prize Laureate

Don't limit yourself. Many people limit themselves to what they think they can do. You can go as far as your mind lets you. What you believe, remember, you can achieve.

Mary Kay Ash, founder of Mary Kay cosmetics

I always knew I was going to be rich. I don't think I ever doubted it for a minute.

Warren Buffett, investor; chairman of Berkshire Hathaway

Don't limit your dreams. Make them magnificent.

Well I DO want to go up into space, but more than that, I'm dissatisfied with the fact that humans have only gone to the moon. I want to go to Mars! I want to eventually go beyond the solar system!

Takafumi Horie, entrepreneur

As long as you're going to think anyway, think big.

Donald Trump, CEO of the Trump Organization

Start with a dream. Maybe a dream that is personal and small, but worth doing. Then dream a bigger dream. Keep dreaming until your dreams seem impossible to achieve. Then you'll know you're on the right track. Then you'll know you're ready to conjure up a dream big enough to define your future and perhaps your generation's future.

Vance Coffman, chairman and CEO of Lockheed Martin

We want to make smarter search engines that do a lot of the work for us. The smarter we can make the search engine, the better. Where will it lead? Who knows? But it's credible to imagine a leap as great as that from hunting through library stacks to a Google session, when we leap from today's search engines to having the entirety of the world's information as just one of our thoughts.

Sergey Brin, co-founder and president of Google Inc.

I had ambition not only to go farther than any man had ever been before, but as far as it was possible for a man to go.

James R. Cook, explorer

It doesn't matter where you start.

I tell [young people] not to be afraid about starting at the bottom; that they can work their way up; that they need to learn all they can from people who have been in the business longer than they have been. They should be a sponge and just absorb what is going on around them and learn everything they possibly can as soon as they step inside the door.

Katie Couric, news anchor

Us kids in Queens always looked at Manhattan as the Mecca. If you could make it there, you could make it anywhere—that's what Frank Sinatra kept saying. I did 'On the Sunny Side of the Street' because at one point in my life, I realized there was a lot of power in having absolutely nothing. Freedom is either that you have absolutely everything or you have absolutely nothing—anywhere in between, you struggle. So I just decided that I would find that sunny side of the street and be as rich as Rockefeller—or "Gatesefeller" now. To get beyond everything, that's the side of the street I had to choose to walk on.

Cyndi Lauper, singer

When you're a self-made man you start very early in life. In my case, it was at nine years old when I started bringing income into the family. You get a drive that's a little different, maybe a little stronger, than somebody who inherited.

Kirk Kerkorian, president and CEO of Tracinda Corporation

Never settle

You'll never approach anything like excellence if you settle for mediocrity.

Nothing is more sterile or lamentable than the man content to live within himself.

Harold Pinter, playwright, in Tea Party

Success is ... the capacity to dream, and the determination to live in obedience to those dreams. An important but little known American poet, Delmore Schwartz, once wrote, "In dreams begin responsibilities."

Christopher Dodd, US senator

The day we think we've got it made, that's the day we'd better start worrying.

Rich Teerlink, CEO of Harley-Davidson

Ambition never comes to an end.

Yoshida Kenko, writer and Buddhist monk

PERSISTENCE

The best habit of human nature is PERSISTENCE. There is nothing to replace the word "Persistence." It is human nature that we all tend to make mistakes knowingly or unknowingly. The most important thing is learning from them and realizing in a positive manner to achieve the desired results. There is a process for everything we come across in our lives. You can always expedite the process in comparison with others if you understand the game plan well. A baby cannot walk on the floor when he or she is first born. He or she needs a lot of practice for a number of months. How many times have you seen a baby strive hard to walk even though he/she is not able to stand at an early stage? Even after failing numerous times, the baby does not give up and he or she will practice it repeatedly with more enthusiasm. The same rule applies for any situation that keeps you doing the same things in different and unique ways until you achieve the desired results. Failure may be part of the game, but it is not the destination.

There is a nice story about the frog in a milk-pail...

A frog was hopping around a farmyard, when it decided to investigate the barn. Being somewhat careless, and maybe a little too curious, he ended up falling into a pail half-filled with fresh milk. As he swam about attempting to reach the top of the pail, he found that the sides of the pail were too high and steep to reach. He tried to stretch

Venu G. Somineni, One Book for Life Success – Transform yourself for peak performance, Outskirts Press, Inc., Denver, Colorado

One Book for Life Success

his back legs to push off the bottom of the pail but found it too deep. But this frog was determined not to give up, and he continued to struggle. He kicked and squirmed and kicked and squirmed, until at last, all his churning about in the milk had turned the milk into a big hunk of butter. The butter was now solid enough for him to climb onto and get out of the pail! "Never Give Up!"

Probably, the greatest example of persistence is Abraham Lincoln (16th President of United States). If you want to learn about somebody who didn't quit, look no further. Born into poverty, Lincoln was faced with defeat throughout his life. He lost eight elections, twice failed in business and suffered a nervous breakdown. He could have quit many times - but he didn't, and because he didn't quit, he became one of the greatest presidents in the history of United States. Lincoln was a champion and he never gave up.

Here is a sketch of Lincoln's road to the White House:

- * 1816 - *His family was forced out of their home. He had to work to support them.*
- * 1818 - *His mother died.*
- * 1831 - *Failed in business.*
- * 1832 - *Ran for the state legislature - lost.*
- * 1832 - *Also lost his job - wanted to go to law school but couldn't get in.*
- * 1833 - *Borrowed some money from a friend to begin a business and by the end of the year he was bankrupt. He spent the next 17 years of his life paying off this debt.*
- * 1834 - *Ran for the state legislature again - won.*
- * 1835 - *Was engaged to be married, sweetheart died and his heart*

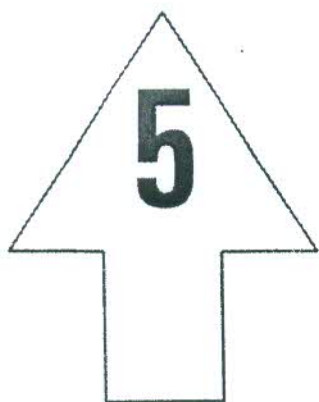
Persistence

was broken.

- * 1836 - *Had a total nervous breakdown and was in bed for six months.*
- * 1838 - *Sought to become speaker of the state legislature – defeated.*
- * 1840 - *Sought to become elector - defeated.*
- * 1843 - *Ran for Congress - lost.*
- * 1846 - *Ran for Congress again - this time he won - went to Washington and did a good job.*
- * 1848 - *Ran for re-election to Congress - lost.*
- * 1849 - *Sought the job of land officer in his home state - rejected.*
- * 1854 - *Ran for Senate of the United States - lost.*
- * 1856 - *Sought the Vice-Presidential nomination at his party's national convention – get less than 100 votes.*
- * 1858 - *Ran for U.S. Senate again - again he lost.*
- * 1860 - *Elected president of the United States.*

It took Abraham Lincoln thirty years to achieve his dream of becoming the President of the United States. Do not be discouraged if you have tried and tried and still haven't achieved your dreams yet. Worthwhile goals and aspirations will always take time to accomplish. However, you can achieve them for sure with sincere effort and great persistence.

The bottom line: Successful people never ever quit. Always try one more time until you succeed.



The Success Attitude

There is no duty we so much underrate as the duty of being happy.

— ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

The Success Attitude formula makes achieving your Core Desires simple. We all use this formula to reach our objectives, whether we know it or not. It has been an integral part of my own achievement experience.

The Success Attitude formula shows you how to unlock and open the door of opportunity. Many people have listened to experts or read their books and have been all fired up with that can-do approach. But soon the fire goes out and they never get going, they never take the first step, or they quit too easily. This won't happen when you know your genuine Core Desires and apply the Success Attitude formula.

$$SA = (CD + D) \times PA + P$$

Success Attitude = (Core Desires + Direction) \times Proper Action + Persistence

SUCCESS ATTITUDE

A Success Attitude is a frame of mind that allows you to accomplish whatever you want because you *know* that you can create the opportunity and then make it happen. You may not necessarily know *how* you will create the opportunity, you just know that you have the *ability* to learn whatever it takes to acquire the attributes, skills, and characteristics needed. With this foundation, you need only identify what you really want to learn about and then find a mentor to shorten your learning curve.

Remember that you are smart enough to learn whatever someone is willing to teach you. With the skill and attitude you learn from a mentor, you can then create the opportunity and make it happen. You may surprise yourself with the things you can do. You will acquire the talent and attitudes needed thanks to your Core Desires and your Conquering Force.

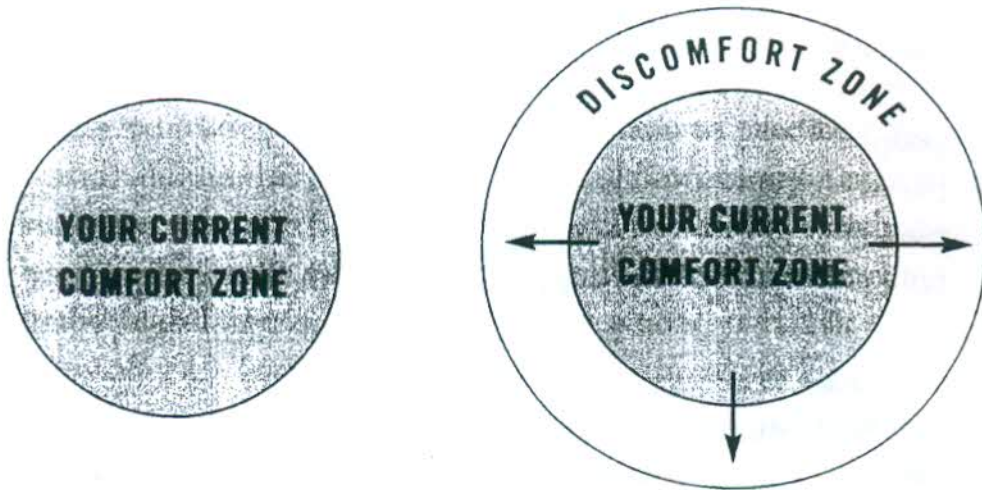
When you have faith and confidence in yourself, you will do more and attempt to do more. The ancient Greeks defined *faith* as “action out of confidence.” The more confidence you have, the more action you will take.

Where can you get more faith and confidence? You can borrow it from someone who has plenty of it—from those who are already successful at whatever you want to learn—whether it’s skiing, swimming, marriage, or business. When you apply what they have taught you, you will achieve the results as promised, thus greatly increasing your faith. When you exercise your faith, you will become a more confident and faith-full person.

CORE DESIRES

Use those strong, powerful, and heartfelt desires—those that measure 100 on the Core Desire Scale—to succeed at anything. Find the overwhelming, overarching desire that is so strong it will tap into the Conquering Force. The only thing that will cause you to do what is unfamiliar, uncomfortable, or even scary is knowing it is worth it. Your

comfort zone is what you have right now in your life. If you want more out of your life, you must move into the discomfort zone—a much larger circle. The longer you stay in the discomfort zone, the more comfortable you become. Before long, the perimeter of the first circle disappears and your comfort zone will encompass this new, larger circle.



How large would you like your comfort zone to be? It can be as big as you'd like. You can choose to place no limits on yourself. If you can learn, you can do, have, or become whatever you want.

When I ask people, "How are *you* creating opportunity?" I hear many excuses. I have a rebuttal for each excuse—I've used them all myself. But what it really comes down to is, do you want it or not? If a person says he would like to learn to swim but is afraid of water, my response is very objective: Do you want to learn to swim or not? It's your choice. If the desire is big enough, you will do it even if the fear is there. It is that simple. Our limiting paradigms are what make it seem so hard.

Once, a woman timidly approached me and told me that she really wanted to take a job but was concerned that she wasn't "cut out for that kind of work."

"When you were cut out, what were you cut out for?" I asked.

She saw herself as "just a housewife."

When I ask people, "What are you?" I hear such things as "I'm just a secretary," "just a truck driver," "just a plumber," "just a mom."

*"The person who says
it can't be done
should not interrupt
the person doing it."*

—Chinese proverb

People label themselves as "just-a." This "just-a" attitude is a way of downplaying your current roles. If you aren't happy in your current roles, you can change them. Everyone is "just-a" *human being* with all the abilities and attributes God gave us at birth. We can do, have, or become whatever our hearts desire. The poten-

tial of any human being is immense.

There will always be those who tell you "it can't be done." Some people—out of love or concern—may advise you not to move forward based on their opinion and limited experience. Without fail, those people who advise against breaking out of a rut and paint scary pictures of failure have never been successful on their own. Remind yourself not to listen to negative people who have never accomplished what you intend to do. People cannot bring you to a level they have never achieved—they can't teach you what they do not know themselves. But they sure can be discouraging.

I know a man whose parents had been wage earners their entire lives. Out of love and concern for their son, they tried to discourage him from going into business for himself. They'd tell him, "You won't have a steady paycheck." And when that didn't work, they'd tell him, "You know, eighty percent of all businesses fail. You won't have much of a chance. You don't have enough education. Get a good job, stay with a company, and work your way up."

The man didn't listen to his parents, or to anyone who cast doubt on his Core Desire. Today he is very successful, and glad he only listened to those who had already achieved what he wanted. The people that helped him get to their level are the ones who knew the way.

I was that young man, and I owe all my success to my Core Desires, my mentors, God, and an encouraging and supportive wife. My parents' paradigm about business and education may have been accurate, but to allow my past to control my future was ridiculous. My parents did not factor in the power of my Core Desires. They had never been in business for themselves, and their mind-set was limited to their personal experiences.

DIRECTION

Still, a Core Desire by itself won't get you where you want to go. If you live in California and want to drive to Washington, D.C., you may have a great desire, but you still need direction.

We already know that the shortest distance between two points is a straight line. Wouldn't it make sense to go straight, or as straight as possible, toward our desired objective? Identifying Core Desires has a way of making you want to fulfill them as quickly as possible. Yet many folks, after they've pinpointed their Core Desires, get bogged down because they can't find direction. So find an accurate map, trace the best route, check with the travel club, and find out about any detours. Minimize your delays and annoyances.

It may not be simple to map out *exactly* how you'll increase your income, increase your free time, overcome habits that hold you back, or create close relationships. It's always much harder to find a map for those—but they do exist.

Once you know what your Core Desires are, you can make use of tools that are available to you, such as the ones listed below. But remember, these tools alone—without Core Desires—will get you nowhere fast.

→ *Mentors*

Throughout history, world leaders have had their mentors. Franklin Roosevelt had George Marshall; the King of England had Winston Churchill; Julius Caesar had Mark Antony. If people at the very top are smart enough to seek out and utilize mentors, don't you think we'd be smart to do the same thing?

→ *Books*

For every Core Desire you have, you can find a book. When you read books that address your Core Desire, reading can be a joy and a pleasure. You'll devour the words and eagerly apply all you've learned. (That's your Conquering Force in action.) Interestingly, the Conquering Force eliminates boredom, because you're always doing what you want. Only buy books that pertain to your identified Core Desires.

⇒ *Audio and video programs*

There are many audio- and videotapes out there, about everything from taxes to relationships. If they apply to your Core Desires, these tapes can help you apply your Conquering Force effectively. Many programs provide specific how-tos. If the content pertains to your Core Desires, the message can be life-changing.

⇒ *Personal development courses and seminars*

Again, as long as the content pertains to one or more of your Core Desires, seminar presentations can help you achieve your desires. Many seminars are free or very inexpensive because local universities or other organizations sponsor them. Seminars and courses are among the most powerful and helpful experiences you can have. Some last an hour or two, some five days. Often they are very intense and they are generally designed to help you overcome personal obstacles hindering your growth and limiting your happiness. In these seminars and courses, you participate on an emotional level. My deepest Core Desire has always been to have the best relationship possible with my wife and children. Anything that can help me do that automatically helps me achieve my Core Desire.

PROPER ACTION

Without proper action, you can't obtain your Core Desires. A Latin proverb says, "If there is no wind, row." I add, "Row with *both* oars, but first untie the boat from the dock." The Conquering Force is the power that causes you to take the proper steps, no matter what the risk or how many obstacles you encounter.

Wanting to go to Washington, D.C., and simply selecting the route won't get you there. You've taken some action by reading about all the things to see; you've bought a map and done some calculations, but it isn't enough. You still must get in the car, fill it with gas, and take off. Without the map, you could have a difficult time getting there. Maybe you'd still get lost or get a flat tire. There are always risks associated with any journey, but the potential for problems doesn't stop you from

trying, because it's a Core Desire to go on vacation and see the nation's capital.

This attitude of not letting risks and possible problems stop you applies to every area of your life. When you are working toward a genuine Core Desire, fear is not a limiting factor. If you are afraid to do something but do it anyway, does that mean that you are afraid or brave? The answer is both, but it's the Core Desires that make the fear manageable.

My wife and I decided to go to Vail, Colorado, with our two teenage daughters to hike in the Rocky Mountains. It was a beautiful summer day when we parked the car at the lodge and started off hiking. Right away my daughters saw that we could take one of the ski lifts and ride to the top of the mountain to take in the spectacular views.

When they asked if we could take the chair lift, my chest tightened. I'm afraid of heights. Those chair lifts go so high above the ground, and with nothing between me and a long fall but those tiny wooden slats to sit on, I said "Uh-uh." They told me that it was impossible to fall—millions of people ride these lifts with no accidents.

They pleaded, "Please, please, Daddy? It will be beautiful up there."

Because my Core Desire was to please my daughters and to have a wonderful experience with them, I took the chair lift to the top.

Was I scared? Absolutely. I was terrified. But I did it anyway, thanks to my Conquering Force.

Be careful not to confuse hard work with proper action. There are millions of hardworking people who have never enjoyed the pleasures of focusing on and living with the success of attaining genuine Core Desires. Some people say the harder you work the luckier you get. But when you are doing the right work, you get even luckier. Many people spin their wheels, producing a lot of action and effort but no real results. They keep working and staying busy but never seem to get ahead. Because they keep doing what they have always done, their lives stay the same.

PERSISTENCE

In your journey from your home in California to the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D.C., you already have the direction you need and are taking proper action as you start the drive. Still, without persistence, you won't make it. After all, it's a long drive, and very real and valid obstacles can keep you from getting there. But if you really want to get there, if it is a Core Desire, you will do what is necessary.

If going to the Smithsonian is a 100 on your Core Desire Scale, you will find a way to get there—even if you are out of money and your car has broken down. You will find a way. Persistence is automatic when you have identified a Core Desire.

In the pursuit of Core Desires, you may not hit the bull's-eye on the first shot. You may have to take several shots and then learn to make adjustments. I failed in four different businesses before I achieved the level of success—and income—I now enjoy. Why did I keep starting over? Because I wanted to be free—and not just financially. I wanted to be my own boss and be in control of my time and money. Had I quit, as so many well-meaning people advised me to do, I wouldn't be free to come and go as I wish, nor would I be speaking to, and helping, people all around the world.

Almost all karate students have a tough time learning the hardest kick—the rear kick. It's so difficult because your body does not easily allow you to kick backward. Students who are just learning this kick

have a hard time; they kick only about ankle or knee high and without proper form. After three or four lessons, they still have difficulty. They moan in frustration "I'll never be any good at this," "I'll never learn this kick." But when asked if they really want to learn it, they always say yes.

After I teach the motions necessary to master this kick, I give my students homework: practice the kick with each leg a thousand times a week for at least two weeks. I can usually tell who will become proficient at the kick by their reaction to

"That which we persist in doing becomes easier to do, not that the nature of the thing itself has changed, but that our ability to do has increased."

—Heber J. Grant

my instructions. Some agree to do the exercise, others protest, and still others persist. Those who persist become experts at the rear kick. All have the ability, but only a few have the heart-set.

After seeing the Success Attitude formula in action over the years, I'm convinced that it works every time. It will produce tremendous results and never fails. By following these simple steps, you can enjoy life at high levels of harmony, satisfaction, and joy. By following the Success Attitude formula, you will benefit greatly.

Mark Lesicka

In 1986 Mark was asked to make a donation to the Children's Hospital fund-raiser. The woman calling on behalf of the hospital told Mark a story about how her child had been cared for in a time of illness. Mark was so touched by the woman's story, he felt compelled to do all he could to make this fund-raiser a resounding success. He wasn't sure how he would do it; he only knew that it was important.

A few days later Mark was visiting one of several video stores he owns. The store manager told him about an article she had read about the Batmobile. She asked Mark if it would be possible to use the car as a promotional tool. At first Mark laughed, but then he thought immediately of the Children's Hospital fund-raiser.

After many calls to the rare car dealership nearby, Mark was able to convince the owner to donate the use of the Batmobile for the fund-raiser, with the stipulation that Mark pay for the advertising and transportation costs, as well as arrange permissions from Warner Brothers. The dealership also requested that any ads make it known that the car was being donated specifically for the Children's Hospital.

Mark set to work, securing the help of employees and friends. When he contacted the movie studio, he was surprised to learn that this was not the first time the Batmobile had been used in a fund-raiser. And he was pleased to learn that the studio would cover any insurance fees. Next Mark contracted with an agency to draw up an advertisement for the Batmobile. While the final ad was being constructed,

"Vitality shows not only in the ability to persist but the ability to start over."

—F. Scott Fitzgerald

"The secret of success is constancy of purpose."

—Benjamin Disraeli

Mark left for a short vacation. While on vacation, he received a call from his office saying that the dealership was calling the deal off. It seemed that the advertising agency had somehow failed to mention the Children's Hospital fund-raiser in the ad. Mark immediately called the dealership and promised to correct the advertisement.

Despite the obstacles in his way, Mark was driven by the Core Desire to help raise money for a cause he felt close to. The use of the Batmobile was a huge success—over four thousand people attended the event and, in just two days, raised 10 percent of the funds that were raised that year. Mark received numerous calls from other local hospitals requesting that the Batmobile pay visits to their fund-raisers and visit terminally ill children.

Because Mark was driven to help raise as much money as possible for the hospital, nothing stood in his way. Without ever writing down goals or making affirmations, he overcame obstacles, pursued all avenues, and ultimately persevered in the face of adversity. Once he had identified his Core Desire, his Conquering Force kicked into gear—and anything was possible.

Heber J. Grant

When Heber J. Grant was a boy, he joined a baseball club. He lacked the physical strength to throw the ball from one base to another or hit the ball or run well. He was teased and called "sissy." This painful teasing caused him to make a solemn vow to play on the best team and win the state championship. He bought a baseball and spent hours and hours throwing it against a barn. His arm would ache so badly he could hardly sleep at night. But he kept on practicing and eventually played on the team that won the state championship.

Steve Young

"In many ways I'm not a likely candidate to be a quarterback in the NFL. For starters, I harbored a lot of self-doubt for years. I was like

The Little Train That Couldn't. I kept saying, 'I can't do it. I can't do it.' So the secret to my success is just that I knew I had the ability and desire—deep down—and I held on. It seemed like success happened to me. I sat there in a 3-D game, and it kept coming at me. I just kept going ahead, kept improving my game, and somehow never stopped. I just took it a day at a time. And over time, I became *The Little Train That Could*. My new message to myself is 'I think I can. I think I can.' I overcame my doubts. Somehow you get things done that you never thought you could when you just move forward and hold on. The hard part was waiting behind Joe Montana. When I finally got my chance, the scrutiny was intense. I faced incredible odds. But I was drawn to the challenge. I kept saying, 'I'm sticking this one out. I want to see where it goes.' And one day I woke up as MVP of the league."

This level of persistence exists in all of us if we want something with *all* our heart. One of my mentors once taught me a lesson on adversity when he asked me what makes a kite fly. I said, "It's *the wind*." He said, "The answer is, the string. What would happen if, while flying a kite, you let go of the string? The kite would fall. You see, it's that resistance to the wind, provided by the string, that not only keeps it aloft but causes it to soar to great heights."

So when you encounter resistance or adversity, remember that you're like a kite flying in the sky and you need resistance to become strong and to stay up there or soar higher. I know that's true for me. As a result of seemingly negative things that have happened to me, I am where I am today. I sure didn't like them when they were happening, but hindsight shows that these experiences were some of the best things that could have happened to me.

The ability to solve problems is one of the most important elements of achievement in any endeavor. Problems will crop up. Accept that as a fact of life. Solving them is the way to succeed.

*"Perseverance is not
a long race. It is many
short races, one after
another."*

—Walter Elliott



10 MANTRAS *of* SUCCESS

It is of utter importance to take a serious view of all the possibilities and outcomes before you take a decision on your future career. Most of us, especially Indians, believe it to be one's destiny to the type of career we have. Though, one cannot fully ignore this fact but one must also not underestimate whatever is in our hands. If we concentrate on our performance then that would almost certainly propel us on the road to success. Certain key ingredients for a successful career are given below:

Decision Making

In simple words, "every single act of ours bears some result or the other" i.e. it may be both negative and positive. This result is very closely tied to the decision which one makes after deciding carefully and after a lot of self analysis because any wrong decision will never bring the desired and right results. Most of the failures that one faces in life are because of a wrong decision taken.

Supposing, someone opts for science stream in class XII despite a lack of interest, due to parental or peer pressure, he/she might end up in just about passing the exam but he/she won't be able to perform better in future.

When such a situation arises, especially after class X, then it becomes the primary responsibility of the teachers and the parents to play a vital role in helping the child with the correct decision making.

Planning

This is another important tool that plays a key role in any successful career because unexpected results and events are due to a lack of proper planning. Thus, it becomes imperative to say that any planned work/effort does not fail, but even it does so for some reasons then the damage is definitely not that great. For example, if any aspirant for the IIT-JEE exam, prepares for it at the right time along with good planning and is still unable to secure a good rank, his efforts do not go waste and he stands a very good chance of succeeding and doing well in other related exams.

Besides reducing the risk of failure, proper planning also saves a lot of time and money. For example, if you plan well in advance for any exam, the chances of success are quite high. Thus, success in one attempt saves your time spent in preparation for the second attempt.

Determination

All the towering people of history, past and present, such as Buddha, Jesus, Alexander, Mahatma Gandhi, Newton, Einstein etc. are remembered for their indefatigable determination to achieve what they wanted at all cost, if not for nothing else. Thus, it would not be out of place to say that determination carries success with it.

Discipline

All your effort may go in vain if you lack discipline in life. Because it lays waste all the efforts and you may end up as a failure in life. For e.g. if you decide to become a doctor and start your preparations with good planning but are not disciplined enough to put in the required number hours to study, then all your efforts might fail.

Stability

Stability should be another required factor in one's personality necessarily. All the activities which are part of one's plan must be performed consistently enough so as to achieve the desired results. For example, if your planning dictates that you need to put in five hours every day to your studies, then missing out a couple of days means that your decision making, planning and discipline all may go waste.

Success Mantra

Majority of people dream of being successful, yet it is only a few who take this 'dream' forward and actually work towards realizing the success they desire in their lives. For someone to be successful one needs to be ready, willing and able to work hard for it. So given below are the five steps to follow in order to get what a person wants:

One must know exactly what one wants

It is important for a person to know the precise level of success he desires? His goals must also be smart goals (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timed). It is natural human instinct to want to achieve some level of success but for this, he will need to be specific about the goals and targets he wants to achieve. He should write down his goals and priorities; and specify all actions that will be required to achieve these goals.

One would surely get something if he really wants it but he must want it badly enough

If a person fails to get what he wants, it means that he did not want it badly enough. If he really wants to succeed in life, then nothing can ever stop him from achieving it. He must have a



strong desire and an equally strong commitment to work towards achieving his objective; no setbacks and challenges shall hinder him from ultimately gaining what he wants. He should be very optimistic with a sharp focus on potential and not problems. He should always visualize the best possible outcome and benefits he wants to achieve; and let this motivate and energize him to work towards it.

One must believe that he is going to get it

The mind and attitude are one's greatest assets which will help him achieve the success he desires. His attitude and thoughts must be positive at all times because these factors influence what he can achieve in his life. It is of extreme importance that he makes the future happen in his thoughts, which will further guide him towards eventual success.

One must be persistent and focused

Persistence is one of the very important traits that a person requires to achieve his goal of being successful. Lot of people give up their dreams simply because they are not persistent enough. When someone faces any hurdles, he should find solutions for them. If he experiences any setback, he should get up, dust himself and keep on working towards the goal. Diligence is the key to his goal and one day he will surely get the level of success he wants.

One must be dedicated to work hard

Success can be easily achieved if one has the necessary dedication and the will to put in the efforts. Having decided on one's goals, the person needs to implement the plan to help him achieve them, review his progress on a daily basis, overcome any obstacles that may come on the way and he should be committed to work hard. He should celebrate every victory he achieves, but should not sulk on any failure and continue to work towards his goal. The mantra of success in life is to set one's goal, persistently working towards it, keeping a positive attitude and never losing the sight of the "Eye of the fish".

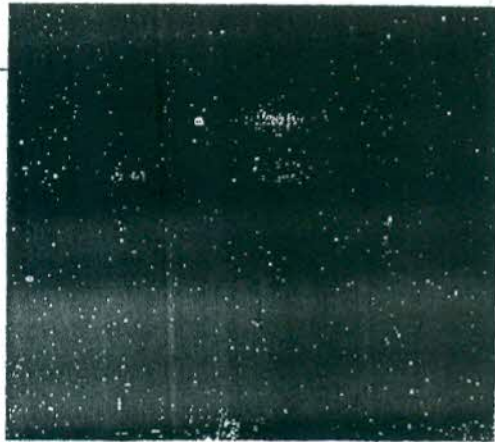
Badar Ahmad

DEVELOPING A PLEASING PERSONALITY

Successful people have pleasing and magnetic personalities, which is what makes them charismatic.

This helps in getting friendly cooperation from others. A pleasing personality is easy to recognize but hard to define. It is apparent in the way a person walks and talks; his/her tone of voice, the warmth in his/her behavior and their definite level of confidence. Some people never lose their attractiveness regardless of age because it flows both from the face and the heart. A pleasing personality is a combination

of a person's attitude, behavior, and expressions. Wearing a pleasant expression is more important than anything else you wear. It takes a lot more than shoeshine and a manicure to give a person polish. Charming manners used to disguise a poor character may work in the short run but reveal themselves rather quickly. Charisma without character is like good looks without goodness. The bottom line is a lasting winning combination which requires both character and charisma. We shall discuss a few measures to develop a pleasing personality, so very essential for making successful careers.



Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw, Padma Vibhushan, Padma Bhushan, Military Cross, A Charismatic Leader, who led India to victory in the 1971 Indo-Pak war

WHAT IS PERSONALITY ?

"When a person impresses other person or a group of persons with his **Attitude, Communication skills** (verbal & non-verbal), **presentation skills** (Dress, etiquette, formal & informal networking, body features and

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creativity), and **Behavioral skills** (Emotional maturity, Intelligence, Assertiveness, Aggressiveness, Submissiveness, Introvert or extrovert nature, conscious, non-conscious & sub-conscious mind, team building, leadership qualities, motivation and wit) it is known as **PERSONALITY**. In other words - "Personality means the sum total of our ways of behaving towards ourselves and towards others in different situations of life or it is the behavior of the individual in a particular environment (situation). How does one acquire the kind of personality that one has? We can say "Heredity supplies the raw material, culture supplies the design, while family is the craftsman because it is the parents who carry the culture of the society to the child." Thus, personality is influenced by both heredity and environment. Its important characteristics are:-

1. Personality is always dynamic & flexible (not permanent).
2. Personality **determines** our thinking, reasoning and actions.
3. Personality is both **physical & psychological** (outer and inner).
4. Personality is **organized & intelligent system**.
5. Personality develops through **social interaction**.
6. Every personality has some **uniqueness**.
7. Personality refers to the process of **adjustment** to our environment

Each letter of the term personality also indicates the various qualities of personality:-

P = Perception (Attitude)

E = Emotional maturity (Aptitude skills)

R = Responsiveness to situations (Attitude)

S = Self-expression (Communication skill)

O = Organized

N = Networking or Sociability (behavioural skills)

A = Appearance (Dress and physique)

L = Leadership qualities

I = Intelligence

T = Time Management

Y = Youthful (Enthusiasm and zeal)

BARRIERS TO DEVELOPING POSITIVE PERSONALITY

We need to inculcate a positive personality to be successful in our lives. There is a need to identify impediments on the way to develop positive personality. Some of the Barriers to Developing Positive Personality are listed below. Most of them are self-explanatory and need no elaboration.

- ◆ Selfishness
- ◆ Lack of courtesy
- ◆ Inconsiderate behavior
- ◆ Not meeting commitments
- ◆ Rude behavior
- ◆ Lack of integrity and honesty
- ◆ Self-centred
- ◆ Arrogance
- ◆ Conceit
- ◆ Negative attitude
- ◆ Closed mind
- ◆ Lack of listening
- ◆ Suspicious nature
- ◆ Lack of respect for values (low morals)
- ◆ Lack of discipline
- ◆ Lack of compassion
- ◆ Impatience
- ◆ Anger - Temper gets a person in trouble and ego keeps him there.
- ◆ Manipulative behavior
- ◆ Escapist behavior
- ◆ Touchy nature
- ◆ Inconsistency
- ◆ Unwillingness to accept the truth
- ◆ Greed

This probably is not an all-inclusive list. Most of us may have some of the characteristics mentioned above. Some may have more of one than the other. The objective is to evaluate with an open mind and not to have an

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empty mind. An open mind is flexible; it evaluates and may accept or reject ideas and concepts based on merit. An empty mind is a dumping ground for good and bad. It accepts without evaluation. So, have an open mind to learn and develop a positive personality which will spread fragrance all around and make you wanted in every team & every organization. This will give you the utmost satisfaction and sense of achievement.

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We all want to be liked and wanted. Who does not want to be appreciated? So overcome the weaknesses and build upon your strengths to have a pleasing personality. Here are some easy tips to follow to develop/strengthen a pleasing personality-

1. **Commitment.** What is the difference between a promise and a commitment? A promise is a statement of intent. A commitment is a promise that is going to be kept no matter what happens. In the no matter what; I exclude illegal and immoral things. Commitment comes out of character and leads to conviction. Can you imagine what kind of a world it would be if no one made a commitment to one another? What would happen to relationships between-

- ◆ Spouses,
- ◆ Employers and employees,
- ◆ Parents and children,
- ◆ Students and teachers,
- ◆ Buyers and sellers.

Uncommitted relationships are pretty shallow and hollow. They are a matter of convenience and are temporary. Nothing lasting has ever been created without commitment.

2. **Consideration.** One day, a ten-year old boy went to an ice-cream shop, sat at a table and asked the waiter, "How much is an ice-cream cone?" He said, "Ten rupees." The boy started counting the money he had in his hand. Then he asked how much a small cup of ice-cream was. The waiter impatiently replied, "Eight rupees," The boy said, "I will have the small ice-cream cup." He had his ice-cream, paid the bill and left. When the waiter came to pick up the empty place, he was touched. Underneath was two rupees as tip. The little boy had consideration for waiter before he ordered his ice-cream. He showed sensitivity and caring. He thought of the other before himself. There

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is more gratification in being a caring person than in just being a nice person. A caring attitude builds goodwill which is the best kind of insurance that a person can have and it doesn't cost a thing. In relationships, we all make mistakes and sometimes we are insensitive to the needs of others, especially those very close to us. All this leads to disappointment and resentment. The answer to handling disappointments is to understand each other. Relationships don't come about because people are perfect. They come about because of understanding. Some people substitute money for caring and understanding. Being understanding is far more important than money and the best way to be understood is to be understanding.

3. **Think Win/Win.** A man died and God asked him if he would like to go to heaven or hell. The man asked if he could see both before deciding. God took him to hell first and the man saw a big hall with a long table, lots of food on it and music playing. He also saw rows of people with pale and sad faces. They looked starved and there was no laughter. And he observed one more thing. Their hands were tied to four-foot forks and knives and they were trying to get the food from the centre of the table to put into their mouths. But they couldn't. Then, he went to see heaven. There he saw a big hall with a long table, with lots of food on the table and music playing. He noticed rows of people on both sides of the table with their hands tied to four-foot forks and knives also. But he observed there was something different here. People were laughing and were well-fed and healthy-looking. He noticed that they were feeding one another across the table. The result was Happiness, Prosperity, Enjoyment and Gratification because they were not thinking of themselves alone; they were thinking win/win. The same is true of our lives. When we serve our customers, our families, our employers and employees, we automatically win.
4. **Choose Your Words Carefully.** A fool speaks without thinking; a wise man thinks before speaking. Remember that the words spoken out of bitterness can cause irreparable damage. A person who says what he likes usually ends up hearing what he doesn't like. Be tactful. Tact consists of choosing one's words carefully and knowing how far to go. It also means knowing what to say and what to leave unsaid. Words can hurt feeling and destroy relationships. More people have been hurt by an improper choice of words than by any natural disaster. Choose what you say rather than say what you choose. That

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is the difference between wisdom and foolishness. Talk less; say more.

5. **Don't Criticize.** When I talk of criticism I refer to negative criticism. Does that mean we should never criticize, or can we give positive criticism? Criticize with a spirit of helpfulness rather than as a put-down. Offer solutions in your criticism. Criticize the behavior, not the person, because when we criticize the person, we hurt their self-esteem. The right to criticize comes with the desire to help. As long as the act of criticizing does not give pleasure to the giver, it is okay. When giving criticism becomes a pleasure, it is time to stop. A critic is like a back-seat driver who drives the driver mad. Invariably, excessive instructions to driver from the back-seat would end in a mishap. Keep criticism in perspective. Don't overdo it. Criticism is like giving medication. The medication should be the right mixture with a perfect dosage. Too much will have adverse effects and too little will be ineffective. Similarly, criticism should be kept in perspective. Given in a positive way in the right dosage, it can work wonders. There may be times when we are criticized, justly or unjustly. The greatest people in the world have been criticized. Justified criticism can be very helpful and should be taken positively as feedback. Unjustified criticism really is a compliment in disguise.
6. **Don't Complain.** Some people are chronic complainers. If it is hot, it is too hot. If it is cold, it is too cold. Every day is a bad day. They complain even if everything goes right. Why is it not a good idea to complain? Because 50% of the people don't care if you have got a problem and the other 50% are happy that you have got a problem. What is the point of complaining? Nothing comes out of it. It becomes a personality trait. Does that mean we should never complain or invite complaints? Not at all. Just like criticism, if it is done in a positive way, complaints can be very useful. A constructive complaint shows that the complainer cares and gives the receiver of complaints a second chance to correct himself.
7. **Smile.** Cheerfulness flows from goodness. A smile can be fake or genuine. The key is to have a genuine one. It takes more muscles to frown than to smile. It is easier to smile than frown. A smile is contagious and is an inexpensive way to improve looks. A smiling face is always welcome. A warm sincere smile shows through just like an insincere one. Remember, smile increases your face value. It enriches those who receive it without impoverishing those who give

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it. In the course of the day, some of your acquaintances may be too tired to give you a smile. Give them one of yours. Nobody needs a smile so much as those who have none. The following lines beautifully describe the importance of a smile & its place in our lives.

It happens in a flash, and the memory of it may last forever. None are so rich that they can get along without it and none so poor that they cannot be richer with its benefits. It creates happiness in the home, fosters goodwill in a business, and is the countersignature of friends. It is rest to the weary, daylight to the discouraged and nature's best antidote for trouble. Yet it cannot be begged, bought, borrowed, or stolen, for it is something that is worth nothing to anyone until it is given away.

8. **Positive Interpretation of Other People's Behavior.** In the absence of sufficient facts, people instinctively put a negative interpretation on others' action or inactions. Some people suffer from "paranoia"; they think the world is out to get them. That is not true. By starting on a positive note, we have a better chance of building a pleasing personality resulting in good relationship. For example, how often have we put through a call and not got a reply from the other party for two days and the first thought that comes to our mind is, "They never cared to return my call" or "They ignored me." That is negative. May be:

- ◆ They tried, but couldn't get through
- ◆ They left the message we didn't get
- ◆ They had an emergency
- ◆ They never got the message

There could be many reasons. It is worth giving the benefit of doubt to the other person and starting on a positive note.

9. **Be a Good Listener.** How does it make you feel when you wanted somebody to listen to you and they did more talking than listening or disagreed with the first thing you said or interrupted you at every step or they were impatient and completed every sentence you started. Such people are physically present but mentally absent. They heard but didn't listen. So you have to repeat the same thing three times because the other person wasn't listening. They came to conclusions unrelated to facts. All these things show disinterest in the person or the topic and a total lack of courtesy. Let's reverse the

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scenario. Does it not make you feel nice when you want someone to listen to you and they give you their undivided attention? Ask appropriate and relevant questions and show interest.

10. ***Be Enthusiastic.*** Enthusiasm and success go hand in hand, but enthusiasm comes first. Enthusiasm inspires confidence, raises morale, builds loyalty, and is priceless. Enthusiasm is contagious. You can feel enthusiasm by the way a person talks, walks or shakes hand. Enthusiasm is a habit that one can acquire and practice. Many decades ago, Charles Schwab, who was earning a salary of a million dollars a year, was asked if he was being paid such a high salary because of his exceptional ability to produce steel. Charles Schwab replied, "I consider my ability to arouse enthusiasm among the men the greatest asset I possess, and the way to develop the best that is in a man is by appreciation and encouragement." Enthusiasm and desire are what change mediocrity to excellence. Water turns into steam with a difference of only one degree in temperature and steam can move some of the biggest engines in the world. That is what enthusiasm helps us to do in our lives.
11. ***Give Honest and Sincere Appreciation.*** One of the deepest desires of human beings is the desire to be appreciated. The feeling of being unwanted is hurtful. Expensive jewels are not real gifts; they are apologies for shortcomings. Many times we buy gifts for people to compensate for not spending enough time with them. Real gifts are when you give a part of yourself. Sincere appreciation is one of the greatest gifts one can give to another person. The desire to feel important is one of the greatest cravings in most human beings. It can be a great motivator.
12. ***Accept your Mistake gracefully.*** Some people live and learn while others live and never learn. Mistakes are to be learned from. The greatest mistake a person can make is to repeat it. Don't assign blame and make excuses. Don't dwell on it. When you realize your mistake, it is a good idea to accept it and apologize. Don't defend it. Why? Acceptance disarms the other person. When the other person realizes and admits that he has made a mistake, congratulate him and give him a way out to save face. If we don't let him save face, we are hurting his self-esteem.
13. ***Discuss not Argue.*** There are bound to be differences of opinion and divergent views on any subject. However, you may discuss the matter to iron out the differences without undue arguments. There

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are some personalities that can be labelled as argumentative and that shows in their behavior and relationships. Arguments can be avoided and a lot of heartache prevented by being a little careful. The best way to win an argument is to avoid it. An argument is one thing you will never win. If you win an argument but lose a good job, customer, friend or marriage, what kind of victory is it? Arguments result from inflated ego. Arguing is like fighting a losing battle. Even if one wins, the cost may be more than the victory is worth. Emotional battles leave a residual ill will even if you win. In an argument, both people are trying to have the last word. Argument is nothing more than a battle of egos and results in a yelling contest. A bigger fool than the one who knows it all is the one who argues with him.

14. **Don't Gossip.** It is the art of saying nothing in a way that leaves nothing unsaid. Gossip can lead to slander and defamation of character. People who listen to gossip are as guilty as those who do the gossiping. A gossip usually gets caught in his own mouth trap. Gossip has no respect for justice. It breaks hearts, it ruins lives, and it is cunning and malicious. It victimizes the helpless. Gossip is hard to track down because it has no face or wrecks marriages, ruins careers, makes the innocent cry, causes heartaches and sleepless nights. Refrain from indulging in gossip. Remember, small talk comes out of big mouths.
15. **Show Empathy.** Whether it is our thoughts, actions or behavior, sooner or later they return and with great accuracy. Place yourself in the shoes of the other person to understand his problems/difficulties. This will help you in rightfully moulding your behavior. Resolve to be tender with the young, compassionate with the aged, sympathetic with the striving and tolerant of the weak and wrong. Because some time in our lives we would have been all of these ourselves. You must treat people with respect on your way up because you may be meeting them on your way down. Empathy alone is a very important characteristic of a positive personality.
16. **Be Grateful But Do Not Expect Gratitude.** We must be thankful. Gratitude is a feeling. It improves our personality and builds character. Gratitude develops out of humility. It is a feeling of thankfulness towards others. It is conveyed through our attitude towards others and reflects in our behavior. Gratitude does not mean reciprocating good deeds because gratitude is not give and take. A good deed cannot be cancelled by a counteract. Things such as kindness,

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- understanding, and intelligence cannot be repaid. What does gratitude teach us? It really teaches us the art of cooperation and understanding. Gratitude must be sincere. A simple thank-you can be gracious. Many times we forget to be thankful to the people closest to us, such as our spouse, our relatives and our friends. Gratitude would rank among the top qualities that form the character and personality of an individual with integrity. Ego stands in the way of showing gratitude. A gracious attitude changes our outlook in life. With gratitude and humility, right actions come naturally.
17. **Be Dependable.** The old adage, "an ounce of loyalty is worth more than a pound of cleverness," is universal and eternal. Ability is important but dependability is crucial. If you have someone with all the ability but if he is not dependable, do you want him as part of your team? The answer is a strong 'No'. If you keep up your promises and fulfill your obligations, people will depend on you. This will make you a wanted and respected member of any outfit.
18. **Forget and Forgive.** Don't be a garbage collector. Have you heard the phrase "I can forgive but I can't forget". When a person refuses to forgive; he is locking doors that some day he might need to open. When we hold grudges and harbor resentment, whom are we hurting the most? No one other than 'Ourselves'. Be a large hearted person to forgive the genuine mistakes and don't keep in your mind to settle scores later. This will build your image among your team members and you will earn their respect.
19. **Integrity.** Build a reputation of being trustworthy. If there is one kind of relationship at home, at work, or socially, it is integrity. Honesty inspires openness, reliability, and frankness. It shows respect of one's self and others. Honesty is in being, not in appearing to be. Integrity is not found in company brochures or titles but in a person's character. It is not worth compromising one's integrity and taking short cuts to win. A person may win a trophy by using unfair means or cheating but knowing the truth, he/she can never be a happy person. More important than winning a trophy is being a good human being.
20. **Practice Humility.** Confidence without humility is arrogance. Humility is the foundation of all virtues. It is a sign of greatness. Branches of trees loaded with fruits are always bent downwards. It is no use standing tall like a Date Tree which does not provide shade to any one and its fruits are too high to be reached. Greatness lies in

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being humble and not showing off our achievements. Mahatma Gandhi successfully shook the foundations of British Raj in India but remained a humble man till his end. It was his humility that won us independence.

21. *Be Courteous.* Courtesy is nothing more than consideration for others. It opens doors that would not otherwise open. A courteous person, who is not very sharp, will go further in life than a discourteous but sharp person. It is the little thing that make a big difference. Have you ever been bitten by an elephant? The most obvious answer is no. Have you ever been bitten by a mosquito? Most of us have. It is the little irritants that test patience. Courtesy is made of nothing more than many petty sacrifices.
22. *To Have a Friend Be a Friend.* We keep looking for the right employer, the right employee, spouse, parent, child, and so on. We forget that we have to be the right person too. Experience has shown that there is no perfect person, no perfect job, and no perfect spouse. When we look for perfection, we are disappointed because all we find is that we traded one set of problems for another set of problems. Let's try and work around these challenges and make divorcing or firing the last rather than the first resort. Learn to appreciate good points of others rather than look for shortcomings and you will be a lot happier. Be a friend if you want friends around. Here, I will like to share the following few lines with you.

A student asked a teacher, "What is love?" The teacher said, "In order to answer your question, go to the wheat field and choose the biggest wheat and come back. But the rule is: you can go through them only once and cannot turn back to pick." The student went to the field, going through first row, he saw one big wheat, but he wondered... maybe there is a bigger one later. Then he saw another bigger one... But maybe there is an even bigger one waiting for him. Later, when he finished more than half of the wheat field, he started to realize that the wheat is not as big as the previous one he saw, he knew he has missed the biggest one, and he regretted. So, he ended up went back to the teacher with empty hand. The teacher told him, "...this is love... You keep looking for a better one, but when later you realize, you have already missed the person". "What is marriage then?" the student asked. The teacher said, "in order to answer your question, go to the corn field and choose the biggest corn and come back. But the rule is: you can go through them only once and cannot turn back

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to pick." The student went to the corn field, this time he was careful not to repeat the previous mistake, when he reached the middle of the field, he picked one medium corn that he felt satisfied, and came back to the teacher. The teacher told him, "This time you brought back a corn because you looked for the one that is just nice, and you had faith and belief this is the best one you could get. This is marriage." Everything has its beauty, but not everyone sees it. Look for good things in another person and you will make him/her your friend; but if you look for weaknesses, then you won't find anyone to make friends since no one is perfect.

23. ***Develop a Sense of Humor.*** Have a sense of humor and you will possess the ability to laugh at yourself. A sense of humor makes a person likable and attractive. Some people are humor-impaired. Learn to laugh at yourself because it is the safest humor. Laughing at yourself gives you the energy to bounce back. Laughter is a natural tranquilizer for people all over the world. Humor may not change the message, but it certainly can help to take the sting out of the bite. Negative people's humor may include sarcasm and hurtful remarks. Any humor involving sarcasm that makes fun of others is in poor taste and it must be avoided.

CONCLUSION

There are no set rules to develop a positive personality. But some of the tips mentioned above will definitely help you achieve traits of a positive personality which will make you wanted, liked and most sought for person. Goodness has a way of coming back; that is the nature of the beast. One doesn't have to do good with a desire to get back. It just happens automatically.



Enhancing Your Self-Image

Never esteem anything as an advantage to you that will make you break your word or lose your self-respect. — MARCUS AURELIUS ANTONINUS

Success is an inside job. Even if your body and mind are ready, willing, and able to learn and do whatever is necessary to get the job done, a negative self-image may stop you.

Although we create many outward images of ourselves—so we can interact with or impress others and sell our ideas or services—we only have one self-image. The way we view ourselves determines the level of success we attain in anything. To achieve more success, some parts of our sense of self will have to change.

Your inward impression of yourself controls much of what you create in your life. When someone says, “Good morning, how are you?” you probably answer, “Fine,” regardless of any troubles you may be having. The image you project is often very different from your true sense of self.

Because your level of success and happiness is controlled by your interior self-image, you must try to ensure that your exterior image and your interior image are in sync. If you can't match your self-worth with your exterior image, your ability to achieve at the highest levels will be restricted.

Try this exercise. Put the palms of your hands together with the fingers aligned as if in prayer. These hands pressing gently together represent you. Now twist your wrists, keeping your hands together, until the back of your right hand is facing away from your face. The right hand with its back facing out is the side of you that you want and allow the world to see. In fact, you present it to the world all the time. You put your best foot forward. It is the side of you that is happy, fine, capable, reliable, strong, honest, trustworthy, caring, sensitive, and thoughtful. This is your positive side.

Your left hand is the one only you can see. It's the side of you that isn't so good. This is the side of you that's not strong, that is lonely or hurting, that has faults, is afraid, unhappy, easily angered, and not confident. This is your not-so-positive side.

Which side is the real you—the positive side or the not-so-positive side? The truth is, you are both. One side does not negate the other. Just because you have faults, failures, or insecurities doesn't negate the fact that you have strengths, wonderful attributes, and abilities to get things done. Yet most people tend to let their not-so-positive side reduce the strengths on the positive side. They focus on the not-so-good side of themselves, saying, "I know I'm a good person, but. . . ."

If the image you have of yourself consists of only undistinguished and unexceptional qualities—or all the things you are not—then your self-image is discrediting your positive attributes. You can be—and in fact are—both at the same time. For example, if you get a pimple on your nose, isn't that all you see when you look in the mirror? Even though the rest of your face is just fine, you worry about the one blemish. But your pimple does not negate the wonderfulness of all your other features.

You can choose to put the not-so-positive side into proper perspective by no longer making it your focus. Once you have the right perspective, you are free to see all the good things about yourself. You can see that you have a profusion of strengths and abilities.

When people operate from the not-so-positive side, they give themselves negative labels, saying, "I don't really have what it takes," or "I'm not cut out for this." Often these labels are not true, but if they are

your truth, a negative self-image results and affects your confidence, performance, and happiness.

To better understand how both sides are valuable to you, try another exercise. Put your hands in front of your chest, as if praying. Press them together as hard as you can, having someone hold your wrists at the same time. Now have them quickly pull your hands apart, moving one hand toward yourself and the other toward your partner. No matter how strong you are, or how hard you try, you will not be able to keep your hands together. Just as you are weak in trying to hold your hands together, you will be weakened if you consider your inner and outer selves as two separate beings.

Try this exercise again, this time interlocking your fingers. In this position, your hands cannot be pulled apart—you are strong now. As you can see, our weaknesses can actually make us stronger. Weaknesses tend to make us more humble and teachable. If you can believe that a weakness is truly a gift from God, then you must also believe that God will show you your weakness and make it your strength.

As a child, my weakness was my cowardice. That weakness prompted me to excel at karate. My lack of self-esteem as a young boy living on the Navajo reservation was one reason I decided to become a professional speaker and help others—so I could feel better about myself. My weaknesses have made me stronger.

If you are prone to take charge of a job and do it well, you are most likely driven by a weakness. This weakness could be a feeling of inferiority that makes you go out of your way to do well. Your feelings of inadequacy may cause you to be a top performer. In order to control the outcome, you have to take charge. Perhaps you have a need to be noticed, praised, or acknowledged that causes you to excel.

I know many people who appear to be very strong—they look and act like confident, make-it-happen, take-charge people. They get the job done, reach out to others, and are there to help whenever they can. Many are known for their caring hearts. But if they stop helping others, they feel empty and much of their joy goes away. On the surface, they seem fine, but inside they just aren't happy. For these people, helping others is like getting an emotional fix. They must help others to feel okay inside.

When I ask, "Who takes care of you?" I frequently hear, "No one."

Such people feel lonely and are either unaware of their need to be taken care of or try to ignore it and meet their needs by helping others. Often the reason they reach out to others is because they know how bad it feels not to be taken care of. Because of our weaknesses—or needs—we feel powerful or compassionate, but we can still be left searching for our own happiness. When we are just givers, our own emotional resources quickly become drained.

Oprah Winfrey

"One of my strongest memories is of being at a boxing match where Mike Tyson was fighting Tyrell Biggs. I remember hearing the announcer say, 'In this corner, wearing black trunks, and weighing 218 pounds, Mike Tyson.' He was exactly the same weight I was.

"I thought, 'I weigh as much as the heavyweight champion of the world.' I left there determined once again to do something about my weight. But it wasn't easy. During a four-year period, my goal was to get below 200 pounds. I tried every diet program imaginable and no matter what I did, I couldn't drop below 200. I would start a workout program and be inconsistent, fail, and gain more weight.

"In the weeks working with trainer Bob Greene, I started to lose weight. But Bob didn't want me to weigh in. He wanted me to be moving toward a healthier lifestyle and not measuring my life in terms of weight. I started to feel lighter and better about myself.

"All of the information about exercise, eating right, and how my body works helped me change the physical me. The most important part is to understand that it's not as much about the weight as it is about making the connection. That means looking after yourself every day and putting forth your best effort to love yourself enough to do what's best for you.

"The biggest change I've made is a spiritual one. It comes from the realization that taking care of my body and my health is one of the greatest kinds of love I can give myself. Every day I put forth the effort to take care of myself. Only when you have self-awareness can you achieve self-acceptance. Only when you accept yourself can you

experience self-love. And when you are capable of self-love, you learn to love. To express love is our ultimate goal. This is the path that leads you to the connection. And making the connection will change your life.”

Nathaniel Branden

“Self-esteem is the disposition to experience oneself as being competent to cope with the basic challenges of life and of being worthy of happiness. It is confidence in the efficacy of our mind, in our ability to think. By extension, it is confidence in our ability to learn, make appropriate choices and decisions, and respond effectively to change. It is also the experience that success, achievement, fulfillment, and happiness are right and natural for us. If you are mindful in this area, you see that self-esteem is not a free gift of nature. It has to be cultivated. It cannot be acquired by blowing oneself a kiss in the mirror and saying, ‘Good morning, Perfect.’ It cannot be attained by being showered with praise, or by sexual conquests, by material acquisitions, or by a hypnotist planting the thought that one is wonderful. Self-esteem can’t be attained by allowing young people to believe they are better students than they really are; faking reality is not a path to mental health or authentic self-assurance. However, just as people dream of attaining effortless wealth, so they dream of attaining effortless self-esteem—and unfortunately, the marketplace is full of panderers to this longing. Self-esteem reflects our deepest vision of our competence and worth.

“Whether or not we admit it, there is a level at which all of us know that the issue of our self-esteem is of the most burning importance. Evidence for this observation is the defensiveness with which insecure people may respond when their errors are pointed out. Or the extraordinary feats of avoidance and self-deception people can exhibit with regard to gross acts of irresponsibility. Or the foolish and pathetic ways people sometimes try to prop up their egos by the wealth or prestige of their spouse, the make of their automobile, the fame of their dress designer, or the exclusiveness of their golf club.”

You must drill down to the core of your heart to find the real truth about you as a person. The real truth is always much better than your truth about you. Generally, the way others see you is much better than the way you see yourself. Change your self-paradigm and accept the truth about yourself—that is how you will begin to grow and achieve differently. As your belief in yourself increases, so does your ability to accomplish anything your heart desires. Your life will become much richer.

ASK YOURSELF THIS

- Does it matter how others perceive me?
- Will their view of me affect my life?
- Will the way others see me affect my income?
- Will the way I am viewed by others affect my social life?
- Will others' view of me affect my marriage and my children?
- How does the way people perceive me affect my confidence and happiness?

How others perceive you and how you perceive yourself are critical to your success and achievement. How you act, talk, walk, dress, and present yourself have a direct affect on all aspects of your life. Self-image can have a major influence on such things as finding a spouse, earning an impressive income, getting involved with life, and getting the maximum out of it.

OUTWARD APPEARANCE

Your outward impression can also determine the level of your success. Studies by sociologists have tried to determine which is more significant—image or skill. They sent fifteen actors and fifteen skilled professionals to apply for the same job. The actors knew little or nothing about the duties required for the job—they just faked it. More often than not, the actor—not the qualified professionals—received the job offer. Actors are excellent at making good impressions. They know all

about posture, body language, dressing for success, inflection in language, and facial expression.

When I ask people what they think it means to acquire a good self-image in the physical area of their lives, I usually hear “get in shape,” “lose weight,” or “lift weights.” Occasionally I hear that they want to learn self-defense or buy new clothes.

Your physical image is very important, and it means much more than just getting into shape, losing weight, or doing exercises. It also involves appearance, clothing, color, posture, and style.

When I was just starting in business, I was struggling financially. I had learned about the significance of a proper appearance, and I always wore a nice suit when meeting a potential client. Once a potential client told me, “You’re obviously successful, and that gives me a lot of comfort in doing business with you.” When I asked her why she felt that way, she said, “Well, you look successful. You have a great office, you sound confident, so I assume that you are.”

If your personal appearance is a turnoff, it will never matter if you have talent or ability. The way you package yourself has as much—or more—to do with your success as all your talents and gifts. People rarely bother to open an unattractive package, even if the contents are valuable. Because poor appearance is a turnoff, people are likely to seek a more attractive package and take their chances.

Your great ability can be obscured by your personal appearance; it may never be recognized—or tested—if your appearance is an indication of mediocrity and nonprofessionalism. Of course, ability and performance usually determine whether you keep a client or job, but appearance may well determine whether you win the client or job in the first place.

Thousands of people have a self-imposed handicap because they don’t present a sharp personal appearance. It’s true, you never get a second chance to make a first impression. An appropriate outward appearance can dramatically affect both you and those you come in contact with.

Do you know what the best hairstyle is for you? Do you wear too much makeup? How is your posture? Did you know that rounded shoulders are often seen as a sign of lack of self-esteem—sending the

message that you are undisciplined, lazy, or don't care about yourself? Should you smile more? Could you eat or sleep better? How do you deal with pain? Do you chew your fingernails, swear, or have an addiction to TV, sex, caffeine, tobacco, alcohol, or drugs?

I once spoke to a woman about discovering her Core Desires. When we spoke of her self-image, she said she only had two desires: to lose fifteen pounds and to learn some self-defense. Since she didn't mention it, I thought I would bring up—as diplomatically as possible—the gap between her top front teeth. The gap was such a sensitive issue for her that she burst into tears. Repairing that space was a Core Desire that she had ignored for years because she didn't have the money to repair it. Once she identified how intense this Core Desire was, her Conquering Force kicked in, and within three months she had cosmetic dentistry. She no longer hid her beautiful smile with her hand, and it did wonders for her self-confidence in social situations.

If it is truly a Core Desire, you'll find a way. If there's anything about your physical self that you don't like, you can change it—or at least your attitude about it. Don't limit your thinking when it comes to discovering your Core Desires in the physical areas of your life. Would you like to learn to ski? Fly an airplane? Paint pictures? Play the piano? Sing songs? Do you want to relax more, play more, and reduce frustrations and stress? Stress can ruin your health and take away the energy you need to achieve your Core Desires. Learn how to laugh and have fun again.

Would you like to fall asleep easily and sleep more soundly? Do you need to get your body into shape through exercise? How are your diet and nutrition? If you tire easily, feel poorly, or don't have much energy, you can't accomplish the many things that you are required to do, let alone the things you really want to do.

Do you control your tongue? Are you courteous and considerate? How are your manners? Do you open doors for people, let cars go in front of yours, show deference to elders, and speak courteously to everyone no matter what their station in life? Do you use clean language? Do you say nice things to and about others?

REAL LIFE, REAL PEOPLE

Consider some examples of the Conquering Force in action.

*"I not afraid of storms
for I am learning how
to sail my ship."*

—Helen Keller

Helen Keller

When she was just nineteen months old, Helen Keller lost both her sight and hearing. Yet she went on to become a world-famous author and lecturer. She inspired millions by facing these overwhelming obstacles and overcoming them. Helen Keller's achievements prove that you can succeed at any level you choose, in spite of the obstacles you encounter. All you need is a Core Desire—and a mentor.

Thomas Edison

Edison once said that his deafness was his greatest blessing because it saved him the trouble of listening to negative comments, in which he had no interest. Being deaf added to his ability to concentrate his aims and purposes in a positive way.

Glenn Cunningham

When Glenn was seven, he was badly burned in a fire. His legs were so badly scarred that his doctors told him he would be crippled for life. But this Kansas farm boy was determined to run and play like the other boys. No obstacle was too great, no matter what pain he endured. He carried on—nothing would stop him. With his desire to be as active as his peers, he threw away his crutches even though he was only able to limp from place to place. From a hobbling gait he went to a full running stride. He went on to break the world record in the mile run, as well as win an Olympic medal. Against impossible odds and when all seemed lost, he fought long, hard, valiantly, and victoriously—eventually becoming one of the greatest American runners of all time.

Wilma Rudolph

Wilma weighed a mere 4½ pounds at birth. By age four, she'd already had polio, pneumonia, and scarlet fever, leaving her with a paralyzed leg. By six, she was walking with a leg brace. By nine, she was walking with the aid of an orthopedic brace. And by the time she was thirteen, she was playing on her school's basketball team. At sixteen, she won a bronze medal at the Melbourne Olympic Games. In 1960, in Rome, she won gold medals in the 100-meter, 200-meter, and 4 × 100-meter relay.

Michael Dowling

When he was fourteen, Michael fell from a wagon during a Michigan blizzard. He was knocked unconscious and couldn't alert his parents. By the time they realized he was gone and went back to find him, he was severely frostbitten. His right leg was amputated almost to the hip; his left leg was removed just above the knee, as well as his right arm and left hand.

Because Michael possessed a strong Core Desire to receive a full education, he addressed a group of businessmen, proposing that they pay for his education—providing he would pay them back. Michael eventually became the president of a large bank, married, and was the father of five children.

During World War I, the government asked Michael to visit wounded soldiers in London. While in London, he was asked to speak to a group of soldiers who had lost an arm, a leg, a hand, or an eye as they were being treated in a makeshift hospital in the lobby of a large hotel.

As Michael addressed these men from the balcony, many thought he was minimizing the seriousness of their wounds. He told them that there were no grounds for complaints and that everything would work out for them. He told them they could go on and have full lives. The wounded soldiers became angry with him and began to heckle him.

Michael then walked over to the grand staircase and started descending. As he did, he told them how fortunate they were. But the

booing and hissing grew more intense. He sat down on one of the stairs and took off his right leg. The soldiers became less boisterous. Then he took off his left leg, and the booing stopped. By the time he had arrived in the lobby itself—scooting down one step at a time—he had taken off his right arm and slipped off his left hand—and there he sat, a mere stump of a man. Michael Dowling made a difference in the lives of those soldiers, as well as hundreds of others.

Evelyn Glennie

Evelyn Glennie is pounding out a rare and brilliant career as a percussion soloist, playing with some of the world's finest orchestras and symphonies—never mind that she is deaf.

W. Mitchell

Mr. Mitchell was in a freak motorcycle accident and was horribly burned. He lost all his fingers and most of his face. After many years, he recovered from the burns and led a very active life—even flying his own airplane. One winter day, he failed to de-ice the wings properly, and moments after taking off, his plane dropped about seventy-five feet to the ground—permanently damaging his spinal cord and leaving him a paraplegic. While in the hospital undergoing treatment and therapy, he met other paraplegic accident victims. They were all complaining bitterly about the things they could no longer do. When he had heard enough, he said, “You keep talking about all the things we can no longer do. But I see it like this. Before my accident, there were ten thousand things I could do, and now there are only one thousand. I’d rather focus on the thousand left.”

Mr. Mitchell went on to become the mayor of his town—even running for congress. In spite of being confined to a wheelchair, he travels around the world teaching people how to deal with what life throws at you. He is billed as “the man who wouldn’t be defeated.”

As a result of his accident—and the things he has learned since then—he has become far more successful. He feels he has accomplished more in his life than he ever imagined.

Christopher Reeve

“Many people have asked me, ‘How do you get through this?’

“I say, ‘Well, I’m not having nearly as much fun as I used to have, there is a lot that I can’t do, but how do I get through it? Because there was a platform that was built over twenty-eight years of being an actor, facing rejection, learning the discipline of giving your best eight times a week, having made that commitment for something that I wanted to do with my life.

“Because I had a platform, I saw that there was an opportunity to help push science and to conquer the frontier of inner space. It’s an incredible moment of opportunity. I feel that if I hadn’t built a base long ago, I couldn’t deal with it. But along with my family and friends, the support of so many people around the world, I’m able to go forward in a way that I never would have thought possible. We all have this inner strength within us—there is nothing special about me. You also can do it if you rely on that solid foundation that you build. If you take the opportunities that come your way, as long as you have some component of giving back to the world, the flow and ebb of your life will work. There will be ups and downs, there will be times when things make sense and times when they don’t, but you’ll be out on an adventure that’s a lot more exciting and meaningful than just doing what’s expected of you by other people.”

Why were these people with severe physical obstacles able to succeed where others—without any disabilities—never even tried? What attitude caused them to deal with these horrible illnesses or accidents, these seemingly insurmountable obstacles? What is this attitude? They all engaged their Conquering Force. In each of these lives, we see people discovering and working toward their Core Desires. These are people who enjoy life in spite of its challenges. They excel, regardless of the trials they go through. In spite of the difficulties they face, they are doing what they love to do.

NOW, WHAT ABOUT YOU?

If you had determination like these people, think of what you could accomplish. The only way you can get that kind of attitude is by identifying your Core Desires—the 100s on your Core Desire Scale—and allowing your Conquering Force to propel you toward outstanding results. There will still be things that you will have to do, or go through, that aren't fun or pleasant. Life sometimes throws us curve balls that we have to deal with—these are the “have-tos.” Life becomes boring and difficult when you're only doing the things you have to do to get where you don't want to be.

If your Core Desire is to speak confidently in public, how do you acquire this ability? First, you've got to love what you are talking about, or at least have a great deal of interest in it. Knowledge is important, but it's not as critical. Another valuable way to exude a confident aura when speaking in public is to take your mind off your performance and put it on the gift in the message you are giving. If you believe in your message, have strong feelings about it, and are not focusing on how people might judge your performance, you will do just fine.

As a speaker, I had to learn not to get butterflies and worry about my performance. Knowing that my message would change lives and focusing on this gift helped me overcome my nerves. I learned to focus on what I was giving the audience, and the butterflies went away.

You deserve to look and feel good about yourself, wherever you are and whatever you are doing. If you're in front of one person, a large group, or even a mirror, it's the same. In job interviews, the interviewer wants to know what value you can bring to the company—not just if you can do the job. One study showed that 65 percent of interviewers make a hiring decision within the first fifteen minutes. The study also showed that 45 percent of the decision to hire is based on how well the interviewees present themselves, 35 percent is based on packaging, and just 10 percent is based on skill. That's 80 percent of the decision being based on presentation and packaging!

If you allow your negative self-image to dominate your life, it will affect all other areas of your life. If you don't have what you want in the self-image and physical areas of your life, you probably haven't identified

your Core Desires. Because your inward and outward self-image will affect all other areas in your life, you will be a much happier, more fulfilled person when you have the proper self-paradigm. Your Core Desires will be realized much faster once you have a proper self-image working for you—not against you.

"Order and simplification are the first steps toward the mastery of a subject—the actual enemy is the unknown."

—Thomas Mann

BEING CONFIDENT

Excellence requires confidence. Some degree of courage and self-assurance is essential for an extraordinary life. Confidence is not always easily achieved, and even the most confident leaders occasionally falter.

Recognizing their doubts and fears as well as finding role models helps successful people overcome obstacles and develop excellence in themselves. Tapping into a common cause—realizing that your effort will help others—is another confidence booster.



Life shrinks or expands in proportion to one's courage.

Anais Nin, writer

Courage is the most important of all the virtues, because without courage you can't practice any other virtue consistently. You can practice any virtue erratically, but nothing consistently without courage.

Maya Angelou, writer and poet

Courage is doing what you're afraid to do. There can be no courage unless you're scared.

Eddie Rickenbacker, pilot

Underlying the whole scheme of civilization is the confidence men have in each other, confidence in their integrity, confidence in their honesty, confidence in their future.

William Bourke Cockran, lawyer, US congressman, and orator

It takes an almost arrogant confidence to do something that interesting.

Christian Lacroix, designer



Stand on your own

Your best self is your most confident self. Do not be inhibited by those who tell you to “know your place.”

It is men and women who have made the world, and they have made it in spite of their gods. The message of the myths is not the one the gods would have us learn—that we should behave ourselves and know our place—but its exact opposite. It is that we must be guided by our natures. Our worst natures can, it's true, be arrogant, venal, corrupt, or selfish; but in our best selves, we—that is, you—can and will be joyous, adventurous, cheeky, creative, inquisitive, demanding, competitive, loving, and defiant. Do not bow your heads. Do not know your place. Defy the gods.

Salman Rushdie, writer

You'll inevitably meet some source of adversity. Have the confidence to stand up for yourself and your principles.

A man who wants to lead the orchestra must turn his back on the crowd.

Max Lucado, minister

You can't build a strong corporation with a lot of committees and a board that has to be consulted every turn. You have to be able to make decisions on your own.

Rupert Murdoch, chairman and managing director of News Corporation

The reasonable man adapts himself to the world.
The unreasonable man persists in trying to adapt the world to himself. Therefore, all progress depends on the unreasonable man.

George Bernard Shaw, playwright

Adversity may even inspire you to be more courageous than you would be otherwise.

I was studying at Stanford University. My father suddenly died so I had to rush back to India and I attended the first annual general meeting of my company. A shareholder, who was very articulate, very vociferous and someone who categorised himself as a public spokesman, gave me very sincere advice in front of all the shareholders. He said: "Mr Premji, you should sell your shareholding and give it to more mature management because there is no way a person of your age with your experience can lead this company." And that really made me more and more determined to make a success of Wipro.

Azim Premji, CEO of Wipro

Find role models

We are more similar to one another than we are different. Find role models and learn how those people have achieved excellence in their lives. Imagine they are in your situation. What would they do?

An act of heroism, of extraordinary courage, the grandeur of it, won't easily inspire us to act in imitation, but it can inspire us to emulate its author. For that, we should learn what we can of the whole experience of the subject, the hero's life, as it was before and after, and believe that trying to emulate the character it reveals is one tried way to prepare for the tests that might await us and gain hope that our courage will not be wanting in the moment.

John McCain, US senator

If I am walking with two other men, each of them will serve as my teacher. I will pick out the good points of the one and imitate them, and the bad points of the other and correct them in myself.

Confucius

You don't have to know people personally for them to be role models. Some of my most important role models were historical or literary figures that I only read about I never actually met.

John Wilson, angler and television personality

Whom do I admire? ... Woody Allen. I admire his tenaciousness, his talent, his integrity. I guess what bothers me about saying that is that he's so many people's hero. If I went a step further, I would say John Cheever. His work really touched me. And he seemed to have a very good heart, to have overcome enormous obstacles and achieved success quite late in life. He also wrote about a world that he made me feel I belonged to, even though it had nothing to do with me. That's a great achievement for an artist. I'd say the same about John Updike and Saul Bellow.

Paul Simon, singer, songwriter, and musician

When I see Avril Lavigne or Gwen Stefani or Christina Aguilera on TV, I take pieces from them. I don't copy their music, but I see emotions in their music that inspire me. Instead of girls being like anti-this or anti-that, we should support and inspire each other.

Britney Spears, singer

Family members are often sources of inspiration.

I see myself as about 12. And it's really interesting. My grandmother—what is she, 88? One time, a few years ago, I was looking at her and remembering when she was younger, when I was real little. I remember her wearing cocktail dresses and earrings and gloves, looking real glamorous, even though she wasn't all that young even then. I asked her, "How old do you feel?" She said, "...Even when I see this old, wrinkled woman in the mirror, I still think of myself as being about 17. It doesn't ever really change."

Cher, singer and actor

Acknowledge your fears

Remind yourself that your fears are internal. You choose to let them affect you. Fears must be acknowledged before they can be overcome. Self-mastery is a lifelong process. Many find direction in spirituality.

Mastery of self comes down to the capacity of an individual to discover what it is that they truly want, what their path is, and then to eliminate the obstacles, which are always internal, that would keep them from being able to fulfill that path on an ongoing basis. There are natural obstacles that life offers us in order for us to grow and expand as individuals and discover more of who we are and to unfold more of our spiritual path. But I also think there are a great number of challenges that are self-induced. And we must develop the capacity to meet those, anticipate those as much as possible, and eliminate them by developing what I would consider to be emotional and/or spiritual muscles.

Tony Robbins, management consultant

You must also realize that the stuff of excellence—truth, real scientific truth—can be elusive ... It is too often covered by the heavy fog of fear and hidden by the darkness of your detractors. You must believe in yourself. You must have the desire. You must have the focus to see truth clearly ... As for the second part of the equation, consider it a personal challenge never to let your commitment to learning be denied. To strive for excellence. To believe in yourself and have the ability to prioritize.

Daniel S. Goldin, former director of NASA

Don't be afraid to fail.

There's a wonderful poem by Rainer Maria Rilke that talks about the biblical story of Jacob wrestling with an angel, being defeated, but coming away stronger from the fight. It ends with an exhortation that goes something like this: "What we fight with is so small, and when we win, it makes us small. What we want is to be defeated, decisively, by successively greater things."

Tim O'Reilly, publisher

You can't be afraid of failure, because that's the thing that can scare the hell out of you.

Kate Spade, designer

Try to embrace your anxiety; channel it to work for you.

About half an hour before air time—5pm. That's when I become hyper. I put everything else out of my mind and just let that nervous energy surge through my body. I start talking faster and louder. My confidence comes up. It's actually a great feeling.

David Letterman, talk show host

Cultivate confidence in others

Inspire others to be excellent, too.

Once, at a tennis tournament, I was paired with a woman who had just learned how to play. Every time she missed a shot, she immediately turned to me, expecting that I would be disappointed or frustrated. Instead, I talked to her about our strategy for the next point. By doing so, I sent a very clear signal: The past doesn't matter. I didn't encourage her with empty praise—that approach rarely works. But I knew that if she dwelled on a mistake, she was more likely to repeat it, and that if she focused on how we were going to win the next point, she was more likely to help us do just that. Over several days, her abilities improved dramatically—and we ended up winning the tournament.

Scott Adams, cartoonist and creator of Dilbert

Leadership of Self and Others

You don't manage people; you manage things. You lead people.

—Admiral Grace Hooper

*You are not master of the wind or the sea,
but you are required to be captain of yourself.*

*Everyone at some point in their lives
has faced waves
that scared the hell out of them
and sought to bring
heaven down to earth.*

All leadership begins with self-leadership. If you cannot be responsible for where you are sailing your ship, don't even think about trying to lead others out of port.

If you don't think of yourself as much of a captain, don't worry. Many of us who never even thought of ourselves as captain even of our own ship have, due to life's storms, found ourselves suddenly thrust behind the helm in high seas. And sometimes with many others counting on us to guide them home safely.

Great leaders are first of all people who make greatness their own destination—and who take responsibility for leading themselves there.

Great leaders are not people who never fail as a leader but are people who aren't afraid to admit their failures and use them as

*He who has never learned
to obey cannot be a good
commander.*

—Aristotle

Noah Benshea, *The Journey to Greatness*, Corwin P

• The Journey

A leader is a dealer in hope.

—Napoleon

a map for finding their way. Great leaders are people who simply and humbly begin by setting a goal and following their own lead.

*Great leaders
are not people who never feel defeated
but people
who don't make defeat their leader.*

And on Personal Reflection . . .

You on Leadership of Self and Others

Who was the first leader you ever admired, and what was it about that person that you admired?

Who was a leader—a parent or a president—you once admired but who has lost your admiration? Why?

What is some aspect in your personality that you think would be a positive trait in a leader? And what is a trait that would negatively serve?

Have you ever thought that you would fear to take a leadership role because of the implications? Conversely, has there ever been a time when you wanted a leadership role and someone else felt you would fail? Why?

- The Journey

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If you could lead yourself to any new situation or place in your life, where or what would that be? What is holding you back?

Achieving greatness in our lives begins with knowing that no one else can get us there. Others can point us in the general direction, but the compass reading to find greatness in our lives is so personal that no other person can lead us there. Others can lead us only to what they think is great, but what constitutes greatness and a great life is left for each of us to claim on our own and as our own. Knowing this is the mark of a great leader.

The only way in which anyone can lead us is to restore to us the belief in our own guidance.

—Henry Miller

Great leaders don't presume their own importance but assume instead that everyone they are leading is important.

*A leader isn't someone who rules over
but is someone who lifts up.*

*Lifting yourself up
is the first sign of self-leadership.*

Many years ago, I cautioned my daughter to be wary not of strong men in her life but of weak men. Weak leaders need to dominate others to convince themselves that they are the leader. Strong leaders are those who know we all have weaknesses and herein our strength of opportunity.

*Anyone can hold the helm
when the sea is calm.*

—Publius Syrus

Some of us are prepared to take the risk of leadership only when there is no risk.

A leader isn't someone who wants to risk the lives of others but is someone who understands that living is a state of risk requiring leadership to cope with life's risks.

Whether we are leading ourselves or others, courage will be called for. It does not mean that leaders are people without fears, but it does mean that leaders are people who will put their faith and not their fears in charge. Great fears are great opportunities and a great place to begin

• The Journey

working on leadership skills. If we can lead ourselves out of our fears, we can remind others that we know their trembling as our own.

*Anger is fear worn inside out.
Fear is the key to anger.
Anger locks you in your own house,
throws away the key,
and then burns down the house
without ever warning you.*

What a man dislikes in his superiors let him not display in the treatment of his inferiors.

—Tsang Sin

Fears or insecurity on the inside usually becomes anger on the outside. Leaders who won't acknowledge the fears that might rise from the consequence of their leadership often hide behind anger and aggression as a leadership style. And many in leadership have been trained by others who have for so long been locked into this construct that anger or aggression are taken to be normative leadership modes when at the root of this construct is a refusal of leaders to witness and honor—and move on—from their fears.

*A great leader isn't someone without fears
but is someone who doesn't make fear their form of leadership.
If you think that people need to fear you to respect you,
it is only because you are afraid that
you don't respect yourself.*

Failing to plan is a plan to fail.

—Effie Jones

A great leader, borrowing from the theologian Paul Tillich, is often someone who knows that forgiving is more important than forgetting because it is forgiving while still remembering. Your ability to forgive in others what you cannot forget requires you, and liberates you, to do the same for yourself.

*A leader is someone
who remembers that greatness is an opportunity
to be more caring
when power gives you the opportunity
to be less caring.*

Leadership of Self and Others •

We all have plans. And plans often fail. But planning always helps. A leader makes a plan, commits to it, and then adjusts. How we adjust, ah—now there is where there is an opportunity to be great.

You are an individual.

There are no two of you.

Your leadership of you is yours and yours alone.

Salute yourself and take over.

The final challenge to being a great leader is the first challenge of leadership revisited. All leadership begins with self-leadership, and the leadership of others begins with knowing who you are leading. No two people can be most effectively led in the same way. Yes, you can get them to follow orders, but having others follow your orders is very different from leading yourself or others to greatness. Great leaders are those who come up with a plan that is molded to those they are leading, to the moment, and to the situation. Taking the time to be a great leader begins with taking the time to learn about who you are leading, not just requiring that they learn your plans.

There is nothing so unequal as the equal treatment of unequals. Individualize your leadership.

—Aristotle

Leadership is more than a lot of people running around following your orders.

Leadership is you following your orders.

A great leader isn't someone who finds the time to be a great leader but is someone who makes the time. There is always time to make a mistake in life, even if that mistake is simply missing the opportunity to become all we might become in this life.

A great leader isn't always a great guy or gal. Often, great leaders have great flaws. That doesn't mean that being flawed will make us great. It does mean that even when we are less than we might be, we can still lead ourselves and others to higher ground—to a place where we will be better still. Lead on!

BEING CREATIVE

With a little imagination, anything is possible. Of course, imagination isn't confined to the arts. Anyone who has achieved excellence in life—in business, politics, spirituality, teaching, etc.—gets there because he or she has in some way thought differently. Try to be creative in everything you do. Arouse your curiosity. Explore your most outlandish interests. Tap into your fantasies and ideals. Let your hobbies inspire your job. Think up a new way of doing something. Think of a new something to do.



Excellence is to do a common thing in an uncommon way.

Booker T. Washington, political leader and rights activist

You need chaos in your soul to give birth to a dancing star.

Friedrich Nietzsche, philosopher

The life of the creative man is led, directed and controlled by boredom. Avoiding boredom is one of our most important purposes.

Saul Steinberg, artist

I believe that someone who invents a new category and establishes a system for it is always needed—in every age.

Takashi Murakami, artist



Be curious

Curiosity is the precursor to creativity. Ask “why?”, “why not?” and “what if?”.

Curiosity is my mantra. It's also my profession.

Curiosity offers novel lenses for looking at the world.

Tom Peters, management consultant; co-author of In Search of Excellence

... Ask high-quality questions, like “What if?” Second, find people who add new perspectives and create new conversations ... Third, pay attention to those new voices. If you want unlimited options for solving a problem, engage the “what if” before you lock onto the “how to.” You'll be surprised by what you discover.

Peter Guber, chairman, Mandalay Entertainment

Genius means little more than the faculty of perceiving in an unhabitual way.

William James, philosopher

How do you turn the world on its head?

Listen, it's really pretty simple. If there's a thing, a scene, maybe, an image that you want to see real bad, that you need to see but it doesn't exist in the world around you, at least not in the form that you envision, then you create it so that you can look at it and have it around, or show it to other people who wouldn't have imagined it because they perceive reality in a more narrow, predictable way.

Tom Robbins, writer

Cross-pollinate

Expand your repertoire of interests and let each of those interests inspire and inform one another. Peter Drucker once advised a young man keen to know how to excel as a manager, "Learn to play the violin."

To tap the force of imagination, you may have to unlearn as well as relearn. That's what Einstein did. He unlearned the old in order to create the new. Einstein's theory of relativity was a leap of imagination that challenged the orthodoxy of Newtonian physics, and helped pave the way for quantum physics. Quantum physics is not an extrapolation of Newtonian physics. It is a colossal breakthrough in our fundamental understanding of nature. That in turn has spawned an era of new technologies, changing the way we live, work, play and communicate.

Einstein was also a fine violinist. He said, "I am enough of an artist to draw freely upon my imagination ... I often think in music; I live my daydreams in music."

Choon Fong, president of the National University of Singapore

... I thought, "I'm supposed to be an experimental artist? Start experimenting!" I thought if I put myself in really awkward situations, then I'd have some other kind of reaction. So working at McDonald's and working on an Amish farm did that for me. It made me have to think on the spot and improvise, not just fall back on who I thought I was, and what I thought I was supposed to be making, and how I thought people should look at me.

Laurie Anderson, performance artist

Successful businesses can be inspired by drawing on diverse backgrounds and interests.

I've always started businesses. I started a publishing company when I was still in school. And then I co-founded a biotechnology company, which is now on the New York Stock Exchange, called Biomatrix. But I had always been very interested in design, so after about ten years of doing the biotechnology company I was really interested in doing something else.

André Balazs, hotelier

Learn from the creative process

As you build and create, pay attention to the process. Adapt as you go. Enjoy the interplay between conception and realization.

... When you're in the process of creating something ... it's often taking a model that you have in your mind and playing out that model with a new creation in the world. But as soon as you create something in the world, it's not necessarily going to live up to exactly the model that you had in your mind. It will disagree in certain ways or surprise you in certain ways. So by creating things in the world, it leads you to revise the models that you have in the mind. And as you revise the models you have in the mind, it leads you to create new things in the world. So I think that we think about this constant cycle ... taking our ways of thinking about the world and using that

to express ourselves and create things in the world, and through that activity of creating ... to test out, to try out, to play with the models we have in our mind and continually iterate back and forth between the two.

Mitchel Resnick, director at MIT Media Lab

But whether it's evolution or revolution, there's always a better way to build a computer, or map a genome, or liberate a country, or take a basketball team to the Final Four. Just work to understand the world around you. Read books. Read websites. Read other people. Circle the pitfalls and highlight the opportunities. Then build a vision of how it could all be better and work like hell to make it happen.

Michael Dell, founder of Dell Computer

Everyone is capable of being creative, no matter your profession or your specific talents and interests.

Creativity does not require special abilities. Human beings were born with the ability to create. That's the exact reason why human beings have created the current civilization. As I have written in my book, some people achieved something when they accidentally exercised creativity at the right time. Other successful people may have been well aware of what creativity is and exercised it right. The difference between successful and unsuccessful people is whether they exercised their own creativity or not.

Koichi Tanaka, Nobel Prize Laureate in Chemistry

Look at the familiar in a different way

You might find inspiration in unexpected places.

... I was flipping channels one night, and there was a program about Harry Partch—you know, he made up all this insane music in the 50s, on these instruments of his own making. And on this program there was this beautiful orchestra playing these crazy instruments, playing 'US Highball,' this amazing oratorio by Harry Partch. And they were all dressed like bums. It was just beautiful to look at, and to listen to. So I thought, "Oh, my God, look at these bums, they're so elegant." And I do that every time I see a bum. But there was something about this particular bum with the orchestra next to him, something beautiful about the contrast of the bum and the elegance. So I thought, my Fall collection has to be bum-ish, right? So I came into work and told everybody and they were like, "You're crazy."

Isaac Mizrahi, designer

I am never more alive intellectually or emotionally than when I am, for example, sitting outside of a yurt in Mongolia listening to a young nomadic tribesman describe how he rode his horse 20 miles through freezing temperatures just for the chance to vote. Or sleeping in a cargo container as I did just this spring in the Pakistan earthquake zone with young American relief workers who had been on duty there for three months. Or riding a humvee with American Special Forces through a hot combat zone in Afghanistan to a primitive village to make sure people have the medical needs that they desired and needed. Or stepping into a wilderness anywhere in the world with all that I need in a backpack, no call waiting, thank you very much.

Tom Brokaw, news anchor

Different ways of seeing are what make life interesting.

... Take any piece of land. Let alone the farmer and the real estate agent or the picnicker, one painter will see it flat, another painter will see it in depth, another as structure, another as fluffy, another as dark and light, another as spots and lines, another as still, another as changeable, another as full of detail, another as a general expression or mood, and so on. But it is all the time the same commonplace piece of land. Likewise people and ideas are normally just as commonplace, but they are irregular since they do contain what is from the practical point of view an excess of aspects and qualities. If it were not for this excess nobody probably would go on living, because in it is all possibility and all novelty and all freedom.

Gertrude Stein, writer

Life\$kill 2

ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY!

*One's philosophy is not best expressed in words.
It is expressed in the choices one makes. The
process never ends, until we die. And the choices
we make are ultimately our responsibility.*

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

TO BE RESPONSIBLE HAS BEEN DEFINED AS "INVOLVING personal accountability;" "being the source or cause of something;" and "able to be trusted or depended upon;" "reliable."

What do you suppose would happen if you made a commitment to be totally accountable to yourself for every aspect of your life? What would happen if you accepted the fact that

THE FIRST BOOK OF LIFE SKILLS

you are the source and the cause of everything you do? What if you were able to be trusted and depended upon? What if you were absolutely reliable? What if you were count-on-able? Would this make a difference in your business, in your relationships, in your life? How would it make a difference? Think about it! This is a serious commitment, isn't it?

It is one you should consider.

Most everyone would agree that on the surface, you are honest, trustworthy, count-on-able, and reliable. You try hard to project that kind of image and yet perhaps life doesn't seem to be working for you like you think it should. If you are lying to yourself; if, deep inside, you know integrity is lacking, then quit being a phony, and do something about it! Where is your commitment to be true to yourself? Where is your commitment to total integrity?

We are talking about the kind of commitment that you stand on! One that becomes a part of who you are! There can be no wavering in this commitment. Your actions demonstrate your commitment. From this kind of commitment you gain strength and power!

Be honest with yourself! Only when you are completely honest with yourself, can you be completely honest with other people. What's your integrity level? Integrity has been defined as "the quality or state of being complete; unbroken condition; wholeness; entirety." When you have integrity, you can have anything you want. Integrity allows you to live life at its fullest. Integrity isn't about being good or bad. It's about keeping your word to yourself only because you said you would. Integrity is living your life as your word, like

Accept Responsibility!

your life depends on it. It does, you know! The foundation of power is integrity. There is power in having personal integrity.

Sometimes we have a tendency to try to pull one over on life; to lie to ourselves; to not totally tell the truth to others; to slide by; to cut corners; to withhold; to not give our all in our relationships with our family and friends; to sleaze-out on our promises; to coast; to make excuses. There are only "results" or "reasons why." The reasons why are called excuses. Excuses rob us of accomplishment!

A famous football player once said, "I believe the day you take complete responsibility for yourself, the day you stop making any excuses, is the day you start to the top!"

Could it be that we have not learned to accept responsibility for who we are, what we do, what is happening now, where we are going, who we can become, and on and on? Accepting responsibility gives you the freedom to know these things. It assures it. Responsibility and freedom are synonymous!

Responsibility is two words. Response and ability. Think about it! How do you rate your ability to respond? What is your response ability? Choose a response that will empower you! Responses that come from anger and resentment disempower you! If you consistently find yourself responding in this way, you can use some work in this area.

Accept responsibility for a bright future. If things aren't happening for you the way you want them to, you must accept responsibility that you may be spending too much time thinking about what you don't want. You can't win if

THE FIRST BOOK OF LIFE \$KILLS

you are always thinking about losing. Change your thinking and you change your life! What gets your total concentration gets you! Give up worrying about your circumstance and do something about it!

Could the problem be that you've lost sight of what you want because of the circumstances you find yourself in? You say, "It's tough to remember you came to drain the swamp when you are up to your waist in alligators?" Are you kidding? You are responsible for creating your own circumstances. Do you find yourself worrying about your predicament? Brian Tracy says that worry is a sustained form of fear caused by indecision. It may be your own indecision that has contributed to why things aren't happening for you. It is up to you! It's decision time!

You could probably write a book about all the creative things you've done to avoid making the decisions you are afraid to make. I believe it all gets back to Life\$kill #1, "Blueprint Your Life!" If the carrot is big enough, if it looks good when you close your eyes and visualize it, if it feels good to you and if it is good for all concerned, then why wouldn't you want to put yourself "out there" and do what needs to be done? Concentrate on the important and postpone the trivial. The reason things may not be happening for you is that you have yet to understand that until you do what needs to be done, nothing happens!

Accept the responsibility that you make things happen! If you are someone who complains about the way the ball bounces you are most likely the one who dropped it. Make something happen you can be proud of. Make something

Accept Responsibility!

happen that you can become passionate about; something that serves others and makes you and others feel good. Make something happen that will have people look at you and say, "There goes a person with integrity! She doesn't just talk about it, she does it!"

Accept responsibility for your own personal development. You can't count on others for this. Remember, if you always do what you've always done, you will always get what you've always gotten. When you get the burn to learn, you will begin to earn self-respect, money and much more. Read good books, listen to cassettes, attend seminars and workshops. Consistently work on yourself! If you don't, who will?

One sure sign that you are not accepting responsibility is to consistently cast blame on: the weather, the economy, your boss, your customers, your spouse or significant other, your kids and on and on. Elmer G. Leterman said, "A man may fail many times, but he won't be a failure until he says that someone pushed him." No one is defeated until he or she starts blaming someone or something else! Want success? Learn that accepting responsibility for your own success and achievement is mandatory not optional!

Life works! It works in direct proportion to the way you work it! It is working just the way you have planned it! If you are saying to yourself, "This is simply not true!" you most likely do not have a written plan. No plan is a plan to have things happen the way they happen. Consider the fact that your life is the way it is because of the choices you have made up to this point. You must accept responsibility for your choices and for the consequences of your actions. Accept responsi-

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bility for the way things are. If you don't like the way things are, change them! Unless you have a plan for life to be different than it is right now, life will continue to show up the way it always has for you. Be accountable to yourself! When things work; take the credit! When things don't work; take the heat!

Accept responsibility that we cause most of the problems that occur in our life. Most of life's predicaments are predictable! We don't seem to learn from our difficulties so we get to experience the same predicament again. Not learning from adversity makes your life's predicaments predictable! Problems by design are repetitive. If we don't learn the lesson the problem presents the first time, we can predict with a high degree of reliability that it will occur again.

Ever wonder why you make the same mistakes or have the same problems over and over again? Not paying attention may be an answer. Thinking you have no control over what happens to you is another. The measure of a man's progress is not whether he has a tough problem to deal with, it's whether it's the same problem he had last year!

Upsets are prolonged by rehearsing them in your mind. Quit wallowing in your difficulties! If you want quick recovery from your problems, learn to quickly change your mental image of the problem. For things to be different, you must do things differently. How you have been won't work! If how you have been in the past isn't working, you must learn to change the way you do things.

Dr. Michael LeBoeuf, author of *Imagineering*, says that a mistake only proves someone stopped talking long enough

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to do something. When you do things, you will make mistakes. The secret is to learn from your mistakes and push forward. Never stay hooked to the past. The past is an energy drain! Focus on what you want, not on what you don't want! You should only look back to learn from your mistakes and to see how far you've come! According to Oscar Wilde, experience is the name we give our mistakes!

It was Charles F. Kettering who said, "You will never stub your toe standing still. The faster you go, the more chance there is of stubbing your toe, but the more chance you have of getting somewhere."

We all make errors. The miracle of error is the access to opportunity it presents; to learn from your mistakes. Mistakes cause problems. Accept responsibility for your problems! They don't just happen!

Let's take it a step further. Problems validate what you are committed to. Stop! Go back and read that one again! It's true, problems get in the way of your commitments, therefore they validate what you are committed to. Otherwise it isn't a problem! It's that simple!

It's pretty easy to get sucked into a problem. Our nature is to analyze it, worry over it, wonder what people think about us being in it and generally stay hooked to the problem. We have our own little "pity party." We celebrate our problems by telling everyone we meet about them. We look for sympathy from anyone who will listen. Do we ever stop to wonder if they care?

While it is important to have someone with whom you can share "the good, the bad and the ugly," to continually talk

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about the problem doesn't get it solved! How do you feel when friends only call you when they have a problem? I tend to distance myself from people who consistently only talk about problems, especially those who return with the same problem several days or weeks later. Problems don't just go away by talking about them! You have to do something about them! I am attracted to people who talk solutions and then do!

Problems keep you stuck! Look at your problems. Don't dwell on them, but look at them. Learn to look at difficult times as invitations to transformation. Are your problems the same ones you have always been having? Werner Erhard once said that when you look at your concerns, you look at what has your feet nailed to the floor! How does it feel to be stationary? Going nowhere!

Part of the problem with being stuck is that we make it mean something bad. Everyone gets stuck in their problems once in a while. It only means we are stuck! It is important to understand that problems are only problems and only have the meaning we give them.

Problems and stress are related. A famous stress expert suggests that stress is the body's non-specific response to exterior demands which are made upon it. Stress is neither good or bad; however, the very word itself conjures up some kind of anxious agony in most peoples' minds. We often associate great discomfort with the idea of stress.

Who is to say what is discomforting? Only we, the "stressees," may do that. When a "stressor" comes along, we have a choice to respond to it from a position of self-confi-

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dence or a position of fear. From self-confidence, we may be stimulated into a creative response by this outer interruption; from fear, we may be scared out of our socks by it! Certainly the former would marshal healthier mind/body reactions, while the latter would cause anxiety and energy drain! Learn to look upon all external stressful situations as opportunities for growth! Learn to respond wisely and peacefully to all stressful situations! This is the wisdom that comes from accepting responsibility for the stress that occurs in our lives. Be grateful for it!

There is a lesson in every problem. Look for it and learn from it!

A lot of us stay stuck in the problem and ask ourselves, "Why me?" Asking, "Why me?" is a waste of time! Get rid of the "why" question. It only makes you defend your position. Defending a position that got us in the problem in the first place doesn't make a lot of sense to me! Our first knee-jerk reaction is usually to ask why! Don't ask why, ask how! Asking how we can solve the problem works better! Immediately asking how has us begin to seek information that will assist us in solving the problem. Asking how creates forward motion. The why of something lives in the past. The how of something is now!

It is infinitely more wise to experience problems as those situations which lure you on to self-discovery than to be stopped by the unpleasantness of the circumstances and be shut down to the possibilities the problem presents. There are no accidents. Problems occur for a reason. It is sometimes difficult to find the good in what appears to be all bad.

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There are important lessons to be learned in every circumstance. Remember, problems by design are repetitive. They come back if you don't learn from them and do something to prevent their reoccurrence.

Many people go into denial when a problem occurs. They think that if they pretend it isn't there, it will go away. Do problems go away? No! Problems only go away when you invent solutions and then take specific actions intended to move you through the problem.

Four Steps to Getting Unstuck From Problems!

Step one - Acknowledge you have a problem!

Step two - Ask yourself, "What am I committed to that has this be a problem?" If you determine that there is a commitment that the problem is getting in the way of, you know you have a problem.

Step three - Study your options. Look at all of the possibilities! Consider many solutions not just one! Do this quickly!

Step four - Do something that is consistent with your commitment! Focus on the solution!

One of the smartest things you can do when a problem occurs is to first acknowledge that it happened! Say to yourself, "I have a problem. The problem is. . ." and state the problem. Sounds so simple, yet many of us refuse to acknowledge our problems and in doing so, we subconsciously hold onto the problem. Next, examine what you are committed to that has it be a problem. This is the second step. This step is

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the test to determine if it really is a problem. If there is no commitment, there is no problem! Step number three is to study your options! Look at all of the possibilities! Don't just look for an answer, look for many answers. Pick one that will work! Finally, the fourth and most important step is to do something that is consistent with your commitment.

We need to get over the questions that focus on the past and on the pain - "Why did this happen to me?" - and ask instead the question which opens doors to the future: "Now that this has happened, what shall I do about it?"

RABBI HAROLD KUSHNER

In other words, focus on a solution right now! Not later, when you feel like it. By then the problem will dominate your thinking and you will never feel like facing it. Not later, after you have told everyone in the world about your problem, but right now! Your friends would probably have a different feeling about you if you would wait and tell them about this wonderful problem you had and then tell them how you handled it! The mind that has the ability to notice problems and to look at what your commitments are, also has the ability to create a solution to your problems. Joyce Hifler said, "Thrashing around in your mind does about as much good as trying to empty an ocean with a paper cup. Quiet your mind and solutions will come."

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Let's say that you have a flat tire on the way to an important meeting. Most of us would call a flat tire a problem. Kick the tire if it will make you feel better, and immediately acknowledge that you have a problem. What is your commitment that has a flat tire be a problem? It could be that you are committed to keeping your word about being on time. Or it could be that you are committed to not getting your hands dirty! Regardless of the commitment, the quicker you begin to work on a solution, the better off you will be. Study your options! Get on your cellular phone or walk to a pay phone and call to let your appointment know you will be running a little late. Reschedule if you must, but get started on fixing the problem! Next, get the tire fixed! Call AAA! Whatever! Don't anguish over it, do something about it!

Doing something brings possibility to the situation! You can't expect the situation to present the possibility, although the situation can, with a high degree of reliability, point in the direction of the solution! And you have to look for it! You create your own possibilities! You alone are responsible!

Refuse to allow the problem to affect you for very long! It won't when you know the secret of how to get unstuck! Don't get mad, be glad you have an opportunity to demonstrate who you are! Anger stops you in your tracks. Anger is natural when challenges come. Staying angry about a problem is not good for your mental health. Someone once said, "Anger is a wind which blows out the lamp of the mind."

You can't think straight when you are angry. Allow a cooling off period before you delve into solving the problem. The Bible says, "Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to

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speak, and slow to become angry." When you lose your temper, you lose the ability to think sensibly and to make balanced decisions. Give up being angry. Being angry is a choice! Who you are, is someone that is bigger than the problem!

Learning to get unstuck from your problems with this four step method could be one of the most important lessons you could learn from reading this book. Use this method and it will help bring you peace of mind. Now that you have discovered a way to give yourself more time to focus on the things you want, doesn't it make sense to implement the idea immediately? If you want to shorten your "bounce-back" time, do it now!

The fundamental design of a bright future must be to focus each day on the study of things what will shorten your "bounce-back" time. Let's define "bounce-back" time as the amount of time it takes you to recover from a problem. Recovery is a process.

You can never solve all of your problems at once. Resolve only the things that demand your immediate attention! Tackle them now! You must set priorities on finding solutions to problems! First things first!

Getting back to the way you were before the problem occurred is an attitude! How you feel about yourself determines how fast you can bounce back. If you have low self-esteem, you are likely to blame others. If your self-esteem is high, you will very quickly realize that what you need to do is to accept responsibility for having caused the problem and immediately focus on the solution to the problem. It really

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doesn't make any difference whose fault it is. With high self-esteem, you find no benefit in blaming others. The benefit is found by finding a quick, workable solution to the problem. Your "bounce-back" time depends on you!

Accept responsibility that when problems happen, you alone can do something about them. Problems do not go away by themselves! When you can accept the fact that you alone can do something about them, you can begin to focus on what needs to be done to solve the problem, rather than stay stuck in the problem. When problems occur, how long does it take for you to bounce back?

We all need to accept responsibility for our problems. If we don't, we are the problem!

Focus on what you want! If you want more problems, continue talking about the ones you have. Tell everyone. Revel in them. Don't listen for suggestions to fix them. When a solution shows up, disregard it immediately. Say things like, "I tried that once and it didn't work!" or "You don't seem to understand! This problem is different!" This will help you keep the problems you have and will attract new and bigger problems for you to enjoy. It seems that some people really enjoy all the sympathy and attention they get from constantly talking about their problems. Remember, you get what you think and talk about most of the time.

If you want your problems to go away, make a promise to yourself to implement the "four steps to getting unstuck" and do it now! Promises shape reality. A commitment to keep your promises transforms the promise into reality. Keep your promises! Making promises and commitments shapes who

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you will become. Make sure the promises you make are the promises you intend to keep.

It takes more energy not to do what you said you would than to do what you said you would. When you break promises, you generally will work very hard to come up with some really good excuses that will sound good and get you off the hook! Forget it! Conserve your energy! Live your life like your word means something.

*You can't build a reputation on
what you are going to do!*

HENRY FORD

One of the problems with doing nothing is you can't stop and rest. Take action now! Don't just talk about it. Do it!

Make a note to yourself to help you remember the four steps. Post it on the bathroom mirror! This lesson is too important to take lightly! Keep it before you and it will be a life skill you will treasure for the rest of your life!

Four Steps to Getting Unstuck From Problems!

Step one - Acknowledge you have a problem!

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Step three - Study your options. Look at all of the possibilities! Consider many solutions not just one!
Do this quickly!

Step four - Do something that is consistent with your commitment! Focus on the solution!

Once you know what needs to be done, never allow anything or anyone to divert your attention. Keep focused! Don't tolerate distractions! They only drain your energy and obscure your objectives. Stay on the path! Accept no invitations for "side trips!"

Direct all of your mental energy on the task at hand. Refuse interruptions! Concentrate on the end result! Stay committed to what matters!

You do not have to be one of those people who gets side-tracked and never makes it! Exercise your self-discipline! Don't accept any excuses from yourself. You can do it! Just do what needs to be done!

*To desert the truth in the hour of need is to prove
that we do not know the truth.*

ERNEST HOLMES

When you begin to feel the shift to "off-center," stop and take several deep breathes. Stretch and move around a bit. Reflect on what you want. Breathe deeply some more. Clarify your purpose. Now is not the time for wavering in your commitment. Clear your mind of all negative thoughts. Think of

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something good! Breathe deeply some more. Re-examine your priorities. This will assist you in getting back on track. Then with no uncertainty, without hesitation, embrace the idea of what must be done and do it!

It's too bad that all of life's problems didn't all happen to us when we were eighteen and thought we knew all the answers! And, they didn't! So, now we get to accept responsibility for the choices we make and the consequences of our actions.

Nobody said life would be easy! Someone once said, "Life is hard and then you die!" My first reaction to that statement was, "How awful! What a terrible attitude! Whoever believes that must not think they have much to live for. They have certainly lost hope. They have given up!"

Upon closer examination and with some personal experience with life, I have come to believe that life is hard. It can be argued, understandably so, that life is what you make it! And what life is about is growing; learning in the process; doing good for others; taking care of yourself; having problems; finding solutions and solving the problems; doing the best you can; living life and on and on; and then you die. Everyone is going to die someday! The question is, "When are you going to start living?"

The more responsible you become, the smoother your life works! It's tough to look at yourself in the mirror and know that you are the source and the cause of how your life turns out! You are, you know! Can you depend on yourself to be personally accountable for all of your thoughts and your actions?

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The greatest gift. . . is the realization that life does not consist either of wallowing in the past or of peering anxiously at the future; and it is appalling to contemplate the great number of often painful steps by which one arrives at a truth so old, so obvious, and so frequently expressed. It is good for one to appreciate that life is now. Whatever it offers, little or much, life is now - this day - this hour.

CHARLES MACOMB FLANDRAU

List several things that you know you need to accept responsibility for. You may not want to accept responsibility, and you know if you did, maybe you could turn your life around!

The price of greatness is responsibility!

WINSTON CHURCHILL

Handling Adversity

15

Adversity is the first path to the truth.

—George Gordon, Lord Byron

Don't react to adversity—respond!

Not only is adversity the first path to truth; it is inevitably true that adversity will also be your constant companion on the journey to greatness. Adversity may be the act of a stranger or sometimes of a friend or, without warning, an act of nature. At the same time, no one ever made the journey to greatness without learning that often we face nothing more adverse than ourselves. Self-adversity can come from getting in our own way, or our own face, or failing to admit that it is happening. Denial, any true traveler on the journey to greatness will learn, is often the form of adversity we most often have to face.

*When you find a knife in your back,
check for your fingerprints on the knife.*

*Your first job on any job
is making sure
you're not working against yourself.*

*How easy to be amiable in the
midst of happiness and success.*

—Anne Sophie Swetchine

I have no business sitting here in the quiet security and privacy of my office typing with a full stomach and telling you that you have the capacity to face and deal with whatever adversity you may be facing. What I can tell

you is that into everybody's life, some life creeps. And sometimes, the anthropomorphic nature of the adversity is a creep. And we have to deal with it.

A friend's late Aunt Edith was a woman who had survived world wars and the Holocaust, and yet, she always had a great smile. When I asked her the secret of her attitude in the face of adversity, she said to me, "A long time ago, I decided you could be either happy or sad, and I decided to be happy." "Well, Edith," I said to her, "that just sounds like common sense." She patted my hand with the wisdom of years and said, "My friend, common sense isn't that common."

Adversity can be big or small, personal or social, but adversity will journey with all of us or be waiting around some curve in the road. These are the facts of life, as is the fact that we are not in charge of whether adversity shows up. In the end, in the beginning, and at every step along the way, what we are in charge of is our reaction to what happens to us.

No life is so hard that you can't make it easier by the way you take it.

—Ellen Glasgow

*In any room you enter,
what first rises to meet you isn't greatness.
Greatness is how you rise to the occasion
at any occasion.*

And on Personal Reflection . . .

You on Handling Adversity

How did your parents handle adversity, and what in their approach do you find yourself mimicking?

What is an example of some kind of adversity that can set you off emotionally or fearfully, almost without warning, and why do you think this is so?

Who is someone you know or have met who handles adversity in a way you admire, what can you learn from this person, and what is holding you back from doing so?

How do you feel when you are in a really tough situation and someone tells you that you can deal with it, even as you are having your own doubts?

Think of a friend who is having a really tough time not only with what the friend is facing but also with how he or she is facing it. What would you tell that friend? How would you deal with it?

*He knows not his own
strength who hath not met
adversity.*

—Ben Jonson

It is tough work to convince ourselves that when things don't seem to be going our way, we will be all right and we haven't lost our way. In some ways, it is like the old joke: If everything is coming your way, you're in the wrong lane.

Some people won't take yes for an answer.

*Be willing to accept greatness,
and greatness will be more willing to accept you.*

*Every calamity is a spur and a
valuable hint.*

—R. W. Emerson

Adversity may not always seem like a gift, but how we come to deal with it can be a gift we give ourselves. Unfortunately, most of us take personal affront when we meet adversity. This is usually because we had something else in mind, and the real affront

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is to our minds' plans. This particularly affronts successful people, who are used to getting their minds' way, which in turn means that successful people meet adversity more often than not, and the nature of their success is again—surprise—a reflection of how they choose to deal with adversity.

Children's talent to endure stems from their ignorance of alternatives.

—Maya Angelou

*Adversity can be a kick in the pants,
but sometimes, it is something that also kicks you
in the direction you need to be going.*

Adversity can also be a hint about something we have previously had hinted to us but to which we did not pay attention.

Adversity can be valuable because it is something we can no longer avoid.
Adversity can be an advance warning and a chance to avoid a calamity.

*Sometimes when things are great,
people are convinced this is just a sign
and something will soon go wrong.
If you are looking to be wrong or wronged,
you will find it.*

*Don't confuse being a realist
with being a failure junkie.*

Lecturing others on how they ought to deal with adversity doesn't make us great. Little makes us better prepared to help others deal with adversity than learning from how we individually deal with adversity. In this dealing with adversity, it surely is a case of "physician, heal thyself."

On the journey to greatness, each of us needs to be our own medic. We need to have our own little bag of experience and wisdom that will serve us when we are wounded by adversity. How we come to treat ourselves when we are wounded will often have more to do with the character of the victim than with the sword of adversity.

By trying we can easily learn to endure adversity. Another man's, I mean.

—Mark Twain

Curiously, the first best step in dealing with our own adversity wounds, or with others' wounds, is not doing but listening. When we listen, we will have a better idea of what's hurting, why it's hurting, and how the telling is often its own healing—certainly an unburdening. Telling yourself or others that you care, and meaning it, can be its own best first aid.

When it comes right down to it, the secret of having it all is loving it all.

—Dr. Joyce Brothers

Some people are always grumbling because roses have thorns. I am thankful that thorns have roses.

—Alphonse Karr

Often, when we meet adversity, its first face is not the face we will meet on reinspection and reflection. Often, when a thorn pierces our skin, there is no better cure than another thorn to pry it out.

Sometimes, adversity is a truth that no amount of facing will change and that simply dictates that we change direction. When the internal combustion engine happened on the scene, a whole lot of guys selling buggy whips started weeping and kept weeping while Henry Ford danced a jig.

Adversity is a soul sister to success. And on the journey to greatness, our willingness to befriend these twin sisters, and know them as one, will have much to do with our greatness.

Helping others deal with their adversity lifts us up as we lift what is weighing on others.

A great king once hid a fortune in gold and jewels under a boulder that he placed in the middle of a path where many travelers journeyed.

Some people coming down the path went around the boulder.

Some people coming down the path climbed over the boulder.

But one man took the time to move it so the way would be easier, not only for him but also for others—and, in doing so, found the treasure.

Adversity can be worth a fortune

if you take the time to mine

what you find yourself facing.

*The only difference between stumbling blocks
and building blocks
is how you use them.
The art in adversity
is the challenge
to see the mountain of bricks in your way
as the cathedral you have dreamt of building.*



Adversity has the effect of eliciting talents which, in prosperous circumstances, would have lain dormant.

—Horace

Embracing Opportunity and Optimism

16

There is no security on this earth; there is only opportunity.

—Douglas MacArthur

*The best thing to wear
on the journey to greatness
is a warm heart
and an open mind.*

It takes no less courage to embrace opportunity than it does to handle adversity. To master adversity without embracing opportunity is to trudge ahead on the road to greatness while assigning oneself to coping but resigning oneself to a life without joy.

*The world is round, and the
place that seems like the end
may also be only the beginning.*

—Ivy Baker Priest

Security is mostly a superstition.

—Helen Keller

I know that there are those who feel that the excitement of embracing opportunity, or an optimistic attitude, is naïve, but one has to wonder about the wisdom of despair. Life is not always great, but a willingness to believe that greatness is just around the corner or that one can turn an event into an opportunity certainly heightens your odds of achieving greatness.

One of the essentials to achieving greatness is not to be deceived by the appearance of things. The playwright Edward Albee reminds us that "very little is as it appears to

Noah Benshea, *The Journey to Greatness*, Corwin P

be." Events in our life wear masks. The skill to unveiling opportunity begins with peeling back the appearance of things to see what lies beneath.

A good attitude is the best way to gain altitude.

If you are looking for guarantees in life, buy a vacuum cleaner. The map to greatness does not come with a money-back promise. The promise is that achieving greatness begins with a willingness to look for what is great in things and in people. When an opportunity appears, see it before it even announces itself as an opportunity.

On the road to greatness, we are seldom offered the opportunity to manufacture what we will meet, but how we choose to deal with what we meet is its own alchemy, turning the dross metal of the day-to-day into a golden opportunity.

In great affairs we ought to apply ourselves less to creating chances than to profiting from those that offer.

—La Rochefoucauld

*It may not sound politically correct, but
the best dope is hope.*

There is no better mood elevator to keep one's spirits up on the journey to greatness than a large helping of hope. It is not bitter to the taste, or to the soul, and if it is, one must then question to what discouragement we have become addicted.

*He who has health has hope,
and he who has hope has
everything.*

—Arabian proverb

*If you're looking for hope,
be hopeful.*

And on Personal Reflection . . .

You on Embracing Opportunity and Optimism

When something you didn't expect happens to you, what is generally your first reaction? Why do you think you react this way?

(Continued)

• The Journey

(Continued)

When was a time when you thought something would be positive but you got burned by it? Does that experience still linger?

What was the nicest unexpected thing that happened to you? Did you embrace it, or were you guarded when it happened?

Which of your parents were optimists or pessimists? What did they teach you, or what results of this attitude did you witness in their lives?

If you had an attitude to pass on to your children about embracing opportunity and optimism or the opposite, what would your counsel be if your first concern was to protect them?

Being where you are

is the best way to get where you're going.

We're still not where we're going, but we're still not where we were.

—Natasha Josefowitz

After all, tomorrow is another day.

—Margaret Mitchell

The journey to greatness is the journey of a lifetime. If we look at our progress each day as a marker of our progress, we can become defeated and turn from our greater goal. Any day can defeat any of us, and still, we can rise to our greater self in the next day, at the next curve, or in the face of the next challenge. An old Russian proverb reminds us that mornings are wiser than evenings. Arming ourselves with faith, we

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can get through the night and face the morning with the witness that this day can be great. Or to borrow from scripture: This is day the Lord gave me, and I will joy in it.

Imagine optimism as a vitamin.

Start your day by taking your vitamins.

*If you're having trouble sleeping,
take one before bed.*

Our willingness to embrace opportunity and the optimism that opportunity is just around the corner can help all of us have the courage to turn the next corner on the journey to greatness.

Embracing opportunity and waking and walking with optimism serve and honor not just our lives but also those lives with which we connect. We infect others with our emotions, and whether it is optimism or pessimism, we are infectious.

We are all teachers. Whether we are in the classroom or the boardroom, we are telling people what we think, or if we're not thinking. We are constantly showing others who we are, and how we feel, and we are passing the information down the social pipeline. Let us leave markers of optimism so others will find the courage to make their way to greatness, just as we are following the markers of those who came before us, stood before us, or stood beside us.

*The opportunity that God
sends down does not wake
those who are asleep.*

—Senegalese proverb

When we shut our eyes and hang out the "do not disturb" sign on our door, it is tough to hear opportunity's knock. Opportunity is looking for people who hang out the "welcome" sign. Think about the sign you have left hanging on your door.

*Greatness is looking for people
who are looking to be great.*

Simply put, if you are looking to be great, keep your eyes open. And certainly keep them open to opportunity. Casting a blind eye on opportunity under the guise of being prudent is a foolish mistake masking as character, and its only similarity to greatness is that it's a great mistake.

*There is a tide in the affairs of
men, which, taken at the flood,
leads on to fortune.*

—William Shakespeare

• The Journey

Big sign on a rural highway in Indiana:

If you're looking for a sign from God, this is it!

*A wise man will make more
opportunities than he finds.*

—Francis Bacon

In each of our lives, every moment brings a tide of emotions, even if it is a tidal lack of emotion. Learning how to use our tides to escape our island self and sail into seas that can carry us to greatness means we have to be mariners of the moment. We have to watch the winds and the waves in our lives, and know when to open our sails of self, and how to tack to capture the angle necessary to reach the goal of greatness. Every wind, every wave, every moment is filled with opportunity that, when embraced with patience and courage and skill, can carry us higher.

*Ask any sailor in any port,
and here is the tale he will tell you:
Opportunity is like the wind.
What you make of it
is more or less
what you make of yourself.*

Being open to making the most of opportunity is the only way to put wind in our sails. Unlike Ulysses, who evaded the Sirens by refusing to listen to their song inviting him to crack up on the rocks, when you hear opportunity singing in your ears, sail on and on into the great blue of greatness, and welcome its embrace.

Do It Now

That it will never come again is what makes life so sweet.

—Emily Dickinson

*Do not be
ready, fire, aim
or
ready, aim, aim.*

*Be
ready, aim, fire.*

*Make target practice
part of your life.*

*And remember that the key word is
"practice."*

The moment in front of you right now will never come again. You can read and reread this book, and a thousand other books, and all that might be gained will come to naught if you do not do something. After you have thought and rethought a thousand things, made a thousand

decisions and revisions, one thing will still be left to do. Do it now.

Do not wait any longer to begin the journey to greatness. Do not wait any longer.

Do not be like the victim who in walking the plank gets halfway out and, hoping to be self-assuring, says, "So far, so good."

Stop making excuses for why you are in the same place you were when there are

*Act without doing; work
without effort.*

—Lao-tzu

*Procrastination is the art of
keeping up with yesterday.*

—Don Marquis

Do It Now •

so many other places your spirit seeks to soar. If you have previously taken one step, now is the time to take two. If you have previously taken two steps, now you have all the reasons to take many more.

Stop making greatness a postponement and start making it your destination. Your train is here. Say "choo, choo," and you will have less "boo hoo, boo hoo"!

Life, as it is called, is for most of us one long postponement.

—Henry Miller

How often is happiness destroyed by preparation, foolish preparation.

—Jane Austen

It doesn't matter how many books filled with good advice you read if you don't do something with the advice.

*If you give a book about
how to start a fire
to smart people who can't read
they will use the pages as kindling.
Make use of what is at hand.*

I had a college friend who before finals would spend all of his study time writing a plan for how he would study. His plan was a work of art and a waste of time.

Today is a great day to begin living a great life.

We are always getting ready to live but never living.

—R. W. Emerson

The longest journey begins with a single step.

Step on it.

Some day is no day!

Do it. Do it now. Do it for you.

Do not wait to pass through all the doors or chapters in this book before you move ahead. Life is always on the move; take this book with you and keep looking ahead. No matter what you may have read already in this book, you will change, and what is written will change its meaning for you.

Just go out there and do what you've got to do.

—Martina Navratilova

I postpone death by living, by suffering, by error, by risking, by giving, by losing.

—Anais Nin

Your life is magic.

You can change it

right now.

And the magic is in doing something

right now.

And what you delay in doing right now

is the sand of opportunity

slipping between your fingers

no matter how convinced you are

that you are holding on

to future opportunity.

And on Personal Reflection . . .

You on Doing It Now

Recall a time you remember promising yourself that you would do something, only to find that you never did what you said you would. How did you feel?

Recall a time someone promised you they would do something but then didn't do it in a timely way, which meant the thing promised never happened. How did you feel?

What is one thing you have been promising yourself for years that you would get around to doing but have never done? Why? How does that feel?

Who is a friend who always follows through when he or she promises to do something? How do you feel about that person?

Recall a time when you disappointed someone because you procrastinated. Why did you procrastinate? How do you feel about that?

My son's pickup truck is filthy. Some high school wit has written "WASH ME" on the dusty back window. Another teenage advisor has answered this suggestion by scribbling an altogether different four-letter suggestion. Some of us need to clean our cars, some of us need to clean up our language, and for some of us, getting around to doing something is a dirty word.

No matter where you live, in everyone's life there is a view. And that view is a landscape of intention unattended. The Chinese say, "Talking doesn't cook rice."

And what you decide can be at any time is something you will probably never find time for doing.

Let us never confuse stability with stagnation.

—Mary Jean LeTendre

One of these days is none of these days.

—English proverb

I'm getting my hair cut. The older gentleman next to me has apparently just retired. The barbers ask him if he's getting much fishing or golf in these days. "Nah," answers the recent retiree, "I'm still dealing with deferred maintenance."

Whether we're young or old or getting older, we've all got to deal with deferred maintenance. We've all got stuff we need to do and haven't done. We've all got stuff we said we would do, crossed our hearts, promised under a summer moon, and still have not done, and summer turns to fall.

Promises deferred promise to haunt you.

Don't let your life be a haunted house.

Deferred maintenance for some is cutting the grass, and for some, it is cutting out cigarettes. For some, it is washing the car, and for some, it

A committee takes hours to put into minutes what can be done in seconds.

—Judy Castrina

The only place you find success before work is in the dictionary.

—May V. Smith

is scrubbing away an old attitude. For some, it is finding something that was lost, and for some, it is losing an old grudge. For some, it is dealing with a stack of bills, and for all of us, it's about time we dealt with ourselves. We can blame circumstances and others for what we haven't done, but most of us eventually have to look at why we haven't done what we haven't done. The journey to greatness demands this.

When you buy a new car or a new used car, in the glove compartment is usually a book containing the maintenance instructions. We may even look at it now and then over the first six months or a year, but then it just becomes part of the car, not as relevant as the cupholder, used less often than the windshield wipers.

We usually don't look at maintenance instructions until there's a bad storm in our lives, and then we suddenly think about the rain gutters we should have put up or the windshield wipers we should have replaced. Almost all of us at one point or another wonder how we're going to "maintain."

To maintain takes day-to-day maintenance.

We may have the best of intentions about deferred maintenance, but events, ranging from the best to the worst in life, are seldom deferred by our intentions.

What you ignore doesn't necessarily ignore you.

Crisis crosses everyone's path. Sometimes, we get no warning. Sometimes, we ignore all the warnings. A man wakes up for years with hair on his pillow and then one morning is surprised to wake up bald. A

To achieve great things, two things are needed: a plan, and not quite enough time.

—Leonard Bernstein

great deal that surprises us is no surprise. Defer what you need to deal with emotionally, intellectually, physically, financially, or spiritually, and eventually, you don't have maintenance; you have a mess. There are some things in life that finally getting around to on a Sunday afternoon can't

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fix. Some stuff (people stuff, children stuff, love stuff) broken for too long is going to stay broken.

*Every time history repeats itself in your life,
the price for ignoring it goes up.*

We all promise that there are certain things we will deal with sooner or later. Often, later is too late.

Sometimes when we're on a trip or taking a walk, we make a promise about dealing with something, and then we come home, put our foot in the river of the day's events, and get washed five years downstream from our intentions. The kids do need to be picked up, there is always something at the market we need for dinner, but we also need to have that talk or take that walk together, face the facts before they smack us in the face.

*You have all the time you ever need
right up to the time you don't.
Try to run out of excuses
before you run out of time.*

Maintenance is just that. Maintenance is different from a makeover. Maintenance is not about transforming yourself but about dealing with the day-to-day, which is already transforming itself. Deciding to defer dealing with things doesn't mean things are going to be patient with us. Life stuff doesn't stand still. It runs away from us, toward us, or over us. Life is dynamic, and change is the only constant. Defer the lube job on your Chevy, or defer dealing with your fears, your plans, your heart, or your hopes for too long, and it's too bad, too late.

*Yes,
greatness is waiting for you.
But there is no telling how long it will wait.*

Defer learning, deny what you know to be true, and it is not that you will fail but that being dumb makes a tough life tougher.

*If you don't risk everything,
you risk even more.*

—Erica Jong

An old joke goes as follows: "I played Abraham Lincoln in the fourth-grade play." "Were you a good actor as a child?" "No, I was the only one old enough to grow a beard." Defer learning from experience, or deny the experience, and you have to repeat

the grade, again and again. It doesn't matter that you're in postgraduate quantum physics if your heart is in preschool because you never dealt with the need to hug and be hugged.

You can be smart and sad. Smart people can do dumb things. Smart people can outsmart themselves. Maintenance isn't an issue of intelligence but of character, and character doesn't give one iota about your IQ. Smart people get caught in life just like dumb people. More than a few of us lay the traps that trap us—or put off clearing the trails of the old traps we laid.

*When you delay dealing with things,
rest assured that they will deal with you.*

Crisis is the invention of avoidance.

*Deal with what you are avoiding in your life
and you will have fewer crises in your life.*

*If you're nodding your head while reading this,
make sure you're not nodding off
again.*

Defer dealing with love, lovers, and how you love, and the question isn't what you will learn but how much it will hurt when you do. If we defer maintenance in our relationships, whether they are about parenting or passion, what we don't do has already done something. People fall in love every day and fall out of love day after day. All of us are ready to buy into love, but fewer of us are ready to give it the day-to-day maintenance it requires.

*To fuel passion,
you have to chop wood.*

*The best way to be loved now
is to do something loving now.*

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If you're lucky, you'll love your work. If you're smart, you'll work at love.

Love isn't only about intentions but also about paying attention.

We all do different work, but all work is sacred. If you don't like your job, work at changing jobs or do a better job at what you do. Some of us put all our maintenance into complaining and none into changing.

Little changes until we do. Biopsychology teaches that our minds automatically work to maintain seeing and doing things the way we did them the day before. That's just the way we work, but maintenance can mean working to change things and the way we've done things, because if we do things the way we've always done them, we may be done for.

*A word spoken in due season,
how good is it!*

—Bible, Proverbs 15:23

*You really can change the
world if you care enough.*

—Marian Wright Edelman

*The pursuit of greatness is not a part-time job
unless you want to get only partway there.*

For years, I had a tower of books next to my bed. Every time I saw a book I liked or someone sent me a book I "must read," I would add it to the tower and promise myself I would get into it before falling asleep. But I would fall asleep at the helm, and instead of inspiring me, the tower began to depress me. It reminded me of what I wanted to do or said I would do but didn't do. Promises we break can break our spirit. Maintenance deferred can be a source of depression. Where we want to go and don't, and what we know we need to do or promise we will do but don't do, will not only fail to carry us forward but can take us two steps backward. Of course, I never read all the books, but I got tired of being depressed. So I put them onto a bookshelf and began reading them one day at a time—every day.

*A great day
is any day we do what we said we would do yesterday.
Too little is often done too late.*

*Do not wait for leaders; do it
alone, person to person.*

—Mother Teresa

Take a moment to watch the shades of sky. Take a moment to enjoy a stranger's passing smile. Take a moment because that is the moment that is given.

Take a moment to cool down when things heat up. Take a moment to hold on, and take a moment to let go. Take a moment to make something that doesn't matter, matter more. Take a moment to listen when someone tells you that you matter. But don't defer living, and loving, and pursuing greatness a moment longer. Life is over in a moment, and every moment needs maintenance.



He who hesitates is a damned fool.

—Mae West

UPS AND DOWNS

Life is a series of UPS and DOWNS. You have day and night, summer and winter. There is always an UP immediately after a DOWN and vice versa. No status is permanent, but it takes a lot of effort to maintain the same status when you are UP. It takes only a few seconds to fall down if you don't pay the same attention as you did while climbing UP.

There is no short route to up without passing through a DOWN phase. There is an old saying, "You do not enjoy the taste of sweet, unless you taste bitter." Every situation that takes you DOWN will create an opportunity for your life to improve. You will never mature without facing challenges. The bigger the challenges you overcome, the stronger you become.

To be successful, you need to solve complex problems with passion and welcome more and more challenges into your life. Even if the situation drags you through a DOWN phase, you will not need to be worried much, since you have already solved complex problems.

In fact, most successful people have their great moments in their DOWN phases. Successful people enjoy struggles in the process of achieving greater things. You can learn a lot of things in your

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DOWN phase. You can enjoy the luxuries on your UP phase, but you have to maintain the same momentum to keep it going.

Donald Trump, Real Estate Empire lost billions in the 90's...

When the real estate business collapsed in the early nineties, Donald Trump was in enormous debt. In fact, he owed almost \$9 billion to banks and investors. Can you imagine a \$9 billion debt? It's almost impossible to even imagine that one person can run up that amount of debt.

You would think that 9 billion dollar debt might sound like the person in debt is in a desperate situation.

What did he do? Well, He didn't quit. He was very persistent and negotiated with the bankers. He was determined to pay everything back. He started working even harder, and to make a long story short: Now Mr. Trump has gotten up from the hole and is doing better than ever.

Beating a 9 billion dollar debt requires a determinant mind. If at some point you feel like you've got a problem, you might as well remember Trump's example. Never give up and make your way. If somebody can manage to get rid of a 9 billion dollar debt, then certainly you can overcome whatever problem you face today.

The Harry Potter series of books and movies has become the biggest publishing success in the history of the book business and led to the creation of a multi-billion dollar business across

Ups and Downs

the world. I would like to share something about the author of Harry Potter, J. K. Rowling.

J. K. Rowling was born in Chipping Sodbury, Gloucestershire, England. She married a journalist in Portugal (he was Portuguese), and her daughter Jessica was born in 1993. Shortly after the birth of her daughter, the marriage ended in divorce and J. K., along with her infant daughter, moved to Edinburgh, Scotland. These times were really challenging for her. It was during this time that she became determined to not only finish her Harry Potter wizard novel, but to get it published. Often she would write in restaurants, where she and her daughter could stay warm while she wrote. She requested a grant from the Scottish Arts Council, which she eventually received, in order to complete her book. When it was completed and after several rejections, Ms. Rowling sold the novel, *Harry Potter and The Philosopher's Stone*, to Bloomsbury in the UK for the equivalent of about \$4,000. Although her given name at birth was Joanne Kathleen, her publisher Bloomsbury feared that the target audience of young boys might be reluctant to buy books written by a female author, and requested that she use two initials, rather than reveal her first name.

Forbes has named J. K. Rowling as the first person to become a U.S.-dollar billionaire by writing books. It was wizardry that transformed J.K. Rowling from a destitute single mother on welfare into a best-selling billionaire. Her adventures of teenage magician Harry Potter and his classmates at Hogwarts became a children's literary sensation in 1998 with the U.S. publication of *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*. It and the six subsequent novels have now sold 375 million copies worldwide. *Harry Potter and the*

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Deathly Hallows has sold over \$44 million, including \$15 million in the first 24 hours.

J. K. Rowling delivered an excellent commencement address, "The Fringe Benefits of Failure, and the Importance of Imagination," at the Annual Meeting of the Harvard Alumni Association in June 2008. Here is the text as she delivered it.

President Faust, members of the Harvard Corporation and the Board of Overseers, members of the faculty, proud parents, and, above all, graduates.

The first thing I would like to say is 'thank you.' Not only has Harvard given me an extraordinary honour, but the weeks of fear and nausea I have endured at the thought of giving this commencement address have made me lose weight. A win-win situation! Now all I have to do is take deep breaths, squint at the red banners and convince myself that I am at the world's largest Gryffindor reunion.

Delivering a commencement address is a great responsibility; or so I thought until I cast my mind back to my own graduation. The commencement speaker that day was the distinguished British philosopher Baroness Mary Warnock. Reflecting on her speech has helped me enormously in writing this one, because it turns out that I can't remember a single word she said. This liberating discovery enables me to proceed without any fear that I might inadvertently influence you to abandon promising careers in business, the law or politics for the giddy delights of becoming a gay wizard.

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You see? If all you remember in years to come is the 'gay wizard' joke, I've come out ahead of Baroness Mary Warnock. Achievable goals: the first step to self-improvement.

Actually, I have wracked my mind and heart for what I ought to say to you today. I have asked myself what I wish I had known at my own graduation, and what important lessons I have learned in the 21 years that have expired between that day and this.

I have come up with two answers. On this wonderful day when we are gathered together to celebrate your academic success, I have decided to talk to you about the benefits of failure. And as you stand on the threshold of what is sometimes called 'real life', I want to extol the crucial importance of imagination.

These may seem quixotic or paradoxical choices, but please bear with me.

Looking back at the 21-year-old that I was at graduation, is a slightly uncomfortable experience for the 42-year-old that she has become. Half my lifetime ago, I was striking an uneasy balance between the ambition I had for myself, and what those closest to me expected of me.

I was convinced that the only thing I wanted to do, ever, was to write novels. However, my parents, both of whom came from impoverished backgrounds and neither of whom had been to college, took the view that my overactive imagination was an amusing personal quirk that would never pay a mortgage, or secure a pension. I know that the irony strikes with the force of a cartoon anvil, now.

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So they hoped that I would take a vocational degree; I wanted to study English Literature. A compromise was reached that in retrospect satisfied nobody, and I went up to study Modern Languages. Hardly had my parents' car rounded the corner at the end of the road than I ditched German and scuttled off down the Classics corridor.

I cannot remember telling my parents that I was studying Classics; they might well have found out for the first time on graduation day. Of all the subjects on this planet, I think they would have been hard put to name one less useful than Greek mythology when it came to securing the keys to an executive bathroom.

I would like to make it clear, in parenthesis, that I do not blame my parents for their point of view. There is an expiry date on blaming your parents for steering you in the wrong direction; the moment you are old enough to take the wheel, responsibility lies with you. What is more, I cannot criticize my parents for hoping that I would never experience poverty. They had been poor themselves, and I have since been poor, and I quite agree with them that it is not an ennobling experience. Poverty entails fear, and stress, and sometimes depression; it means a thousand petty humiliations and hardships. Climbing out of poverty by your own efforts, that is indeed something on which to pride yourself, but poverty itself is romanticized only by fools.

What I feared most for myself at your age was not poverty, but failure.

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At your age, in spite of a distinct lack of motivation at university, where I had spent far too long in the coffee bar writing stories, and far too little time at lectures, I had a knack for passing examinations, and that, for years, had been the measure of success in my life and that of my peers.

I am not dull enough to suppose that because you are young, gifted and well-educated, you have never known hardship or heartbreak. Talent and intelligence never yet inoculated anyone against the caprice of the Fates, and I do not for a moment suppose that everyone here has enjoyed an existence of unruffled privilege and contentment.

However, the fact that you are graduating from Harvard suggests that you are not very well-acquainted with failure. You might be driven by a fear of failure quite as much as a desire for success. Indeed, your conception of failure might not be too far from the average person's idea of success, so high have you already flown.

Ultimately, we all have to decide for ourselves what constitutes failure, but the world is quite eager to give you a set of criteria if you let it. So I think it fair to say that by any conventional measure, a mere seven years after my graduation day, I had failed on an epic scale. An exceptionally short-lived marriage had imploded, and I was jobless, a lone parent, and as poor as it is possible to be in modern Britain, without being homeless. The fears that my parents had had for me, and that I had had for myself, had both come to pass, and by every usual standard, I was the biggest failure I knew.

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Now, I am not going to stand here and tell you that failure is fun. That period of my life was a dark one, and I had no idea that there was going to be what the press has since represented as a kind of fairy tale resolution. I had no idea then how far the tunnel extended, and for a long time, any light at the end of it was a hope rather than a reality.

So why do I talk about the benefits of failure? Simply because failure meant a stripping away of the inessential. I stopped pretending to myself that I was anything other than what I was, and began to direct all my energy into finishing the only work that mattered to me. Had I really succeeded at anything else, I might never have found the determination to succeed in the one arena I believed I truly belonged. I was set free, because my greatest fear had been realized, and I was still alive, and I still had a daughter whom I adored, and I had an old typewriter and a big idea. And so rock bottom became the solid foundation on which I rebuilt my life.

You might never fail on the scale I did, but some failure in life is inevitable. It is impossible to live without failing at something, unless you live so cautiously that you might as well not have lived at all – in which case, you fail by default.

Failure gave me an inner security that I had never attained by passing examinations. Failure taught me things about myself that I could have learned no other way. I discovered that I had a strong will, and more discipline than I had suspected; I also found out that I had friends whose value was truly above the price of rubies.

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The knowledge that you have emerged wiser and stronger from setbacks means that you are, ever after, secure in your ability to survive. You will never truly know yourself, or the strength of your relationships, until both have been tested by adversity. Such knowledge is a true gift, for all that it is painfully won, and it has been worth more than any qualification I ever earned.

So given a Time Turner, I would tell my 21-year-old self that personal happiness lies in knowing that life is not a check-list of acquisition or achievement. Your qualifications, your CV, are not your life, though you will meet many people of my age and older who confuse the two. Life is difficult, and complicated, and beyond anyone's total control, and the humility to know that will enable you to survive its vicissitudes.

Now you might think that I chose my second theme, the importance of imagination, because of the part it played in rebuilding my life, but that is not wholly so. Though I personally will defend the value of bedtime stories to my last gasp, I have learned to value imagination in a much broader sense. Imagination is not only the uniquely human capacity to envision that which is not, and therefore the fount of all invention and innovation. In its arguably most transformative and revelatory capacity, it is the power that enables us to empathize with humans whose experiences we have never shared.

One of the greatest formative experiences of my life preceded Harry Potter, though it informed much of what I subsequently wrote in those books. This revelation came in the form of one of my earliest day jobs. Though I was sloping off to write stories during

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my lunch hours, I paid the rent in my early 20s by working at the African research department at Amnesty International's headquarters in London.

There in my little office I read hastily scribbled letters smuggled out of totalitarian regimes by men and women who were risking imprisonment to inform the outside world of what was happening to them. I saw photographs of those who had disappeared without trace, sent to Amnesty by their desperate families and friends. I read the testimony of torture victims and saw pictures of their injuries. I opened handwritten, eye-witness accounts of summary trials and executions, of kidnappings and rapes.

Many of my co-workers were ex-political prisoners, people who had been displaced from their homes, or fled into exile, because they had the temerity to speak against their governments. Visitors to our offices included those who had come to give information, or to try and find out what had happened to those they had left behind.

I shall never forget the African torture victim, a young man no older than I was at the time, who had become mentally ill after all he had endured in his homeland. He trembled uncontrollably as he spoke into a video camera about the brutality inflicted upon him. He was a foot taller than I was, and seemed as fragile as a child. I was given the job of escorting him back to the Underground Station afterwards, and this man whose life had been shattered by cruelty took my hand with exquisite courtesy, and wished me future happiness.

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And as long as I live I shall remember walking along an empty corridor and suddenly hearing, from behind a closed door, a scream of pain and horror such as I have never heard since. The door opened, and the researcher poked out her head and told me to run and make a hot drink for the young man sitting with her. She had just had to give him the news that in retaliation for his own outspokenness against his country's regime, his mother had been seized and executed.

Every day of my working week in my early 20s I was reminded how incredibly fortunate I was, to live in a country with a democratically elected government, where legal representation and a public trial were the rights of everyone.

Every day, I saw more evidence about the evils humankind will inflict on their fellow humans, to gain or maintain power. I began to have nightmares, literal nightmares, about some of the things I saw, heard, and read.

And yet I also learned more about human goodness at Amnesty International than I had ever known before.

Amnesty mobilizes thousands of people who have never been tortured or imprisoned for their beliefs to act on behalf of those who have. The power of human empathy, leading to collective action, saves lives, and frees prisoners. Ordinary people, whose personal well-being and security are assured, join together in huge numbers to save people they do not know, and will never meet. My small participation in that process was one of the most humbling and inspiring experiences of my life.

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Unlike any other creature on this planet, humans can learn and understand, without having experienced. They can think themselves into other people's places.

Of course, this is a power, like my brand of fictional magic, that is morally neutral. One might use such an ability to manipulate, or control, just as much as to understand or sympathize.

And many prefer not to exercise their imaginations at all. They choose to remain comfortably within the bounds of their own experience, never troubling to wonder how it would feel to have been born other than they are. They can refuse to hear screams or to peer inside cages; they can close their minds and hearts to any suffering that does not touch them personally; they can refuse to know.

I might be tempted to envy people who can live that way, except that I do not think they have any fewer nightmares than I do. Choosing to live in narrow spaces leads to a form of mental agoraphobia, and that brings its own terrors. I think the wilfully unimaginative see more monsters. They are often more afraid.

What is more, those who choose not to empathize enable real monsters. For without ever committing an act of outright evil ourselves, we collude with it, through our own apathy.

One of the many things I learned at the end of that Classics corridor down which I ventured at the age of 18, in search of something I could not then define, was this, written by the Greek author Plutarch: What we achieve inwardly will change outer reality.

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That is an astonishing statement and yet proven a thousand times every day of our lives. It expresses, in part, our inescapable connection with the outside world, the fact that we touch other people's lives simply by existing.

But how much more are you, Harvard graduates of 2008, likely to touch other people's lives? Your intelligence, your capacity for hard work, the education you have earned and received, give you unique status, and unique responsibilities. Even your nationality sets you apart. The great majority of you belong to the world's only remaining superpower. The way you vote, the way you live, the way you protest, the pressure you bring to bear on your government, has an impact way beyond your borders. That is your privilege, and your burden.

If you choose to use your status and influence to raise your voice on behalf of those who have no voice; if you choose to identify not only with the powerful, but with the powerless; if you retain the ability to imagine yourself into the lives of those who do not have your advantages, then it will not only be your proud families who celebrate your existence, but thousands and millions of people whose reality you have helped change. We do not need magic to change the world, we carry all the power we need inside ourselves already: we have the power to imagine better.

I am nearly finished. I have one last hope for you, which is something that I already had at 21. The friends with whom I sat on graduation day have been my friends for life. They are my children's godparents, the people to whom I've been able to turn in times of trouble, people who have been kind enough not to sue me

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when I took their names for Death Eaters. At our graduation we were bound by enormous affection, by our shared experience of a time that could never come again, and, of course, by the knowledge that we held certain photographic evidence that would be exceptionally valuable if any of us ran for Prime Minister.

So today, I wish you nothing better than similar friendships. And tomorrow, I hope that even if you remember not a single word of mine, you remember those of Seneca, another of those old Romans I met when I fled down the Classics corridor, in retreat from career ladders, in search of ancient wisdom:

As is a tale, so is life: not how long it is, but how good it is, is what matters.

I wish you all very good lives.

The bottom line: Most successful people know the true difference between Ups and Downs. They do not worry, even if they lost everything that they acquired over the years. They use the same magic formula and get everything back, and even receive much bigger bonuses than before, in a lesser amount of time. Do not expect to be successful in all your efforts the first time. Consider failure as a small memory and success as the reality. Whatever you lose today should be considered an investment towards achieving your next bigger goal. Sometimes you win, sometimes you learn. Failure does not exist in the real world. Failure is an illusion.

GREATEST FAILURES OF ICONS

If you never failed, you never succeeded. There are a great number of failures behind every successful person. I would like to share some of the famous failures of icons in history. Each time you face any failure or disappointing event or undesirable outcome, never forget some of these famous failures:

Thomas Edison

Thomas Edison had a teacher who told him he was "too stupid to learn anything." His teacher suggested he go into a field where he might succeed, based less on intelligence and more on his pleasant personality. When he set out on his own, he tried more than 9,000 experiments before he created the first successful light bulb. If Edison had quit after five attempts, or even 500 attempts, you might still be reading by gas or candlelight. Edison developed many devices, which greatly influenced life in the 20th century. Edison is considered one of the most prolific inventors in history, holding 1,093 U.S patents to his name.

Walt Disney

Disney started his own business from his home garage and his very first cartoon production went bankrupt. Disney had once been fired by a newspaper editor who told him "he had no good ideas in film production." Walt Disney was reportedly turned down by 321 banks before he got the funding he needed to build Disneyland.

One Book for Life Success

Walt Disney was an American film producer, director, screenwriter, voice actor, and animator. One of the most well-known motion picture producers in the world, Disney founded a production company, Walt Disney, one of the largest productions houses today.

Frederick W. Smith

He received a nearly failing grade for a business idea he presented to his business management class while studying at Yale University. He believed parcels could be delivered overnight at a profit using a private airline system with a centralized hub. Hence the idea of FedEx was born. Smith succeeded in raising the money to start his business, but on Federal Express's first night of operation, the business shipped only 186 packages. In the first three months, Federal Express lost more than \$30 million, and drivers often had to pay for gas out of their own pockets. On the verge of declaring bankruptcy, Smith renegotiated his bank loans and kept his fledgling business going. The rest is history.

Soichiro Honda

Soichiro Honda was turned down by Toyota Motor Corporation during a job interview as an "engineer." He continued to be jobless until his neighbors started buying his "home-made scooters." Subsequently, he set out on his own to start his own company, Honda. Today, the company has grown to become the world's largest motorcycle manufacturer and one of the most profitable automakers.

Steven Spielberg

During his childhood, Spielberg dropped out of junior high school. He was persuaded to come back and was placed in a learning-disabled class. He only lasted a month and then dropped out of

Greatest Failures of Icons

school. He was rejected three times from UCLA film school because of his poor grades. Steven Spielberg is an American film director. He has won three Academy Awards and ranks among the most successful filmmakers in history. Most of all, Spielberg was recognized as the financially most successful motion picture director of all time.

Oprah Winfrey

Oprah Winfrey was not born with a silver spoon in her mouth. In fact, Oprah Winfrey's childhood began in poverty in Mississippi. She began her television career as a news anchor in Baltimore, but she was fired because executives thought she did not project herself as a hard-nosed reporter. And she had a weight problem. Winfrey accepted a job at AM Chicago and took it from the bottom of the ratings to the top. A year later, the show renamed as—The Oprah Winfrey Show. The rest is history. Today Winfrey's television talk show is the highest-rated in television history.

Albert Einstein

Albert Einstein was four years old before he could speak. He did not read until he was seven, and his poor performance in elementary school caused many people to suspect he was mentally retarded. When the teachers called on him, the boy was mouthing the words himself before slowly uttering them aloud. The teacher told him that he would not become anybody in life. The boy went on to revolutionize modern physics when he proposed the Theory of Relativity. In 1921, he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physics.

One Book for Life Success

Alexander Graham Bell

When he invented a communication machine in 1876, it did not ring off the hook with calls from potential backers. After making a demonstration call, President Rutherford Hayes said, "That's an amazing invention, but who would ever want to see one of them?" Today, we cannot imagine a world without telephones.

Dhirubhai Ambani

Dhirubhai Ambani (Indian rags-to-riches business tycoon) was born at Kukaswada near Chorwad, state of Gujarat, India. He chose work, which used his physical ability to the maximum rather than mugging up school lessons. When his mother once asked Dhirubhai and his brother to help his father by earning money, he angrily replied, "Why do you keep screaming for money? I will make heaps of money one day." During weekends, he began setting up onion/potato fries stalls at village fairs and made extra money, which he gave to his mother. When he was 16-years-old, he moved to Aden, Yemen. He worked with A. Besse & Co. for a salary of 300 Rupees (US\$6). Dhirubhai Ambani eventually returned to India and started "Majin" in partnership with Champaklal Damani, his second cousin, who used to be with him in Aden, Yemen. Dhirubhai had started the business with 15,000 Rupees (US\$300). He courted controversy all throughout his life. A lot of his competitors who were not able to digest his personal growth tried to stop him in every move he made. He overcame tons of challenges with his courageous nature during his lifetime. He took his company (Reliance) public in 1977. He once had a major stroke in February 1986 that kept his right hand paralyzed. He died on July 6, 2002. By 2007, the combined fortune of the family (sons Mukesh Am-

Greatest Failures of Icons

bani and Anil Ambani) was over \$60 billion dollars, making the Ambanis the richest family in the world.

Sam Walton

Sam Walton was raised in Missouri where he had his first retailing experience in his father's store while attending school. After 17 years of operating franchise retail stores, he approached the company's executives about starting a new chain of discount stores. The executives rejected the idea and told him that discount stores would not last very long. He strongly believed in his idea, and opened the first Wal-Mart in Rogers, Arkansas, in 1962. Wal-Mart specialized in name brands at low prices and even Sam Walton was surprised at its success. Soon a chain of stores spread across America, with Wal-Mart becoming the world's largest retailer in 1991 with 1,700 stores and a multibillion-dollar business. As of 2008, Wal-Mart Stores, Inc. serves customers and club members more than 200 million times per week at more than 8,000 retail units.

Michael Jordan:

After being cut from his high school basketball team, a young Michael Jordan went home and cried in the privacy of his bedroom. But Jordan didn't let this early-in-life setback stop him from playing the game and the basketball superstar has stated, "I have missed more than 9,000 shots in my career. I have lost almost 300 games. On 26 occasions I have been entrusted to take the game winning shot, and I missed. I have failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed."

Narendra Modi:

A humble chai-vendor, embroiled in one of the most blood-bathed controversies in the country is today the Prime Minister. Does success need any other definition? When Modi took on the reigns of Gujarat as the Chief Minister from Keshubhai Patel, his rise was met with opposition from many within the party. Modi's lack of experience was one of the major concerns. However, Modi stood his ground and became Gujarat's CM. As the CM, he veered from RSS's ideologies and supported privatization and small government. But perhaps, his true test came in the form of the Godhra violence. While many still blame him for the riots, his name was cleared and he went to become one of the most powerful men in the country.

Steve Jobs:

Steve Jobs was a college dropout, a fired tech executive and an unsuccessful businessman. At 30-years-old he was left devastated after being unceremoniously removed from the company he founded. In a 2005 commencement speech at Stanford University, Jobs explained, "I didn't see it then, but it turned out that getting fired from Apple was the best thing that could have ever happened to me. The heaviness of being successful was replaced by the lightness of being a beginner again, less sure about everything. It freed me to enter one of the most creative periods of my life."

After his return to Apple, Jobs created several iconic products, including the iPod, iPhone and iPad, which have changed the face of consumer technology forever. And Jobs became one of the richest men in the world.

Shiv Khera:

Shiv khera is an Indian author of self-help books and activist. In his early years, he worked as a car washer, a life insurance agent, and a franchise operator. His struggling life took a winning direction when he attended a lecture by Norman Vincent Peale. The motivational teachings of Norman Vincent changed his life forever and he moved forward in his success path. He launched a movement against caste-based reservation in India and found an organization called Country First Foundation whose mission is to ensure freedom through education and justice.

He has authored several bestsellers that have an enthusiastic reader base, not only in the country but worldwide. One of his books "Freedom Is Not Free" was on the stands. Though this book fell into the controversy of plagiarism, the charges were dropped and the book turned into a best seller.

Note: Last 4 icons are taken from: <http://www.indiatimes.com/lifestyle/self/9-indian-failures-who-became-inspirational-success-stories-227984.html> retrieved on 28th April, 2015.

