

Thinking Success

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“Remember there are other people out there succeeding everyday. There is nothing that separates them from you. You can succeed in anything you want.”

To Your Success,
Mark Warren

Success: 5 Secrets to Continued Success

Develop these 5 attributes of a successful person, and you will find yourself moving quickly toward your goals in life!

- **Thick Skin:** you cannot be easily offended or hurt if you want to be successful. There will always be people who are jealous or envious or out to bring someone else down—you must develop a way to see past that and let it roll off your back, like “water off a duck’s back.”

Ducks have feathers that are tight and their density act like oil—it keeps the duck dry and warm. So when water (cold or otherwise) lands on the back of a duck, it simply rolls off. Let criticism roll off your back in a similar manner—because if you are going to be successful, you will have your share of criticism. Count on it.

- **Obedience:** although this might seem strange to talk about to adults and not children, it is important to consider that in order to be a leader, you must first learn how to obey a leader. You must learn the principle of loyalty to a leader if you want to lead others.

Once you have learned how to obey and to follow directions, you can lead others and understand what commands and orders do for an organization and an individual. Consider this: 175 of the CEOs of Fortune 500 companies are former US Marines, and 27 US Presidents served in the military.

- **Courage:** bravery is not courage, but you cannot have courage without being brave. Courage is the moral fortitude to stand up for your character (touched on in the last article) and to do the right thing—even in the face of adversity.

When you have courage, you follow through on your vision. It’s on display every day and only the courageous have the ability to get the most out of life. When you have the strength of your conviction, find the courage to put it in to action. You won’t be sorry you did.

- **Intolerance:** not exactly what you might expect to find in an article about success, but each of us must be intolerant of any number of things: intolerant of abuse, of injustice, of the things that you know are immoral, unethical, or illegal. If there’s anything in this world you should be intolerant of, those are some of them. I hope you are an intolerant person—in the right way.

- Sense of Humour: if you don't have a sense of humour, you will fall flat on your face and never be someone who succeeds. A good portion of the road we walk to success is filled with blockades and potholes. If you come up against one and go down, you must have the ability to laugh at the situation and yourself. If you don't, you will be angry and bitter about your misfortune and never move past it. Laugh at yourself and what you run up against and you'll find your climb to the top is quicker and more enjoyable than you thought it would be.

Success: Increasing Creativity

As you ponder your goal and determine the best course to achieve it, you will need some creative ways of thinking and facing challenges that will arise. The most creative-thinkers out there will encourage you to think outside your box and to consider even the wildest of ideas.

One way to do this is to “Wild Mind Brainstorm.” Wild-Mind is done by having a piece of paper and writing down EVERY idea that occurs to you about the situation you're facing. Do NOT evaluate your ideas—just write them down. Do NOT consider something “too silly” or “too dumb” to write down—just write it down!

Evaluate your ideas in a few days, but not when you're writing them down. Consider these ideas much like a newborn baby. You must cradle that baby and hold it lovingly and help it grow to a responsible adult. The same goes for your new ideas. You might find that one idea you would consider to be the “silliest” turns out to be your key for unlocking the door you're facing.

Remember the guy who came up with the idea for Post-It Notes? The adhesive was discovered long before they found a use for it—and the person who said, “Let's make some note pads that are small and can be easily removed,” was laughed at. But now—do you even see ONE office without Post-Its around? I have at least 6 pads of Post-Its in my desk drawer alone. There's one in the kitchen, and one in the car.

Another way to increase your creativity is to be around others who are creative. Proverbs 27:17 says, “As iron sharpens iron, so people can improve each other.” If you hobnob with those who are known for creativity, it will wear off on you. And you will find new ways of looking at things and thinking about situations, as well.

You can find audio-books and speeches that will stir up your creative juices as well. Professional speakers and those who have “been there, done that” often hit the speaking-circuit and can pump fresh ideas and life in your goal and the ways you attain those goals.

I prefer removing myself from the goal-achieving mode and moving to a truly creative outlet—the arts. You may not consider yourself artsy or think you have any ability in this realm, but it's worth taking a lump of clay (or Play-Doh) and working with it.

You may find, as I do, that when I'm working on a hobby that I truly love, I free up a portion of my brain that was engaged in my problem-solving. When that happens, I typically find a potential solution to my dilemma. Artistic creativity often sparks other forms of creative-thinking, as it engages a different area of the brain than what we're used to using. Pick up a paintbrush, a pencil, arrange some flowers, or begin a needlework project. You may find in colour and artistry you have a new lease on what you're doing!

Success: The Right Mental Attitude

You must develop the right mental attitude on your road to success. Without being overly simplistic, think of "The Little Train Who Could." Instead of having an "I Can't" attitude, replace it with an "I Can!" attitude.

A positive outlook is necessary to see change coming, to be able to work with the change, and to make the most of whatever change comes down the pike in your life. If you expect change (but not from a vending machine!), you'll be in a better position to accept it and make the most of it.

A fabulous book regarding change and positive attitude is "Who Moved My Cheese?" by Spencer Johnson, MD.

In order to gain right thinking (being positive), you must decide to look at the bright side of life. Instead of seeing the cloud, see the silver lining in the cloud. Instead of seeing downsizing as a horrible thing that will plummet you in to bankruptcy and homelessness, consider it an opportunity to look for a better job and a chance to try new skills and career paths that you wouldn't have had the opportunity to try before. Don't be pollyannaish, but do consider all sides of a situation before you adopt a negative perspective.

In order to maintain a positive outlook, you must also be realistic. For example, if you've gained 30 pounds in the last 3 years, it would be highly unrealistic to expect to drop those 30 pounds in 3 weeks. If you take an honest and realistic assessment of your skills and goals, you're much more likely to find success in whatever field or career best suits you.

Maintain a cautious optimism as you seek success, not be blindly optimistic about every situation. There are some situations in which positive thinking cannot overcome the situation you're faced with.

Consider Tom Brady, quarterback for the New England Patriots; he's a man who's in excellent shape. But if he decided to trade in his helmet and pads for ballet toe shoes, he likely wouldn't make it, despite his physique. Blind optimism also puts you at the mercy of con men and charlatans—your optimism must be tempered by context and relevance.

No matter what your abilities are (and they are fabulous!), using them realistically will get you much farther than not. Your right thinking, paired with your abilities, put you on a course for success—no matter what field you're in!

Success: 5 Top Tips of Successful

Incorporate these skills into your strategy for success and you'll move forward quicker than you ever dreamed!

- **Hustle:** generally, people who make it big have one thing in common—they are dissatisfied with the status quo. They will not take what is “common” or “expected” and let that define their lives—they move past it and excel. You must work hard and hustle.
- **Character:** someone coined the phrase, “character is what you do in the dark.” In other words, when no one is looking, will you behave differently than if someone was looking? If not, then you have character. If you are attacked, be tough—not hard. Don't be a pushover, but be compassionate, gentle, and flexible—especially on procedure (not principle).
- **Risk Taking:** this isn't gambling, it's a willingness to be bold, hearty, and to push forward. People who refuse to take risks are definitely going to lose. If you refuse a new promotion because you're not confident of your skills, you will likely be passed over when a different chance arrives.

Don't be afraid of rejection, just take it as part of life and you'll find there's nothing to be afraid of—especially in the word “no.” “No” is just another opportunity to find a way around an obstacle and to use creative problem-solving skills.

- **Time Management:** we all know that one minute has 60 seconds and that one hour has 60 minutes. One day has 24 hours, and one year has 365 days. But one year also has 525,600 minutes. We don't think about a year in such small increments, but maybe we should. We waste minutes as if they'll always be around, and the fact is that time wasted is time we can never get back. We might miss a deal or promotion of a lifetime by wasting just a few minutes.

Proper time management is essential as you climb to success. Continue to break goals down in to manageable chunks—do that with relation to your day

and the time you've been given. You'll accomplish far more this way and you won't regret using your time wisely.

- **Master Non-Verbal Communication:** it is said that our body language and facial expressions do much more communicating than our words will ever do. When the words that you speak don't match the expressions on your face or the stance of your body, you confuse the listener and muddle your message.

Be aware that when you try to "multi-task," you often end up short-changing something, and the last thing you want is to short-change people. Don't try to do too much at once—your willingness to do this tells people they aren't important, even if you're expressing your appreciation of their work and effort. Be aware of what message your body is sending off!

Success: It's All About Relationships

Once you know the formula to success, it's time to consider different avenues in which that formula should be put in to action. The main one you'll find in every area of your life is relationships.

Why relationships? Because we are human beings, designed to interact with other human beings. This, by default, entails relationships. And also by default, if you don't have appropriate skills to manage your relationships, you will fail miserably at whatever success you're aiming for.

The first relationship you must consider is the one you have with yourself. If you don't like yourself, chances are great you will project that dislike to others and your lack of self-appreciation will not propel you to success in any given field. The higher your integrity is, the more you will like yourself. The more you like yourself, the better your relationships will be with others—from the inside out.

Your family relationship is the next thing to examine. The most successful Harvard Business graduates (class of 1949, by percentages) had several things in common:

- They had wives who supported their work and endeavors; women who were intelligent and able to share ideas and be a sounding board
- They built their personal, family, and business lives on a foundation of integrity

Family relationships are extremely important as you consider your path to success. If you fail here, you will not succeed elsewhere—we've already covered that in depth.

Business relationships follow closely behind family relationships. They play a major role in the security and productivity of every individual involved in them, as well as the success and growth of the company.

You must also learn to manage your frustration as you deal with relationships. Because we are all human, we all have problem-areas and “sticking points” that will irritate and inflame others. If you can manage your frustration and turn a bad situation with an individual in to something you can learn from and make profitable, you will be that much farther ahead on your road to success.

Consider also, that the next person you meet is important. He or she might look like someone who cannot help you in your field, but then again, looks are deceiving. You never know when the person you assist might be able to assist you or report back to your boss what a great job you’re doing!

Summing up this section, you should be able to see how healthy family relationships, a willingness to go above & beyond at work, and an ability to consider the next person as important can have a monumental effect on your path to success. We cannot do it alone, and that mere fact means we must deal appropriately with people and relationships!

Success: The Right Philosophy

Why does it always come back to the ageless truths? Mostly because that which is truth is ageless and truth doesn’t change with the wind. “The Right Philosophy” can be defined by any number of phrases, but it always comes back to the “golden rule.” It’s re-phrased, but the essence is the same:

You can have whatever you want in life if you will just help others get what it is that they want.

This isn’t some pie-in-the-sky-feel-good theory, this is practical and will be strongly linked to your success, no matter what field you’re in. It shows that all aspects of success—business, personal, etc.—are linked together and will all have an impact on your financial success.

Everyone largely wants the same things in life; to be happy, healthy, to have at least some amount of prosperity, to be secure and have friends, to have a happy family life, to have peace, and to have hope.

Abraham Maslow called it the Hierarchy of Needs: our physiological needs are met, then we move on to the need for safety, then to the need for love, then on to the need for esteem, and finally what he called “self-actualization.” Fancy words to say that we all need the same things (the basic needs met) before we can achieve success, however it is that we define success.

No matter what your religious beliefs are, the golden rule is inherent in each religion; each just uses different words. The philosophy that you need to care for others (the “do unto others”) as you want to be cared for yourself (“as you would have others do unto you”) is at the heart of my phrase above—you will find success when you consider the needs of others as not only achievable, but something with which you can help.

When you do this, you not only set yourself to be assisted as you face needs in the future, but you also show others (and yourself!) that your own ambition hasn’t blinded you.

Remember: success doesn’t happen in the vacuum of work only. It’s something that touches every aspect of your life and the right philosophy will help get you there!

Success: Attitude –Positive!

In his book *The Winning Attitude*, John C. Maxwell, noted author and speaker tells us that attitude is:

- The “advance man” of our true selves
- Has inward roots but outward fruits
- Is our best friend or worst enemy
- Is more honest and more consistent than our words
- Is an outward look based on past experiences
- Is a think which draws people to us or repels them
- Is never content until it is expressed
- Is the librarian of our past
- Is the speaker of our present
- Is the prophet of our future

Your attitude, or your willingness to think positively, affects many people—from your family to the stranger you smile at in the grocery store. An optimist will see opportunity in difficulties, while a pessimist will see difficulty in opportunities.

You must choose which you will focus on: if you choose poorly, you will doom yourself to never achieving your goals and being successful. Count on that.

So how do you begin to think positively if you’re a natural pessimist? I don’t really believe there ARE natural pessimists, just people who have been taught how to consider the darkest side of every cloud.

You cannot change the fact that a problem exists, but you can do a lot to determine what opportunity is within that problem. Begin to see that problems are a fact of life and that your job is to find a way over, around, under, or through

them—as quickly as possible. When you're upbeat and consider how quickly a problem will be behind you, it's easy to be optimistic.

Cynicism is another killer when it comes to attitude. It's a cousin of pessimism—it considers everything suspect and everyone as having an ulterior motive. It never looks at someone handing you a piece of candy just to be nice, it always considers that there is a reason you're being handed the candy and the motivation of the person who's giving it.

Cynicism comes from having unrealistic expectations. Many people expect great and wonderful things to happen to them with little-to-no work on their parts. They expect things to fall from the sky in to their laps. When it doesn't happen as they expect, they become suspicious of others who have achieved success and ultimately, cynical.

You must harness the power of your thoughts and words when setting your course for success. Use positive affirmations daily: remind yourself that a stumbling block is temporary and that you will overcome it; admit to yourself that you are courageous and able to move on when others cannot; agree with your vision for your life and your goals.

As you discipline yourself to do this, you will find optimism and positive thinking chasing you down the street. And who couldn't use these two friends when we're aiming for success?

Success: Moving Past Fear

There are times when simply thinking positively won't move you past your fear and anxiety. There are times when simply plodding it out is the thing you must do.

The Evangelical speaker Joyce Meyer says, "If you're afraid to do it, just DO IT AFRAID." No one will blame you for being fearful—what you will be blamed for is letting that fear immobilize you. So no matter what it takes, keep moving.

Fear is much like a quagmire—it slurps at our feet and if we stand still long enough, it begins to suck us down. It's hard to get out of, but it is possible.

If you're stuck in fear as you shoot for success, there are several ways out:

- First, consider the source. Where did the fear come from? Have you been dwelling on the difficulties instead of the opportunities? Have you been listening to those who are cynics and pessimists, instead of coaching yourself

with positive words and people? If so, MOVE ON. GET AWAY from people and situations that drag you down.

- Second, take your checklist and note what you HAVE accomplished. Look at your list of goals and the baby steps you're taking to get there, and on a separate sheet of paper (or a separate document in your computer), begin to list everything you have accomplished. This will begin to empower you to move on and leave the fear behind.
- Third, take stock of your talents and skills. Fear often tells us that we "don't have what it takes..." Show fear as the liar it is: list your skills, all your positive attributes. Then look at the problem again, after you have a new appreciation for your God-given talents and abilities.
- Fourth, don't underestimate the power of prayer. Regardless of your spiritual beliefs, there is an amazing power that comes from releasing your fear to a God Who loves you and is looking out for you. Don't bottle the fear up—let it go. You don't need it anyhow!
- Finally, remember this acronym when facing fear:
 - o F= False
 - o E= Evidence
 - o A=Appearing
 - o R=Real

For that's really what fear is—it is an unrealistic look (false look) at something and attempting to make you believe it (appearing to be real).

Once you know these things, you'll be able to move past your fear and on to the next step you need to be successful!

Success: The Right Skills

Attitude is incredibly important as you consider the topic of success. But even the most enthusiastic and overtly positive individual selling appliances, for example, will fall short of his/her goal of success if s/he isn't educated about what is being sold and obtains the right skills.

You don't have to have a Master's degree in order to be successful—you don't even have to have a Bachelor's degree! Some of the least-successful people I know have advanced degrees, but the education does them no good, as their attitude and aptitude are poor.

It doesn't matter if you want to be a college president or an auto mechanic—your educational needs are specific. If you have advanced degrees and no ability to

educate, inform, and encourage others, you're not likely to end up as a college or university president. Similarly, if you are an auto mechanic who doesn't have the latest education about newer cars and all of the computerized systems in them, you won't reach the top of your potential and be successful in your field.

There are some fields in which education isn't particularly esteemed—professional sports is one of them. Young athletes are told to have an education “in case you get hurt,” but most college football players, for example, eschew their senior year (and graduation) for the NFL draft.

But consider a football player who majored in business during college (and graduated) and bettered himself with the specific-knowledge of retail sport-related equipment. He would be in a much better place for success both in the NFL and in the lucrative world of celebrity-endorsements than if he'd had underwater basket-weaving for a major.

Additionally, if he was injured on the field and found retirement from professional football imminent, he not only has something to fall back on, but he has the trade of his name as he considers launching a piece of retail-sport equipment or a line of retail stores.

Education for a particular skill set is preceded by motivation. If you desire to succeed in your chosen field, you will pursue the education necessary to do so. That ties in to your attitude. If you excel at your chosen field and can display a great grasp of the skill set necessary in your line of work, you WILL succeed, because competition for good-paying, skilled jobs continues on a downward slope.

Success: Benchmarks of Success

Look for these things and consider them well as you walk your road to success:

- Know that Failure is Just an Event. We talked about this at length previously, but it bears repeating. If you fail, it doesn't define you—it just puts you back at 'square one' with your idea and plan.

- Consider Your Responsibilities Before Your Rights. Our American culture drums it in to us that we must “have it now,” and many of us comply. You are successful when you are mature enough to delay gratification and move your focus from your “rights” to your “responsibilities.”

- Fill Up on Faith, Hope, & Love. Your outlook determines your output, and your output determines your outcome. Choose to be optimistic, to read uplifting books, to listen to inspirational speakers. When you put faith, hope, and love in your mind and heart, you're able to overcome adversity and live free from anger, greed, guilt, and envy.

- Make Friends with Your Past—and then Look Ahead. You can use your past as a stepping stone to your future or you can let it cripple you. Either way, it's your choice. When you can make friends with your past, be focused on the present, and have a bright opinion of your future, you have succeeded, no matter what your goal is.

- Know that Success Doesn't Make You. Along with the idea above, understanding that a win doesn't make you and a loss doesn't break you. If you win, you'll still have more wins to make before you "arrive," and if you lose, you'll have more opportunities to turn that around in the future.

- Stand up for Morality. If you take a stand for what is right, even if it's unpopular or costs you your job, you are successful. There is no disputing this fact.

- Be a "Servant Friend." Success isn't defined by how many people wait on your every whim or need; it's defined by how many people you can help or serve while you achieve your goals. If you can help others as you climb, you'll learn more and climb quicker. A servant's heart is the true hallmark of a leader and shows the character of the person in the position of leadership.

Success: Overcoming Anxiety

Anxiety is the result of either a) not believing you can achieve your goals successfully or b) having a fear of not achieving your goals. Either can stop you in your tracks when it comes to being successful.

Worrying is not anxiety, but it can accompany being anxious. Ultimately, what anxiety does as well is distracts you from your stated goal.

You must plot your course for success. If you have your goals well-defined and your "insurance policies" in place (such as friends who can encourage you, experts in your chosen field who can guide you, etc.), anxiety and worry don't have much room to take root. If you are a negative person, however, you can give birth to these twins without much effort.

If you don't believe in your goals or don't believe you can achieve them, your attitude will determine your level of success. And that's where worry and anxiety come in to roost.

Your first step in overcoming anxiety is to make sure you have your goals written down—or at least, entered in a PDA where you can easily retrieve them and view them regularly. If you can see your goals and the small steps you'll take to achieve them (and have a check-mark system to chart your progress), pull it out and read over it when you begin to feel anxious.

The second step is to correct your attitude. If you dwell in the “I can't” and “I'll never,” you're right—you can't and you'll never. Instead, you need to dismiss those thoughts and consider what you have already accomplished and what next goal your series of baby steps will achieve. We go back to the truth “attitude is everything.”

Henry Ford famously said, “Either you think you can or you think you can't. Either way, you're right.” On this point, I think he was correct. As an inventor, he had the opportunity to dwell on all the times his Quadricycle prototypes failed. Instead, he moved on, learning from the failures and mistakes. He didn't let a bad prototype stand in his way of succeeding. He overcame any anxiety and worry with positive attitude and a gritty determination.

The final step to overcoming anxiety is to have those around you who can encourage you. We talked about this when discussing setting your goals and making sure that you have the appropriate support system around you. Anxiety and worry rarely come to a party of more than one—they like to torment individuals. Two or three people have the benefit of seeing different angles of a challenge and being positive about the outcome. So if you find yourself worrying or anxious, tap your support system. Don't do it at 3:00 in the morning (your support system won't be very supportive at that hour!), but do it as soon as it's practical. You'll thank yourself and continue on towards your goal.

The Success Zone

I'm sure you've heard the expression “in the zone,” particularly as it applies to athletes or others who are unflappable as they eye the goal. Sometimes you can be in the zone regarding your success and nothing gets in your way; other times you can do everything right and find that whatever can go wrong, will. Here are thoughts on building the habit of success and getting “in the zone.”

- Achieve Success by Expecting It

You must understand that the path from where you are to where you want to be is not always smooth or straight. When you hit those inevitable bumps in the road, your character, commitment, and attitude will help get you “in the zone” or at least, keep you there.

□ Success Breeds Success

“Mo.” That shortened word of “mo” speaks of momentum—the ability to continually succeed and build on the past successes you’ve had. Most people understand that when they have one (big or small) success, it encourages them and makes them believe they can do anything. Salespeople know it, and they strive for it.

When you’ve unlocked the key to your success (whatever that may be), you’ll find your “mo” and that nothing can get in your way.

□ Choosing Success

We all understand that we can choose to be happy or miserable, and that our choices will affect our lives for the better or worse. When you opt to be happy, you choose to identify with the accomplishments in life that exude who you are and who you have striven to be.

You can choose to look on the positive side, just as you can choose success. Remember, success is more than just wealth. Choose the positive side of things and you choose to remember and live your successes, not your failures.

□ Experts Don’t Know Everything

If you have a plan that seems to go against all the conventional wisdom and yet you know in your soul that this WILL work, then follow your gut instincts. The “experts” are wrong all the time—from medical experts who predict incorrectly to future-trending experts who foretell the wrong trends and costs corporations millions.

More than 100 years ago, someone wanted to close down the US Patent office because he thought everything that could be invented had been and that no one would need to patent anything else, ever. So don’t listen to the nay sayers and “experts”—sometimes they are dead wrong!

Success: Character and Integrity

Without character, the puzzle of achieving success falls apart. It is most important of all pieces to life’s puzzle. Without character, you can make money.

But it will be worthless to you and to those around you. Look out in the world today: drug dealers and con artists have money—but they lack character.

If you go to all the work of achieving success, you don't want to mar it with a lack of character that will make people pity you as you age and become less than you were intended to be.

Character equals integrity. Integrity is doing the right thing all the time, even when no one else is watching. You don't have anything to fear when your integrity is intact, because you have nothing to hide. You experience no guilt and no fear. And without those two traveling companions, it's much easier to climb higher and farther, faster!

What does this mean in a practical sense? It means that you will put the right philosophy (the golden rule) in to practice in all that you do. You will not step on someone else to climb the corporate ladder; you will not stack bodies in order to reach the CEO position that you desire. You will treat people with respect, honesty, and trust. You will behave towards others how you want (and expect) them to behave towards you.

You will be the model of “doing the right thing” in your office, even if it isn't appreciated or understood. Chances are very good that if you're the only one doing the right thing, you won't last where you are, but you will find something better where your integrity is appreciated and applauded.

Character realizes that the most important things in life are not office- or work-based. They are family and a sense of responsibility to that family. Character will not sacrifice your family on the altar of “I've got to finish this project,” nor will it tell you children, “Maybe next time, hon,” when asked to play catch.

Your character will shine through as you put your family before your work, as you purposefully schedule time with them (and then keep those appointments you put in your planner), as you “date” your spouse and remember why it is you got married in the first place, and as you set an example that your spouse and children can be proud of.

The most important thing to remember as you consider character is that your children will grow up to be just like you. John Maxwell once said, “We teach what we know; we reproduce who we are.” So as a person who is full of integrity and character, you will reproduce those same traits in your children as you climb towards success in your life. And isn't that really what it's all about, anyhow?

Success: Recovering From Failure

Okay, so you've been giving it your all. Well, maybe not your *all*, but a good portion of your all. And you're not seeing any progress. So now what? Are you doomed to failure and never to succeed? No! Keep reading.

One thing that you need to understand is that failure is an event, not a person. It doesn't define you as a "loser" for the rest of your life—unless you let it. Failure happens to you—it isn't who you are. You're not a victim, but it also doesn't define you. So when it happens (notice I didn't say "if"), pick yourself up and get ready for the next event in your life.

You must adjust your attitude as you recuperate from a failure. You will rise to your own expectations. Psychologists call this a "self-fulfilling prophecy," and we are suckers to believe our own words. So adjust your attitude to the positive side of things.

Remember the guy who came up with the brilliant idea to change Coke? Back in the 80s (for those of you who were mere babes during that decade), someone had a stroke of genius—or so he thought. The Coca Cola company decided to compete more with Pepsi, and changed the formulation of their signature product—Coke.

They called it "The New Coke." It bombed. No one enjoyed the new taste and the calls were immediate to bring back "the old Coke." After a few months of hemming and hawing, Coca Cola executives brought back the original formula of Coke and ditched the new stuff—and its creator.

So what happened to the guy whose idea this was? He left Coca Cola and began to look for new work. The trouble was, his name was well known in the business community and everyone connected him to the failure that New Coke was. He finally landed an interview in which he got a fair shake: the interviewer asked what he had learned through the problems the New Coke had created.

Naturally, he indicated that he had many lessons learned from the fiasco. He didn't let failure define him, and he ended up landing the job for which he was interviewing. Good for him, right? But good for the company that hired him, too. They were willing to take a chance on a creative risk-taker who had a very public failure on his record.

Many of those who are considered to be "successful" have had failures dot their lives. Rush Limbaugh, the king of daytime talk radio, was fired multiple times from different radio jobs. He also filed for bankruptcy—twice. So you can see how Limbaugh didn't permit failure to define him. Those failures were events from which he recovered and moved on. And you should take the same tact when confronted with something that didn't turn out like you hoped it would.

Success: Time Out to Reflect and Assess

At some point on your road to your goals, you'll need to take some time to reflect and assess where you are, where you've been, and how this is affecting where you want to go.

One way you can determine how you're doing and where you've been is to journal. I personally am not a journaler, nor do I think everyone needs to be. But journaling is a great way to track your progress. If you feel intimidated by a blank book that's sold as a "journal," blog it. Blogging is a good way to put your thoughts down and out there in cyberspace.

Or choose an audio-method: speak in to a tape recorder. If, like me, you're not a journaler, keep track of your progress and setbacks in the form of check-marks or some other recording-method.

I personally like to reassess after achieving some part of my goal. There is usually a natural denouement that comes with an accomplishment—a little bit of "time off," as it were. I use that time to consider what I've finished and how it fits in to my goals and success.

Another time to reflect and consider is when you've hit a stumbling block. As you look at the obstacle in front of you, try to figure out where it came from and why you might not have seen it before you tripped over it.

If you have strayed off-course and found this boulder that way, this is the time to determine that. If you've lost sight of your values, you may have found this problem as a result of that. Reassess now and get back on track. Don't forget your key value of integrity and realize that integrity is the most important thing as you pursue success.

Finally, use reflection time to re-evaluate your goals. Have your goals changed a bit since you wrote them down?

An example is a goal to pursue your doctoral degree and defend your thesis within 3 years of starting your program. If you were single when you started your program and got married during your education, you might find that your timeline is less important now than it was 2 years ago. You might find that if you take an extra year to defend your thesis, you'll have a richer, more productive document to defend, as your spouse may be able to help you consider things you hadn't seen before.

Regardless of how you assess and consider your goals and your path to success, it's important that you do. Everyone needs tweaking along the way, and that also applies to the goals we set for ourselves.

Success: What it Is & Isn't

Success is defined in different ways by different people, but let's talk about what most people agree "success" looks like.

- Success Is: knowing you did a good job during your day and had positive interactions with other people
- Success Is: looking forward to going home to your family and sharing yourself with them
- Success Is: knowing you have enough funds to pay this month's bills and the bills that will arise in the future
- Success Is: knowing that your spiritual life is in order and that you have somewhere to turn when you hit a bump in the road
- Success Is: having hobbies that you enjoy and having the time to work at them
- Success Isn't: putting your work ahead of your career
- Success Isn't: running home and then hiding from your family because you've "had a hard day"
- Success Isn't: having all the money in the world and then trying to figure out how to amass even more
- Success Isn't: going to a worship service and creating your "to-do" list during it
- Success Isn't: burning the candle at both ends, never having time to play or relax

In short, success is not always monetarily-related; you aren't deemed "un-successful" if you don't earn a six-figure salary. Success is more than moving up a corporate ladder and it touches more than just your career. It affects your marriage and family, your home life (finances, etc.), your spiritual life, and more.

Being successful is a balancing act. One isn't considered successful in life if s/he climbs the corporate ladder but has a home- or family-life that is in shambles. One isn't considered "successful" if s/he earns plenty of money to retire on, anticipating spending that retirement with family, only to find that his/her children

are gone and disinterested in any family relationships by the time retirement is possible.

So is there one formula to be successful? I think there is, and the components are: positive thinking, the right skill set, the right philosophy, having direction, and having character. All of these things make up a formula for success, and each of these things, if left out of the formula, will cause an individual to lack success in life.

Learn how to think “success” so that you are successful at whatever you choose to do.

Success: Setting Goals

“Genius” has been described as the “ability to focus on one thing at a time.” Many people who are “geniuses” are so not only because they have a high intellect, but because they are a gift of being able to focus on the objective or goal at hand.

This same focus must come in to play when determining what your goals are in relation to success. You need to learn to work towards one major objective and juggle a few short- and mid-range goals at the same time.

One way to determine what your direction is (and ultimately your goals are) is to do a check-up. I suggest listing 7 categories: Financial; Career, Family, Personal, Spiritual, Mental, & Physical. Rank your goals in these categories and how you’re doing. This will illustrate to you where you are and where you’d like to be and exactly how balanced you are as you move about your process.

- o Set goals that are smart. Big goals must be broken down in to manageable pieces. Don’t set more than 4 goals to work on during a single day. Seek divine guidance and direction on each goal.
- o Then identify what the pay-off is when you achieve your goal. Nebulous rewards don’t motivate people to achieve much.
- o List the obstacles that stand between you and your goals. If you’re not aware of potential problems, you’ll be side-tracked when they arise and lose sight of your objective.
- o Have someone in your corner who can dispense counsel & guidance.
- o Think about who can help you achieve your goal. Identify friends who can be encouragers and who can help keep you motivated and on-track.

- o List the skills and knowledge required to attain your goal
- o Develop a plan of action to achieve your goal
- o Set a deadline for achievement. It's hard to achieve something that has no ending date.

As you consider your goals, ask yourself the following questions:

- Is this really my goal?
- Is this morally right and fair to everyone involved?
- Will it take me closer to my long-range goal?
- Can I commit myself to start and reach this objective?
- Can I see myself attaining this goal?

You should answer yes to each of these questions. If not, re-evaluate!

And then give each goal a final test of the "basic wants" in life:

- Will it make me happier?
- Will it make me healthier?
- Will it make me more prosperous?
- Will it increase my security?
- Will it help me make more friends?
- Will it give me peace of mind?
- Will it improve my family (and other) relationships?
- Will it increase my hope for the future?

If you can't answer yes to each of these questions, re-evaluate your goal.

Success: You Can Do It!

One thing that stands in the way of success is your ability to believe in yourself. We've touched on this in the attitude sections, but there's more to it than just having a positive attitude. You must believe in yourself.

"So how do I do THAT?" you might be asking me right about now. "I'm really not good at very much....So-and-so at my office doesn't struggle with anything. That's why s/he succeeds!" I'm sorry—did we begin a whine-fest here? Who's bringing the cheese to go with the whine?

Everyone struggles with *something*, whether or not you know what that something is. If you struggle with your self-esteem, then you're probably comparing yourself to other people and using a measuring stick that's not even remotely accurate as you bash yourself and your own abilities.

The first thing you need to do is sit down with a piece of paper and start to write down the things at which you are genuinely good. I mean things like "I brush my teeth twice a day," and "I'm organized." For every skill or task that you OWN (and it doesn't matter what it is), there is a way to put those abilities to good use and a way to make it your own personal success story.

Now that you've done that, think about things you *love* to do. Make another column on your paper and begin to list things you really enjoy and could do every day for the rest of your life—and not dread going to work. Draw lines between things in your two columns that might go together.

On my paper, I'd write "I'm good at organizing things" in one column and "I like to write." They don't seem to go together, but what if I began writing about getting organized? What if I started an email list with tips on how to get organized and wrote notes to encourage my subscribers? And then what if I started to talk to companies who would custom-make things for my subscribers to help keep them organized and began seeing profit from all of this?

Would you call that "success"? I would—and there's a lady in North Carolina who's done just that. Just ask any of the 250,000 "Flybabies" if the FLYlady is good for them! This woman has created a niche for herself and is success personified.

So are you beginning to see how some creative thinking and listing your skills and passions can come together for success? I hope you're learning to think outside the box in this exercise, because that's what it takes.

So the moral of this story is that you CAN do this. You CAN succeed at this and you DO have what it takes to be successful. Go work on your lists and remember to think outside the box!

Success: Having Direction

Let's say you've got your attitude correct, the right skill set honed, and the right philosophy. Great! You're on your way – somewhere. If you don't have the right direction planned out, you'll simply wander aimlessly.

You don't attempt even the smallest of construction jobs without a plan, and yet many people work in a field they just happened to "fall in to" because someone suggested it, or a friend was doing it, or even worse—they didn't have anything else to do.

Wandering through your career can be just as deadly as wandering through a desert without a compass and canteen—in both places, you can die a slow death of thirst and exhaustion.

You must know where you want to go in order to set a direction for your life and career. You've probably heard the adage, "No one plans to fail, but they do fail to plan." So determine where it is that you want to go (i.e., what you want to do) and set a course for it.

I recommend doing something you love. Not something that you can tolerate or achieve a reasonable pension from after 30 years of work (do pensions even exist anymore?), but something you are truly passionate about.

If it's music, think about how you are gifted in that area. Do you sing? Would your singing chip paint off a house? Do you have an ear for pitch and tune? Do you play an instrument? Consider the field of professional golf for a moment. Do you love to golf? Would you be willing to commit days, weeks, months, and years to bettering your game to the point when you could hit the pro-circuit?

Do you have a means to support yourself (and your family) while you work on your dream job? Would you be happy and content doing whatever you chose—for the rest of your days, if need be? These are all questions you should ask yourself as you try to set the direction for your life, and ultimately, for your success.

Now that you know where you want to go, you must plan and prepare for your destination. As you plan and prepare, it's fair to expect that you will achieve that goal—expectations play a large role in success, no matter what the field. If you plan well and are committed to the work involved, then and only then, can you expect to achieve the desired results in your life.

Success: Takin' Care of Business

If you're hearing the song that Bachman-Turner-Overdrive made famous in the 60s, that's exactly what I want! I'm not talking about "business" in a strictly financial sense, but "business" with the idea that whatever you're shooting for success-wise, you complete your tasks.

Once you have a course plotted for success, there are going to be a million things that will vie for your attention and time. It's not that these things haven't been there before now, and it's not even that the world is plotting against you succeeding. It's just that now you have a focus and you'll begin to notice things that seem like they shouldn't be on your radar screen.

It doesn't mean that you don't do the little pesky things that are buzzing and want to be taken care of (especially if it relates to your job), just that you must not let those things pull you off-track.

So how do you stay on-task? The best way I've found, bar none, is to keep a log of tasks that must be accomplished as you move towards your goal. Remember to break the big tasks in to a series of small ones and to give yourself a reward-system as you do it. I use check-marks; others use stickers (sounds silly, but if it works for you, who cares?), still others use tangible rewards as they accomplish "x" number of small or large tasks.

Whatever motivates you is your key—keep it simple and keep it attainable. If the carrot is too far out in front of the horse, the horse will give up. If it's just close enough to smell and see but just out of reach, that horse will keep moving towards the incentive.

Let's say your goal is to lose 60 pounds. That's quite a chunk of weight and can take a long time to accomplish. Let's also say that you need a new wardrobe. Should you wait until all the weight is gone to buy those new clothes? Probably not—your current closet full of clothes will look awfully loose and ill-fitting if you do.

But let's talk about small, incremental rewards that help move you towards your goal. If you lose 10 pounds, your current clothes won't look baggy on you, but you will notice a difference in your waistband that might bother you. Don't chuck the pants or go buy a new pair—take the current ones to a seamstress or tailor to be taken in.

It's a small reward and saves you the money of buying new pants that you will continue to shrink out of. It also keeps you motivated. For the next 5 or 10 pounds, think about some new cosmetics or a new hairstyle—small things that will make you feel better, inside and out.

Takin' care of business and staying on task. Now that's the way to chart yourself to success!

Success: You're Not Alone

Somewhere on your road to success, you'll begin to understand that you are really never alone. There are amazing sources of strength and help everywhere you look—you just have to use them. You'll have to look to find them and then know how to use them, but it beats the heck out of not having them at all!

A team is incredibly important as you walk along your path. You may reap the benefits of success in your world, but you don't get there alone. The fallacy of the "self-made man" is just that—because everyone is influenced directly and indirectly by scores of people. Let's look at a list of those involved:

- Parents: if they were there to raise you, they had the greatest influence on your life. Feelings of love and security are established early—as early as birth. Children who have parents who love, care for, and protect them gain enormously both psychologically and physiologically.
- Teachers: chances are there is a teacher who has made an impression on you that you remember to this day. Positive or negative, there are teachers in our lives who have the power to mold us and shape us. Sometimes we choose paths in response to a negative example a teacher has left us; more often than not, we choose paths that are due to the positive influence they've left in our lives.
- Friends: the happiest and most successful people tend to have a wide range of friends from different walks of life. They encourage us, lift us up, and are part of an inextricable support system in our lives.
- Mentors: smart people who truly desire success find mentors that will walk with them as they traverse their road. Mentors can point out pitfalls and potholes in the road that we might otherwise miss, and their experience and willingness to teach us is an invaluable gift.
- Spiritual Leaders: ministers, priests, rabbis, pastors, etc., are in an amazing position to contribute positively and significantly in your life. Their ability to see past the circumstances and share life and light is unparalleled. Having a spiritual leader doesn't guarantee that you'll never feel despair, but it does guarantee that you won't have to go through the dark times alone.

Just as you have a team as you work towards success, you can be a part of someone else's team as well. Be a friend to someone who is just starting out on the road to success—encourage them, mentor them (if appropriate), and commit to be there for them when they need you. Do the right thing (remember your

integrity), and have compassion in all situations. You'll build your team and your success as you do these things!