

21 Ways to Achieve Lasting Happiness and Success

THE POWER OF SELF-DISCIPLINE



**NO
EXCUSES!**

BRIAN TRACY

New York Times Bestselling Author of Eat that Frog!

**No
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*The Power
of Self-Discipline*

BRIAN TRACY



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*This book is fondly dedicated
to my friend and partner Eric Berman,
one of the most disciplined and
determined people I have ever met.*

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Introduction: The Miracle of Self-Discipline

*“There are a thousand excuses for failure
but never a good reason.”*

—MARK TWAIN

Why are some people more successful than others? Why do some people make more money, live happier lives, and accomplish much more in the same number of years than the great majority? What is the real “secret of success?”

Often I begin a seminar with a little exercise. I ask the audience, “How many people here would like to double their income?”

Almost everyone smiles and raises their hands. I then ask, “How many people here would like to lose weight? Get out of debt? Achieve financial independence?”

Again, everyone smiles, some people cheer, and they all raise their hands. Then I say, “Wonderful! These are great goals that everyone has. We all want to make more money,

spend more time with our families, be fit and trim, and achieve financial independence.

“Not only do we all want the same things, but we all know what we have to do to achieve them. And we all intend to do those things, *sometime*. But before we get started, we decide that we need to take a little vacation to a wonderful fantasy place called ‘Someday Isle.’

“We say that ‘Someday I’ll read that book. Someday I’ll start that exercise program. Someday I’ll upgrade my skills and earn more money. Someday I’ll get my finances under control and get out of debt. Someday I’ll do all those things that I know I need to do to achieve all my goals. Someday.’”

Probably 80 percent of the population lives on Someday Isle most of the time. They think and dream and fantasize about all the things they are going to do “someday.”

And who are they surrounded by on Someday Isle? Other people on Someday Isle! And what is the chief topic of conversation on Someday Isle? Excuses! They all sit around and swap excuses for being on the island.

“Why are you here?” they ask each other.

Not surprising, their excuses are largely the same: “I didn’t have a happy childhood,” “I didn’t get a good education,” “I don’t have any money,” “My boss is really critical,” “My marriage is no good,” “No one appreciates me,” or “The economy is terrible.”

They have come down with the disease of “excusitis,” which is invariable fatal to success. They all have good intentions, but as everyone knows, “The road to hell is paved with good intentions.”

The first rule of success is simple: Vote yourself off the island!

No more excuses! Do it or don't do it—but don't make excuses. Stop using your incredible brain to think up elaborate rationalizations and justifications for not taking action. Do something. Do anything. Get on with it! Repeat to yourself: "If it's to be, it's up to me!"

Losers make excuses; winners make progress. Now, how can you tell if your favorite excuse is valid or not? It's simple. Look around and ask, "Is there anyone else who has my same excuse who is successful anyway?"

When you ask this question, if you are honest, you will have to admit that there are thousands and even millions of people who have had it far worse than you have who have gone on to do wonderful things with their lives. And what thousands and millions of others have done, you can do as well—if you try.

It has been said that if people put as much energy into achieving their goals as they spend making up excuses for failure, they would actually surprise themselves. But first, you have to vote yourself off the island.

Humble Beginnings

Very few people start off with many advantages. Personally, I did not graduate from high school. I worked at laboring jobs for several years. I had limited education, limited skills, and a limited future. And then I began asking that question: "Why are some people more successful than others?" This question changed my life.

Over the years, I have read thousands of books and articles on the subjects of success and achievement. It seems that the reasons for these accomplishments have been discussed and written about for more than 2,000 years, in every conceivable way.

One quality that most philosophers, teachers, and experts agree on is the importance of self-discipline. Discipline is what you must have to resist the lure of excuses.

It is self-discipline that enables you to “vote yourself off the island.” It is the key to a great life and, without it, no lasting success is possible.

The development of self-discipline changed my life, and it will change yours as well. By continually demanding more from myself, I became successful in sales and then in management. I caught up on my schooling and took an MBA degree in my thirties, which required thousands of hours of determined study. I imported Suzuki vehicles into Canada before anyone else, set up sixty-five dealerships, and sold \$25 million worth of the vehicles, and this is all after I had started with no knowledge of the industry. What I had, however, was the discipline and determination to learn what I needed to know and then apply what I needed to do.

I got into real estate development with no knowledge or experience, applied the power of discipline, which was then backed by hundreds of hours of work and study. I then went on to build shopping centers, industrial parks, office buildings, and residential subdivisions.

With self-discipline, I have built successful businesses in training, consulting, speaking, writing, recording, and

distribution. My audio and video programs, books, seminars, and training programs have sold more than \$500 million in thirty-six languages and fifty-four countries. Over the years I have consulted for more than 1,000 companies and trained more than 5 million people in live seminars and talks. In every case, the practice of self-discipline has been essential to my success.

I discovered that you can achieve almost any goal you set for yourself if you have the discipline to pay the price, to do what you need to do, and to never give up.

Who Should Read This Book?

This book is written for ambitious, determined men and women who want to achieve everything that is possible for them in life. It is written for people who are “hungry” to do more, to have more, and to be more than they ever have been before.

Perhaps the most important insight of all with regard to success is that to achieve greatly, you must become a different person. It is not the material things you accomplish or acquire that matter so much as it is the *quality of the person you must become* to accomplish well above the average. The development of self-discipline is the high road that makes everything possible for you.

This book will serve as your step-by-step guide to becoming a remarkable person who is capable of remarkable achievements.

• • •

A Chance Encounter Reveals the Reason for Success

Some years ago, I was attending a conference in Washington, D.C. During the lunch break I was eating at a nearby Food Fair. The area was crowded, so I sat down at the last open table by myself, even though it was a table for four.

A few minutes later, an older gentleman and a younger woman who appeared to be his assistant came along, carrying trays of food and obviously looking for a place to sit.

Having lots of room at my table, I immediately arose and invited the older gentleman to join me. He was hesitant, but I insisted. Finally, he sat down, quite thankfully, and we began to chat over lunch.

It turned out that his name was Kop Kopmeyer. As it happened, I immediately knew who he was. He was a legend in the field of success and achievement. Kop Kopmeyer had written four bestselling books, each of which contained 250 success principles that he had derived from more than fifty years of research and study. I had read all four books from cover to cover, each more than once.

After we had chatted for a while, I asked him the question that many people in this situation would ask: “Of all the 1,000 success principles that you have discovered, which do you think is the most important?”

He smiled at me with a twinkle in his eye, as if he had been asked this question many times, and he replied without hesitating, “The most important success principle of all was stated by Elbert Hubbard, one of the most prolific

writers in American history, at the beginning of the twentieth century. He said, *‘Self-discipline is the ability to do what you should do, when you should do it, whether you feel like it or not.’*”

He went on to say, “There are 999 other success principles that I have found in my reading and experience, but without self-discipline, none of them work. With self-discipline, they all work.”

Thus, self-discipline is the key to personal greatness. It is the magic quality that opens all doors for you and makes everything else possible. With self-discipline, the average person can rise as far and as fast as his talents and intelligence can take him. But without self-discipline, a person with every blessing of background, education, and opportunity will seldom rise above mediocrity.

Your Two Worst Enemies

Just as self-discipline is the key to success, the *lack* of self-discipline is the major cause of failure, frustration, underachievement, and unhappiness in life. It causes us to make excuses and sell ourselves short.

Perhaps the two biggest enemies of success, happiness and personal fulfillment, are first the Path of Least Resistance and, second, the Expediency Factor.

The Path of Least Resistance is what causes people to take the easy way in almost every situation. They seek shortcuts to everything. They arrive at work at the last minute and leave at the first opportunity. They look for get-rich-quick schemes and easy money. Over time, they

develop the habit of always seeking an easier, faster way to get the things they want rather than doing what is hard but necessary to achieve real success.

The Expediency Factor, which is an extension of the law of least resistance, is even worse when leading people to failure and underachievement. This principle says, “People invariably seek the fastest and easiest way to get the things they want, right now, with little or no concern for the long-term consequences of their behaviors.” In other words, most people do what is *expedient*, what is fun and easy rather than what is *necessary* for success.

Every day, and every minute of every day, there is a battle going on inside of you between doing what is right, hard, and necessary (like the angel on one shoulder) or doing what is fun, easy, and of little or no value (like the devil on your other shoulder). Every minute of every day, you must fight and win this battle with the Expediency Factor and resist the pull of the Path of Least Resistance if you truly desire to become everything you are capable of becoming.

Take Control of Yourself

Another definition of self-discipline is *self-mastery*. Success is possible only when you can master your own emotions, appetites, and inclinations. People who lack the ability to master their appetites become weak and dissolute, as well as unreliable in other things as well.

Self-discipline can also be defined as *self-control*. Your ability to control yourself and your actions, control what

you say and do, and ensure that your behaviors are consistent with your long-term goals and objectives is the mark of the superior person.

Discipline has been defined as *self-denial*. This requires that you deny yourself the easy pleasures, the temptations that lead so many people astray, and instead discipline yourself to do only those things that you know are right for the long term and appropriate for the moment.

Self-discipline requires *delayed gratification*, the ability to put off satisfaction in the short term in order to enjoy greater rewards in the long term.

Think Long Term

Sociologist Dr. Edward Banfield of Harvard University conducted a fifty-year study into the reasons for upward socioeconomic mobility in America. He concluded that the most important single attribute of people who achieved great success in life was “long time perspective.” Banfield defined “time perspective” as “the amount of time an individual takes into consideration when determining his present actions.”

In other words, the most successful people are long-term thinkers. They look into the future as far as they can to determine the kind of people they want to become and the goals they want to achieve. They then come back to the present and determine the things that they will have to do—or not do—to achieve their desired futures.

This practice of long-term thinking applies to work, career, marriage, relationships, money, and personal

conduct—each of which is covered in the pages ahead. Successful people make sure that everything they do in the short term is consistent with where they want to end up in the long term. They practice self-discipline at all times.

Perhaps the most important word in long-term thinking is *sacrifice*. Superior people have the ability to throughout their lives make sacrifices in the short term, both large and small, so as to assure greater results and rewards in the long term.

You see this willingness to sacrifice in people who spend many hours and even years preparing, studying, and upgrading their skills to make themselves more valuable so that they can have a better life in the future, rather than spending most of their time socializing and having fun in the present.

Longfellow once wrote:

*“Those heights by great men, won and kept,
Were not achieved by sudden flight.
But they, while their companions slept,
Were toiling upward in the night.”*

Your ability to think, plan, and work hard in the short term and to discipline yourself to do what is right and necessary before you do what is fun and easy is the key to creating a wonderful future for yourself.

Your ability to think long term is a developed skill. As you get better at it, you become more able to predict with

increasing accuracy what is likely to happen to you in the future as the result of your actions in the present. This is a quality of the superior thinker.

Short-Term Gain Can Cause Long-Term Pain

There are two laws that you fall victim to when you fail to practice self-discipline. The first is called the “Law of Unintended Consequences.” This law states that “the unintended consequences of an action can be far worse than the intended consequences of that behavior because of a lack of long-term thinking.”

The second is the “Law of Perverse Consequences,” which says that “a short-term action aimed at immediate gratification can lead to perverse, or the opposite, consequences from those at which it was aimed.”

For example, you might make an investment of time, money, or emotion with the desire and intent to be better off and happier as a result. But because you acted without carefully thinking or doing your homework, the consequences of your behavior turned out to be far worse than if you had done nothing at all. Every person has had this experience, and usually more than once.

The Common Denominator of Success

Herbert Grey, a businessman, conducted a long-term study searching for what he called “the common denominator

of success.” After eleven years, he finally concluded that the common denominator of success was that “successful people make a *habit* of doing the things that unsuccessful people don’t like to do.”

And what were these things? It turned out that the things that successful people don’t like to do are the same things that failures don’t like to do either. But successful people do them anyway because they know that this is the price they have to pay if they want to enjoy greater success and rewards in the future.

What Grey found was that successful people are more concerned with “pleasing results,” whereas failures were more concerned about “pleasing methods.” Successful, happy people were more concerned with the *positive, long-term consequences of their behaviors*, whereas unsuccessful people were more concerned with *personal enjoyment and immediate gratification*.

Motivational speaker Denis Waitley has said that the top people were those who were more concerned with activities that were “goal achieving,” whereas average people were more concerned with activities that were “tension relieving.”

Dinner Before Dessert

The simplest rule in the practice of self-discipline is to eat “dinner before dessert.” In a meal, there is a logical order of dishes, and dessert comes last. First, you eat the main courses and clean your plate; only then do you have dessert.

There is a cute but misleading bumper sticker that says, “Life is short; eat dessert first.”

Just think what would happen if you came home after work and, instead of eating a healthy dinner, you ate a large piece of apple pie with ice cream. What kind of appetite for healthy, nutritious food would you have afterward? With all that sugar in your stomach, how would you feel? Would you feel re-energized and eager to do something productive? Or would you feel tired and sluggish and ready to write off the day as largely finished?

You get the same result when you go for a drink or two after work and then come home and turn on the television. These are simply different forms of “dessert” that largely eliminate your ability to do anything useful for the rest of the evening.

Perhaps the worst part of all is that, whatever you do repeatedly soon becomes a *habit*. And a habit, once formed, is hard to break. The habit of taking the easy way, doing what is fun and enjoyable, or eating dessert before dinner becomes stronger and stronger, and it leads inevitably to personal weakness, underachievement, and failure.

The Habit of Self-Discipline

Fortunately, you can develop the habit of self-discipline. The regular practice of disciplining yourself to do what you should do, when you should do it, whether you feel like it or not becomes stronger and stronger as you practice it. You refuse to make excuses.

Bad habits are easy to form, but hard to live with. Good habits are hard to form, but easy to live with. And as Goethe said, “Everything is hard before it’s easy.”

It is hard to form the habits of self-discipline, self-mastery, and self-control, but once you have developed them, they become automatic and easy to practice. When the habits of self-discipline are firmly entrenched in your behavior, you start to feel uncomfortable when you are not behaving in a self-disciplined manner.

The best news is that all habits are *learnable*. You can learn any habit you need to learn in order to become the kind of person that you want to become. You can become an excellent person by practicing self-discipline whenever it is called for.

Every practice of self-discipline *strengthens* every other discipline. Unfortunately, every weakness in discipline weakens your other disciplines as well.

To develop the habit of self-discipline, you first make a firm decision about how you will behave in a particular area of activity. You then refuse to allow exceptions until the habit of self-discipline in that area is firmly established. Each time you slip, as you will, you resolve once again to keep practicing self-discipline until it becomes easier for you to behave in a disciplined way than to behave in an undisciplined way.

The Big Payoff

The payoff for developing high levels of self-discipline is extraordinary! There is a direct relationship between self-discipline and *self-esteem*:

- The more you practice self-mastery and self-control, the more you like and value yourself;
- The more you discipline yourself, the greater is your sense of self-respect and personal pride;
- The more you practice self-discipline, the better is your self-image. You see yourself and think about yourself in a more positive way. You feel happier and more powerful as a person.

The development and maintenance of the habit of self-discipline are a lifelong task, an ongoing battle. It never ends. The temptation to follow the path of least resistance and the expediency factor lurk continually in the back of your mind. They are always waiting for an opportunity to pounce, to lead you astray into doing what is fun, easy, and unimportant rather than what is hard, necessary, and life-enhancing.

Napoleon Hill concluded his bestselling book of the same name by saying that “Self-discipline is *the master key to riches.*” Self-discipline is the key to self-esteem, self-respect, and personal pride. The development of self-discipline is your guarantee that you will eventually overcome all your obstacles and create a wonderful life for yourself.

The ability to practice self-discipline is the real reason why some people are more successful and happy than others.

How This Book Is Written

In the pages ahead, I will describe the twenty-one areas of life in which the practice of self-discipline is vital to

fulfilling your full potential and achieving everything that is possible for you.

This book is divided into three sections for greater ease of use. Part I is entitled “Self-Discipline and Personal Success.” In these seven chapters, you will learn how to release more and more of your *personal potential* by practicing self-discipline in every area of your personal life, including setting goals, building character, accepting responsibility, developing courage, and backing everything you do with persistence and determination.

In the seven chapters of Part 2, you will learn how to achieve vastly more than ever before in the areas of *business, sales, and personal finance*. You learn why and how self-discipline is essential to becoming a leader in your field, to operating a business more profitably, to making more sales, investing more intelligently, and managing your time for maximum results.

Finally, in the seven chapters of Part 3, you will learn how to apply the miracle of self-discipline to your *personal life*. You will learn how to practice self-discipline in the areas of happiness, health, fitness, marriage, children, friendship, and the attainment of peace of mind. You will learn how to enhance the quality of your life and your relationships in every area.

In each chapter, I will show you how you can incorporate higher levels of self-discipline and self-mastery into everything you do.

In the pages ahead, you will learn how to take complete control over your own personal and professional development and how to become a stronger, happier, more

self-confident person in every area of your life that is important to you. You will learn how to break old habits that may be holding you back and how to develop the habits of self-reliance, self-determination, and self-discipline that will enable you to set and achieve any goal. You will learn how to take complete control over your mind, your emotions, and your future.

When you master the power of self-discipline, you will become *unstoppable*, like a force of nature. You will never make excuses for not making progress. You will accomplish more in the next few months and years than most people accomplish in a lifetime.

PART I



Self-Discipline and Personal Success

Your success in life depends more on the person you become than on the things you do or acquire. As Aristotle wrote, “The ultimate end of life is the development of character.” In these chapters, you will learn how to develop and use discipline in order to become an excellent person. You will learn how to develop greater self-esteem, self-respect, and personal pride. You will learn the essential disciplines required for personal greatness and how to build them into your own character and personality.

Chapter 1

Self-Discipline and Success

“The first and best victory is to conquer self.”

—PLATO

Why do some people accomplish so much more in their personal and professional lives than others? This question has occupied some of the very best minds throughout human history. More than 2,300 years ago, Aristotle wrote that the ultimate aim of human life is to be happy. He said that the great question that each of us must answer is, *“How shall we live in order to be happy?”*

Your ability to ask and answer that question correctly for yourself—and then to follow where your answer leads you—will largely determine whether you achieve your own happiness, and how soon.

Begin with your own personal definition. How do *you* define success? If you could wave a magic wand and make your life perfect in every way, what would it look like?

Describe Your Ideal Life

If your *business, work, and career* were ideal in every way, what would they look like? What would you be doing? What sort of company would you work for? What position would you have? How much money would you earn? What kind of people would you work with? And, especially, what would you need to do more or less of to create your perfect career?

If your *family life* were perfect in every way, what would it look like? Where would you live, and how would you be living? What kind of a lifestyle would you have? What sort of things would you want to have and do with the members of your family? If you had no limitations and you could wave a magic wand, in what ways would you change your family life today?

If your *health* were perfect, how would you describe it? How would you feel? How much would you weigh? How would your levels of health and fitness be different from what they are today? Most of all, what steps could you take immediately to begin moving toward your ideal levels of health and energy?

If your *financial situation* were ideal, how much would you have in the bank? How much would you be earning each month and each year from your investments? If you had enough money that you never had to worry about finances again, how much would that be? What steps could you take, starting today, to create your ideal financial life?

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Do Your Own Thing

A popular definition of success is “being able to live your life in your own way, doing only those things that you want to do, with the people who you choose, in the situations you desire.”

In each case, when you begin to define what “success” means to you, you can immediately see things that you should be doing more of or less of in order to begin creating your ideal life. And the biggest thing that holds you back from moving in the direction of your dreams is usually your favorite excuses and a lack of self-discipline.

It’s not that you don’t know *what* to do, but rather that you don’t have the *discipline* to make yourself do what you should do, whether you feel like it or not.

Join the Top 20 Percent

In our society, the top 20 percent of people earn 80 percent of the money and enjoy 80 percent of the riches and rewards. This “Pareto Principle” has been proven over and over again since it was first formulated in 1895 by Vilfredo Pareto. Your first goal in your career should be to get into the top 20 percent in your chosen field.

In the twenty-first century, there is a premium on knowledge and skill. The more knowledge you acquire and the greater skill that you apply, the more competent and valuable you become. As you get better at what you do, your income-earning ability increases—like compound interest.

Unfortunately, the majority of people—the bottom 80 percent—make little or no effort to upgrade their skills. Most people, according to Geoffrey Colvin’s 2009 book *Talent Is Overrated*, learn their jobs in the first year of their employment, and then they never get any better. It is only the top people in every field who are committed to continuous improvement.

Because of this increasing disparity of productive ability, based on knowledge, skill, and hard work, the top 1 percent of people in America today control as much as 33 percent of the financial assets.

Starting with Nothing

Interestingly, almost everyone starts out the same in life—with little or nothing. Almost all fortunes in America (and worldwide) are *first* generation. This means that most individuals started with little or nothing and earned everything they own in their current lifetime.

The wealthiest people in America are almost all first-generation multibillionaires. This is the case with wealthy Americans such as Bill Gates, Warren Buffett, Larry Ellison, Michael Dell, and Paul Allen. Fully 80 percent of millionaires and multimillionaires started with little money, often penniless, and sometimes deeply in debt and with few advantages, such as Sam Walton, who died worth more than \$100 billion. Why have these people been able to achieve so much when so many have achieved so little?

In their book, *The Millionaire Next Door*, Thomas Stanley and William Danko interviewed more than 500

millionaires and surveyed 11,000 more over a twenty-five-year period. They asked them why they felt they had been able to achieve financial independence when most of the people around them, who started at the same place, were still struggling. Fully 85 percent of this new generation of millionaires replied by saying something like “I didn’t have a better education or more intelligence, but I was willing to work *harder* than anyone else.”

Hard Work Is the Key

The indispensable requirement for hard work is self-discipline. Success is possible only when you can overcome the natural tendency to cut corners and take the easy way. Lasting success is possible only when you can discipline yourself to work hard for a long, long time.

As I mentioned in the Introduction, I started my own life with no money or advantages. For years, I worked at laboring jobs, at which I earned just enough to get from paycheck to paycheck. I stumbled into sales when I could no longer find a laboring job, where I spun my wheels for many months before I began asking that question: “Why is it that some people are more successful in selling than others?”

One day, a top salesman then told me that the top 20 percent of salespeople earn 80 percent of the money. I had never heard that before. This meant that the bottom 80 percent of salespeople had to be satisfied with the remaining 20 percent, with what was left over after the top people had taken the lion’s share. I decided then and there

that I was going to be in the top 20 percent. This decision changed my life.

The Great Law

Then I learned the “Iron Law of the Universe,” which made getting into the top 20 percent possible. It was the Law of Cause and Effect, or sowing and reaping. This law says that “for every effect, there is a specific cause or series of causes.”

This law says that if you want to achieve success in any area, you must determine how success is achieved in that area and then practice those skills and activities repeatedly until you achieve the same results.

Here’s the rule: “If you *do* what other successful people do, over and over again, nothing can stop you from eventually enjoying the same rewards that they do. But if you *don’t* do what successful people do, nothing can help you.”

The law of sowing and reaping, from the Old Testament, is a variation of The Law of Cause and Effect. It says that “whatsoever a man soweth, that also shall he reap.” This law says that whatever you put in, you get out. It also says that whatever you are reaping today is a result of what you have sown in the past. So if you are not happy with your current “crop,” it is up to you, starting today, to plant a *new* crop, to begin doing more of those things that lead to success—and to stop engaging in those activities that lead nowhere.

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Success Is Predictable

Success is not an accident. Sadly, failure is not an accident either. You succeed when you do what other successful people do, over and over, until these behaviors become a habit. Likewise, you fail if you don't do what successful people do. In either case, nature is *neutral*. Nature does not take sides. Nature doesn't care. What happens to you is simply a matter of law—the law of cause and effect.

You can look at yourself as a machine with a *default* mechanism. Your default mechanism is the almost irresistible attraction of the expediency factor and the path of least resistance that I described in the Introduction. In the absence of self-discipline, your default mechanism goes off automatically. This is the main cause of underachievement and the failure to realize your true potential.

When you are not working *deliberately, consciously, and continuously* to do, be, and have those things that constitute success for you, your default mechanism is at work. You end up doing those fun, easy, and low-value things in the short term that lead to frustration, financial worries, and failure in the long term.

The Secrets of Success

The great oil man, H. L. Hunt, who was at one time the richest self-made billionaire in the world, was once asked by a television journalist for his “secrets of success.” He replied: “There are only three requirements for success. First, decide exactly what it is you want in life. Second,

determine the price that you are going to have to pay to get the things you want. And third, and this is most important, resolve to pay that price.”

One of the most important requirements for success, once you have decided what it is that you want, is the quality of *willingness*. Successful people are willing to pay the price, whatever it is and for as long as it takes, until they achieve the results they desire.

Everyone wants to be successful. Everyone wants to be healthy, happy, thin, and rich. But most people are not willing to pay the price. Occasionally, they may be willing to pay *part* of the price, but they are not willing to pay the *whole* price. They always hold back. They always have some excuse or rationalization for not disciplining themselves to do everything that they need to do to achieve their goals.

Pay the Price

How can you tell when you have paid the full price of success? It's simple: Look around you. There it is! You can always tell how much of the price of success you have paid by looking at your current lifestyle and your bank account. By the Law of Correspondence, your outer world will, like a mirror, always reflect the person you are and the price you have paid on the *inside*.

There is an interesting point about the price of success: It must always be paid in full—and *in advance*. Success, however you define it, is not like a restaurant where you pay *after* you have enjoyed your meal. Instead it is like a

cafeteria, where you can choose whatever you want, but you must pay for it before you eat it.

Motivational speaker Zig Ziglar says, “The elevator to success is out of order, but the stairs are always open.”

Learn from the Experts

Kop Kopmeyer, who I mentioned in the Introduction, also told me that the second most important success principle, after self-discipline, is that you must “learn from the experts. You will never live long enough to learn it all for yourself.”

If you want to be successful, your first job is to learn what you need to learn in order to achieve the success you desire. Learn from the experts. Read their books. Listen to their audio programs. Attend their seminars. Write to them or approach them directly and ask them for advice. Sometimes, one idea is all you need to change the direction of your life. Let me give you an example of what I mean:

Some years ago, I was referred by a friend to an excellent dentist. I learned later that he had a superb reputation. He was called the “dentist’s dentist.” He was the dentist that the other dentists went to when they needed excellent dental work. He told me that he attended every major dental conference that he could. When he was there, he attended every session, listening to dentists from all the over the country, and all over the world, discuss the latest breakthroughs in dental technology.

One week, at great sacrifice in time and money, he attended an international dental conference in Hong Kong. At that conference, he sat in on a session given by a Japanese dentist who had discovered a new technology in

cosmetic surgery that improved the appearance of teeth and enabled people to look handsome or beautiful indefinitely.

He returned to San Diego and immediately began using the new technique in his practice. Soon, he became excellent in this area and developed a national reputation. Within a couple of years, people were coming to him from all over southwestern United States for this treatment. Because he had developed this expertise, he could raise his fees again and again. Eventually, he had made so much money that he was able to retire at the age of fifty-five, financially independent and able to spend the rest of his life with his family, traveling and fulfilling his dreams.

The point of this story is that, by continually seeking out ideas and advice from other experts in his field, he came across a new technology that helped him become the leader in his field and saved him ten years of hard work in order to reach the same level of financial success. This could happen to you as well, but only if you become a lifelong student of your craft.

Mental and Physical Fitness Need to Be *Ongoing*

Achieving success is like achieving physical fitness. It is like bathing, brushing your teeth, and eating. It is something that you need to do continuously, every day. Once you begin, you never stop until your life and career are over and you have achieved all the success you desire.

Not long ago, I was giving a seminar in Seattle. Just before the break, I encouraged people to buy and listen to

my audio programs on sales, time management, and personal success. At the break, several people came up to me to ask me questions about the seminar content. One salesman pushed his way forward and said, “When you encourage people to buy your programs, you should tell them the whole truth.”

I asked, “How do you mean?”

He went on to say, “You are not telling the whole truth about your programs. You should tell people that they only work for a certain period of time, and then they stop working.”

Again, I asked, “How do you mean?”

He said, “Well, I came to your seminar about five years ago, and I was completely convinced by your presentation. I bought all your programs and began listening to them. I read every day in sales. And you were right, over the next three years, I tripled my income and became the top seller in my company. But then my income flattened out and has not increased at all over the last two years. The fact is that your materials stop working after a certain point.”

I then asked him, “What happened to you two years ago, when your income flattened out and stopped increasing?”

He searched his memory, thought for a while and then said, “Well, I was selling so much that I was hired away by another company. Ever since I started my new job, my income has remained flat.”

I asked him, “What did you do differently in your new job in comparison with your previous job?”

He started to answer. He then stopped. A shocked look came over his face. Finally he replied, “Oh my gosh! I stopped doing it. When I changed jobs, I stopped reading in sales. I stopped listening to audio programs. I stopped attending seminars. I stopped doing it!”

He walked away shaking his head, muttering to himself, “I stopped doing it. I stopped doing it. I stopped doing it.”

Becoming an expert in your field, continually upgrading your skills—which I will talk about in Chapter 5—is like physical fitness. If you stop exercising for any period of time, you don't maintain your fitness at the same level. You begin to decline. Your body and your muscles become softer and weaker. You lose your strength, flexibility, and stamina. In order to maintain them, you must keep working at them every day, every week, and every month.

Become All You Can Be

There is an even more important reason for you to practice the self-discipline that leads onward and upward to the great successes that are possible for you. The practice of self-discipline enables you to change your *character*, to become a stronger and better person. The exercise of self-discipline has a powerful effect on your mind and emotions, developing you into a different person from the one that you would have been without self-discipline.

Imagine yourself in a chemistry lab. You mix a series of chemicals in a Petri dish and put it over a Bunsen burner. The Bunsen burner heats the chemicals to the point at which they crystallize and become hardened. But once you have crystallized these chemicals using intense heat, they cannot be transformed back into liquid form.

In the same way, your personality begins like a liquid: soft, fluid, and formless. But as you apply the heat of self-discipline, as you exert yourself to do what is hard and necessary rather than what is fun and easy, your personality crystallizes and hardens at a higher level as well.

The greatest benefit you enjoy from exerting self-discipline in the pursuit of your goals is that you become a different person. You become stronger and more resolute. You develop greater self-control and determination. You actually shape and strengthen your personality and transform yourself into a better person.

The rule is that “to become someone that you have never been before, you must do something that you have never done before.” This means that to develop a superior character, you must exert ever-higher levels of self-discipline and self-mastery on yourself. You must do the things that average people don’t like to do.

Another success principle is that “to achieve something that you have never achieved before, you must learn and practice qualities and skills that you have never had before.”

By practicing self-discipline, you become a new person. You become better, stronger, and more clearly defined. You develop higher levels of self-esteem, self-respect, and personal pride. You move yourself up the ladder of human evolution and become a person of higher character and resolve.

Success Is Its Own Reward

The wonderful thing about the achievement of success is that every step in that direction is rewarding in itself. Each step you take toward becoming a better person and accomplishing more than you ever have before makes you feel happier, more confident, and more fulfilled.

You've heard it said that "nothing succeeds like success." What this means is that the greatest reward of success is *not the money you make* but rather *the excellent person you become* in the process of striving toward success and exerting self-discipline every time it is required.

In the next chapter, I will explain how you can become the truly excellent person you are capable of becoming.

Action Exercises:

Take out a pen right now and write down your answers to the questions below.

1. If your work life and career were ideal, what would they look like? What one discipline could you develop that would help you to achieve it?
 2. If your family life were ideal, what would it look like, and what one discipline would help you the most to make it a reality?
 3. If your health were perfect in every way, what disciplines would you have that make it possible?
 4. If your financial situation were ideal today, what one discipline would you have that would help you the most?
 5. Why aren't you *already* as successful as you would like to be, and what one discipline would help you the most to achieve all your goals?
 6. What one skill could you develop that would help you to realize more of your goals?
 7. If you could wave a magic wand and be completely disciplined in one area, which one discipline would have the greatest positive impact on your life?
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