

***Success
Is a
Decision***

Tim Connor, CSP

Success Is a Decision

Copyright: January 2007, Tim Connor

ISBN: 1-930376-81-2

Editor: Catherine Frenzel

Cover Design: Cara Johnston

Published by: Worldwide Press

First Printing: January 2007

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*Self-trust is the first secret of
success.*

Ralph Waldo Emerson

*The biggest human temptation is to
settle for too little.*

Thomas Merton

*It may be that those who do most
dream most.*

Stephen Leacock

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*Lord, grant that I might always desire
more than I can accomplish.*

Michelangelo

*I find the great thing in this world is not
so much where we stand, as to what
direction we are moving.*

O.W. Holmes

*The road to triumph is built by
adversity.*

Ovid

Introduction

Do not be misled by the size of this book. Achieving sustained success is not all that complicated, unless we choose to make it so. Success is truly a decision.

For many, the benefits of success are illusive. These people struggle, search, and try year after year to create a life filled with financial security, nurturing relationships, and a sense of purpose and meaning.

Others appear to effortlessly achieve greatness, independence, and happiness as they travel through the days of their lives.

What are the differences between these two groups? Is it luck, a favorable early environment, good fortune, the right contacts, hard work, a powerful will to succeed, education, good looks, charm, or some other measurable qualities?

As a fellow traveler in search of success for over forty years, I do not claim to have The Answer or the answers to *your* quest. I do not know the secrets, if there are any secrets, to success.

I have learned, however, that there are certain attitudes, actions, beliefs, and philosophies that, when embraced and followed, ultimately lead to the higher ground.

In this book, we will cover what I believe are the twelve traits that successful people – regardless of age, gender, profession, education status, or however you would choose to define success – embrace and have mastered.

It doesn't matter whether you are a business leader, teacher, florist, artist, or in any of the thousands of other roles or positions in life. If you want rewarding and enduring success, you must embrace and master each of the twelve qualities covered in this book. Keep in mind that this is not a treatise and its intent is not to

give you all the answers in each of the twelve areas. Its purpose is to help you cultivate the awareness and then develop the desire to take the next step to learn where and how to develop and master each trait.

I do not believe that success hinges on any single one of the qualities listed or those that I have chosen to leave out. Success is not guaranteed to every human who walks the planet. However, the potential for success is bequeathed to each of us at birth. Success is not an accident or the result of believing that life owes it to you.

Success is not power, fame, wealth, prosperity, happiness, or independence. Success, once gained, has no guarantee that it will be maintained indefinitely in any recognizable or anticipated form. If success is lost, it is not destined to elude us forever.

Success for everyone, in the end, is a decision – a decision to act rather than wait, a decision to learn rather than remain ignorant, a decision to live with

passion rather than with apathy, and a decision to hope rather than despair. Yes, there are many other decisions made each day and each year. And when all is said and done, and your life has come to an end, it will be your decisions that will have determined your life outcomes.

Life offers no guarantees – just alternatives and options; no certainty – just consequences; no predictable outcomes – just the privilege of pursuit. People who succeed and fail come in all shapes, sizes, colors, ages, nationalities, and gender. In the end, success is not what we achieve or accumulate, but who we have become in the process.

Successful people succeed because they do the things necessary for success. Failures want the same success outcomes and rewards, but they either don't know which traits to develop or they refuse or fail to develop them while on their life journey.

Many people, when attempting to excuse themselves from the personal responsibility of a successful life, do so by blaming others, their background, or circumstances. Life is a neutral concept. It responds to a person's beliefs, commitments, expectations, effort, attitudes, and actions. It always gives us what we unconsciously desire, deserve, and ask for.

Life is not selective. It doesn't pick on some people, while showering others with innumerable benefits or gifts. It is a perfect example of cause and effect in the ebb and flow of life. Life is not fair. It is not unfair either. It just is.

In the end, people who want to succeed, do – because they take the time and energy to develop the required characteristics and attitudes. Their success, however, may not resemble their early picture of what they thought their success would look like when they embarked on their journey. Most people who fail, subconsciously want to fail. Oh, they may say they want success and its trappings, but in reality they do

not believe in their hearts that they deserve it or will ever achieve it.

We are all magnets. We attract into our experience and life whatever is consistent with our inner beliefs, values, thoughts, expectations, and desires.

So, my friend, let's continue on your journey to sustained and rewarding success.

At the very end of this book, you will find several pages where you can write down your personal insights and reflections.

*Don't be run so much by what
you lack as by what you have
already achieved.*

Marcus Aurelius

*You will become as small as your
controlling desire; as great as your
dominant aspiration.*

James Allen

*I am always content with what happens;
for I know that what God chooses is
better than what I choose.*

Epictetus

1. Control your thoughts

The most important thing you can do that will guarantee your success and happiness is to learn to control your thoughts. At first glance, this might seem an easy task, but just think of how many times today you were pulled out of your own thought patterns by the actions or words of someone else or by circumstances.

Thought control is the one trait of all happy and successful people – whether they are professional athletes or business leaders, artists or musicians – and every one of us, no matter what our station in life.

Most people live their lives in reverse. Most of their thinking is nothing more than recycling old information over and over again in the mind. It is replaying hurts, joys, memories, dreams, desires, and information that is essentially of no value.

Real thought-control permits you to decide what thoughts will be permitted access to your unconscious

mind. Most people think about what they don't want, can't have, won't become, or would like to change. Successful people accept that the mind is a tool that can be used to create happiness or unhappiness, success or failure, joy or pain, and productive now moments or wasted time in the present.

To control your thoughts means that NOTHING gets into your consciousness that you don't want. If a thought does sneak in while you are not looking, you dispose of it quickly and easily without getting yourself all worked up into a lather. What thoughts are filling your mind today? Happy ones? Sad ones? Positive ones? Negative ones? Destructive ones?

I would like to quote one of the all-time best selling messages of the past one hundred years. It is James Allen's book, *As a Man Thinketh*. If you have never read it I can't impress upon you enough the tremendous power of this short message written over a century ago.

All that a man achieves and all that he fails to achieve is the direct result of his own thoughts. He who has conquered doubt and fear has conquered failure. Men do not attract that which they want, but that which they are. Their whims, fancies, and ambitions are thwarted at every step, but their inmost thoughts and desires are fed with their own food, be it foul or clean.

As a being of power, Intelligence, and love, and the lord of his own thoughts, man holds the key to every situation and contains within himself that transforming and regenerative agency by which he may make himself what he wills.

Thought and character are one, and as character can only manifest and discover itself through environment and circumstance, the outer conditions of a person's life will always be found to be harmoniously related to his

inner state. This does not mean that a man's circumstances at any given time are an indication of his entire character, but that those circumstances are so intimately connected with some vital thought-element within himself that, for the time being, they are indispensable to his development.

Good thoughts and actions can never produce bad results and bad thoughts and actions can never produce good results. Suffering is always the effect of wrong thought in some direction. It is an indication that the individual is out of harmony with himself.

Dream lofty dreams, and as you dream so shall you become. Your vision is the promise of what you shall one day be; your ideal is the prophecy of what you shall at last unveil. The greatest achievement was at first and for a time a dream. The oak sleeps in the acorn; the bird waits in the egg; and in the highest vision

*of the soul a waking angel stirs. Dreams are
the seedlings of realities.*

*Circumstances are the rulers of the
weak; they are but the instruments
of the wise.*

Samuel Lover

*All human activity is prompted
by desire.*

Bertrand Russell

*Don't forget until too late that the
business of life is not business,
but living.*

B.C. Forbes

2. Promote yourself relentlessly

Have you ever heard of any of these people:

- *Dale Earnhardt*
- *Dr. Phil*
- *Martha Stewart*
- *Donald Trump*
- *Madonna*
- *Billy Graham*

Regardless of their chosen profession, business or discipline, each of them is successful for a variety of reasons; but one thing they all have in common is that they are or were relentless self-promoters.

Being a self-promoter can conjure up many different images in the minds of many, some negative, some arrogant, some self-serving and some envy; but, in the end, this ability separates the also-rans from the super successful. If you think of Herb Kelleher, (the founder of Southwest Airlines), you might think he was a lunatic. If you mention Bill Clinton, you'll get two very

opposing reactions; and if you bring up the name Michael Jordan, you might get very consistent reactions. But one thing they all did was self-promote in one way or another.

As I was thinking about writing this book, I was wondering: Has anyone ever been super-successful who did not have self-promotion as their companion as they brought their ideas, products, or talent to the rest of the world? I couldn't think of anyone. Maybe you can, but I'll bet that if anyone has achieved enduring and satisfying success, self-promotion was high on their list of traits.

What exactly is self-promotion? Is it self-confidence? No. There are a lot of people with strong self-confidence who are not comfortable in self-promotion. Is it talent? No. Many very talented people have never been successful or publicly heard of.

I could also mention numerous people in specific professions, who are super-successful, but because

they are not relentless self-promoters, you don't hear about them; their success is not measured by fame.

Now don't get me wrong here. I am not saying that fame or fortune equal success. I am only saying that self-promotion is one of the most evident traits of successful people. Let me illustrate this with familiar examples.

Is Donald Trump smarter than other corporate executives? Is Oprah Winfrey better looking than other media people? Was Bill Waldron (the founder of Wal-Mart) better educated than you or me?

I am telling you, education is important. Talent is important. Effort is important. Timing is important. The right contacts are important. But even if you have all of these, you can still never achieve greatness or sustained success without the willingness and ability to be a relentless self-promoter.

Trials teach us what we are.

Charles H. Spurgeon

*If matters go badly now, they will
not always be so.*

Horace

*Great men are they who see that
the spiritual is stronger than any
material force, that thoughts rule
the world.*

Ralph Waldo Emerson

3. Believe steadfastly

Do you believe in, trust, and accept yourself? Consistently? Steadfastly? This is one of the keys to enduring success, peace, happiness, and a worthwhile life.

Many people believe that if some aspect of themselves were better – such as weighing less, being taller, having a better job, being better looking, or having nicer home or different career – then they would then be O.K.

Steadfast belief in yourself is the knowledge that no matter what crosses your path, you can handle it. No matter how hard you fall, how long you are down, or who is kicking you while you are down, this too will pass and you can learn from the experience.

There are two types of people in any given situation: those that whine and those that act. Those that believe in a better tomorrow and those that don't. Those that

blame and those that take responsibility. Those that resist the pull of life into the future and those that flow with it.

Self-belief says: Throw it at me, life; I will handle it, overcome it, and I will survive and succeed. A lack of self-belief says, I quit, I can't do it, it's too much for me.

What is your approach to adversity, trouble, failure, problems, challenges, or any negative circumstances? Do you have a YES or NO in your heart?

*If one advances confidently in the
direction of his dreams, and
endeavors to live the life which he has
imagined, he will meet with success
unexpected in common hours.*

Henry David Thoreau

*If I fail, it will be for lack of ability
and not of purpose.*

Abraham Lincoln

*In times of stress, be bold
and valiant.*

Horace

4. Know your purpose

In his classic best-seller *Think and Grow Rich*, Napoleon Hill discusses the importance of a “Definite Major Purpose” in life. It would be difficult for me to improve on his words that were written over fifty years ago. The book can be summarized, in my opinion, with two of his quotes: *“What the mind of man can conceive and believe, it can achieve.”* And *“Every adversity, every problem, and every heartache carries with it the seed of an equivalent or greater benefit.”*

Webster defines *purpose* as: “the reason for which something exists, is done or made. An intended or desired result, aim, or goal. To intend or resolve.” Although as a writer I refer to my dictionary a great deal, I am more often than not confused by the use of certain words to describe other words. Dictionary definitions leave so much out regarding the essence of the word as a concept. Words are so much more than just words when you consider them more deeply. Purpose is the determining factor in goals and

objectives. If a person lacks a clear purpose in his or her life, career, or business, it is difficult to set and achieve meaningful goals. Without purpose, people easily lose their motivation or will to continue when life throws them a curve, pothole, or difficult challenge. Without purpose it is difficult to develop any sense of satisfaction for accomplishments along life's path. And without purpose, people will change direction in life whenever the whim inspires them or the going gets rough.

Purpose is similar to a personal mission statement. I will share mine with you to illustrate my point. My personal mission statement for over thirty years has been and is today, *"To learn as much as I can as I move through life and to share what I have learned with others who cross my path."* This mission statement has become the foundation for my speaking goals, writing goals, and publishing efforts.

When I don't feel like writing, or would rather stay home than travel 10,000 miles to speak, or I am not in the

mood to work on another book, my purpose or mission statement kicks in.

The thought that often comes up in my mind is: Either change your mission or purpose – or get on with it.

How are you doing today? Do you have a major purpose in life? Do you have a personal mission statement? Have you converted these into practical, rewarding, and meaningful goals and objectives? If not, what are you waiting for?

*I love the man that can smile in
trouble, that can gather strength from
distress and grow brave by reflection.*

Thomas Paine

*The things that are impossible with men
are possible with God.*

Luke 18:27

*All I have seen teaches me to trust
the Creator for all I have not seen.*

Ralph Waldo Emerson

5. Maintain your passion

Passion is the great equalizer. It can make up for a lack of experience and knowledge. I am not suggesting that you not develop your knowledge or experience, however, because they will only enhance and further empower your passion – your strong belief in yourself, your ability, your mission, and your purpose.

Passion is different than enthusiasm. The old cliché says, “Act enthusiastic and you will become enthusiastic.” I have never subscribed to this philosophy. If your enthusiasm is contrived, an act that you use when things are going well, then what happens when things go badly? Real enthusiasm means “God within.” So if you are *being* enthusiastic because that is who you are, then no matter what is going on in your life, you will respond with enthusiasm.

Passion is not an act. It is a way of believing. It is woven into your cellular structure just as much as your DNA. Passion – real passion for who you are, who you

are becoming, where you are, and where you are going, what you believe in, stand for, and would die for – shouts to the world, “I am here to stay, I am here to make a difference, I will leave my mark in this world. It may take me my entire life, but I will not give up until my purpose and destiny are realized.” Who do you know that is passionate about something? Anything?

You can see it in their eyes, hear it in their voice, and sense it in their behavior. How are you doing? Are you in love with where you are, where you are going, who you are becoming, and what you are contributing? Or are you living like over 85% of the population with the attitude, “same stuff, different day.”

If you have lost or are losing your passion for life, your career, or a relationship, do what ever is necessary to get it back. Here are a few ideas to consider.

1. Count your blessings.
2. Accept the reality of how your life is unfolding.
3. Manage your expectations.

4. Let go of old baggage.
5. Accept yourself just as you are.
6. Live with an attitude of gratitude.
7. Find a way to serve your fellow human beings.
8. Do what you love, not what you must do.

*Be happy with what you have, and
better things will come along.*

John Wanamaker

*In all things it is better to hope
than to despair.*

Goethe

*Hope is the last thing that
dies in man.*

La Rochefoucauld

6. Make time your ally

There is only one common denominator when you study both successful people and people who fail. It's not education, gender, position, status, or wealth. It is time. The millionaire gets 24 hours every day. The homeless person gets 24 hours every day. The genius gets 24 hours a day, and the idiot gets 24 hours every day.

Successful people know that they can't get more time. They know that have to use the time they have more effectively if they want to achieve success.

Time passes. When you are doing what you like or are with people you enjoy, time seems to speed by. When you are doing things you hate or are with people you don't like, time seems to creep by very slowly. The rate of time does not change. Your perception of passing time does. Time management is a misnomer. If you are having trouble managing time, I'll bet you are having

trouble managing: some other area of your life such as people, resources, decisions, or problems.

Time management and effective time use is a function of many skills and attitudes, prejudices, habits, and personal philosophies. No one can manage time. The keys to improving time use is to:

1. Know yourself
2. Know your tendencies
3. Know your strengths
4. Know your weaknesses
5. Know your goals
6. Identify your common time wasters
7. Establish regular planning times
8. Be relentless with your self-discipline

Each of us has numerous demands on our time, energy, and resources. One of the keys to success is the ability to balance multiple demands, requirements of your position, personal needs and desires, tasks, routine activities and family roles.

*Every current experience can aid
you in your growth toward higher
consciousness – if you know how to
use it.*

Ken Keyes

*Circumstances do not make the man,
they reveal him.*

James Allen

*What lies behind us and what lies
before us are tiny matters compared
to what lies within us.*

Ralph Waldo Emerson

7. Overcome adversity

Everyone, at least once in their life, experiences some form of a setback, adversity, failure, or loss in at least one area of their life. Adversity can strike with or without notice. It can hit a relationship, a loved one, a career, your business, your health, or your financial status. No matter where or when it hits, the anxiety, stress, frustration, disappointment, fear, sadness, or panic leaves the same feelings or emotions in its wake: a sense of hopelessness and/or despair.

Life is circular, not linear. First there is birth, then growth, then maturity, then death, followed again by birth or re-birth and so on. This is the law of the universe, whether it is life itself or a change in career or a relationship. I do not mean to imply that all relationships must die before their time, but they do eventually end. There is a big difference. Endings are different than death.

Death is certainly an ending, but there are literally thousands of types of endings. Periods of life end; for

example, youth. It is followed by adulthood. All careers end – if not by premature death, then by retirement or the beginning of a new or different career. Relationships end; if not physically, then a stage in the relationship – for example: In long-standing relationships, lust, infatuation or physical attraction is replaced with deep and abiding love.

Setbacks and adversity are often signals that some aspect of life has come to an end or needs to come to an end or is there to test your resolve and commitment. They are wake-up calls or what I call “choice points” in life. Many people, myself included, resist endings from time to time. Sometimes however, we embrace or encourage them. We want to continue life, business, or a way of life forever. Most people die with unfinished business left in them. It is seldom that there isn't something more that could have been said, done, seen, learned, or shared by someone who has passed on.

Life brings to each person unique opportunities to learn and grow as a result of the events or circumstances

that cross their path. Everyone, I repeat everyone – regardless of their age, gender, nationality, religion, career status, or financial position – is a student in life and they either learn from their life lessons or they are doomed to repeat them. Some people, at first glance, may seem to "have it made." But do not judge only by appearances. Everyone has inner battles of one kind or another that they are fighting.

Adversity gives us the opportunity to do a number of things as we move through our lives. Some of them are: Reevaluate old life-patterns that are not working; see ourselves more clearly as a contributor; develop new attitudes about life, relationships, money, people, or work; or observe how we handle the lessons we are given.

*All things are difficult before they
are easy.*

John Norley

*Let me tell thee, time is a very
precious gift of God; so precious that
it's only given to us moment by
moment.*

Amelia Barr

*So get a few laughs and do the
best you can.*

Will Rogers

8. Develop a spirit of optimism

There are only two ways to look at life – with a YES or a NO in your heart and mind. If you begin every task, relationship, or activity with a NO life-outlook, you are doomed to live a life filled with disappointment,

frustration, and anxiety. If you begin with a YES-I can-do-this life-outlook, you have a greater chance of achieving your desires. There is no guarantee that with optimism you will achieve success, but the chances are in your favor.

It is a medical fact that people who are positive and optimistic get sick less often and live longer than people who are negative and pessimistic. I am not referring here to a blind optimism that anything or everything is possible; it's just not that kind of life or world. However, if your outlook tends to be "I can, I deserve, I will," your chances of success are improved dramatically. You will be amazed that when your life outlook is positive, circumstances, people, and events will often be in your favor either directly or indirectly. Jung called it synchronicity. Segleman calls it opportunity. Some would call it fate. Others luck. I choose to call it the consequences of life working in your favor.

This does not imply that just being an optimist will guarantee success, happiness, wealth, or peace of mind. But if you had a choice to be negative about anything or positive, which do you think gives you a better chance to achieve it?

In reality, there is a lot of negativity in our world. We are surrounded daily with a plethora of negative circumstances, people, and situations. The thing to remember is that judging a thing to be negative or positive is not about the thing itself. It is about us and our perceptions.

Life is a neutral process that gives each of us the opportunity to decide whether a condition or situation is negative or positive in our perspective or life. We don't always get to choose our life circumstances, but we can always choose our attitudes about them.

Remember, we are here for a short time and then we are gone from this Earth forever.

*A man can do only what he can do. But
if he does that each day he can sleep at
night and do it again the next day.*

Albert Schweitzer

*Success is going from failure to failure
without loss of enthusiasm.*

Winston Churchill

*Dream lofty dreams, and as you
dream, so shall you become. Your
vision is the promise of what you
shall one day be.*

James Allen

9. Be persistent

It is unfortunate that many people quit just before they are about to have all of their effort, patience, commitment, and belief pay off. Why is this? Why do people fail to stick with things? Well, for every person who has given up on something – anything – I will bet there are others who have persisted until they have achieved or won the day.

I would like to share with you what I have discovered are some of the common reasons why people successfully stay with relationships, projects, careers, businesses, or simple activities and hobbies. People persist because:

1. They believe in themselves.
2. They perceive failure as an opportunity to do better, not as a negative.
3. They interpret problems as hurdles, not roadblocks.

4. They just refuse to give up.
5. They understand that failure is not final, only a circumstance.
6. Their self-esteem is too high to permit giving in or up.
7. Their dreams are too important to them to settle for less.
8. They do not accept the views or judgments of others that would limit their potential and ability.
9. They know that their legacy is in their hands alone.
10. They see rejection as the other person's issue, not theirs.
11. Their ego is not in control of their life.
12. Their life is NOW, and what they do with it matters.
13. They believe in their purpose and mission in life.
14. They believe that the specific gifts they have been given are to be used for the benefit of others.
15. They know their time is limited, so they need to get on with it – now.

This is a long list, I know, but I wanted to make sure I covered a whole range of reasons. Any of them sound familiar to you?

*Whatever the mind of man can conceive
and believe it can achieve.*

Napoleon Hill

*Be ashamed to die until you have won
one victory for humanity.*

Horace Mann

*The important thing in life is not the
triumph but the struggle.*

Pierre de Coubertin

10. Focus on what you can do now

You tend to bring into your life whatever is consistent with your focus. You can either focus on what is not working or what is; what you don't have or you do; what you want or don't want; what you believe in or don't. There is a great line (can't remember where I heard it; just know I am not taking credit for it) that says: Be careful what you ask for, you might just get it.

One of my favorite quotes is by Arthur Ashe. He said, *"True greatness is: starting where you are, using what you have, and doing what you can."*

Most winners in life are grateful for their blessings, and focus on what they want, have, and can do. By the same token, most losers focus on what is missing, where they are not and on what they can't do.

Winners, on the other hand, learn to work with what they have. They improvise, innovate, adjust, or

compromise – whatever it takes to get the job done with the tools they have.

Whining about what is missing or can't be done keeps you stuck in the past. You have three options in any situation or circumstance: Change it, accept it, or leave it. Whining or complaining doesn't change things or fix them.

A key ingredient in all successful people is focus. What is your focus today? Is it on what you can or cannot do? Have or don't have?

Be aware that you can't focus on both. You can't focus on what is and on what isn't at the same time. It is simply impossible.

*There is no such thing as chance;
and what to us seems merest
accident springs from the deepest
source of destiny.*

Friedrich von Schiller

*Optimism is the faith that leads to
achievement. Nothing can be done
without hope and confidence.*

Helen Keller

*The only thing that is certain in life is
its uncertainty.*

Oswald Chambers

11. Be grateful

Have you ever noticed that some people seem to have more of some things or everything than others? More fun, stuff, friends, success, money, influence, achievements, wisdom, peace, harmony, freedom – just to mention a few.

Why is this? During the years, I have observed hundreds of people in all walks of life. As a speaker, I am privileged to meet thousands of people each year worldwide in my programs. One thing I have seen is a wide-ranging array of attitudes, feelings, and beliefs about life and what it should be like. It is interesting to note that of the people I have met that have the greatest degree of peace, joy, harmony, life balance, friends, and success are people who live with a great deal of gratitude in their lives.

Some of you might believe that you have nothing to be grateful for. Life is just “same stuff, different day,” or just a bowl of pits, or not fair, or whatever.

Here are just a few things you have to be grateful for that many people often take for granted:

1. Air to breathe.
2. Food to eat.
3. Hearts that pump 2,500,000 a month.
4. Minds that can think.
5. Work that is satisfying or challenging or contributes to our growth.
6. The right to believe what we want.
7. The ability to control what we feel and think.
8. The ability to feel.
9. The ability to express love and receive it.
10. The ability to share with others.

Obviously there are many more.

There are two ways each of us can choose to spend our conscious time: focusing on either what we have or what we lack. One of the common characteristics I have found that successful people have is their attitude of thankfulness and gratitude. Each of us, regardless of our social status, education, circumstance, or condition, has much to be grateful for.

I would like you to take a few minutes and count your blessings. Think of everything you are or have been thankful for during your life:

- in your relationships
- in your finances
- in your health
- in your social life
- in your spiritual life
- in your career or business
- with your friends
- your education/wisdom/knowledge
- with your family

You have a choice. You can be filled with gratitude for what you have been given or you can whine about what is missing. Successful people focus on what they can do, not what they can't; what they have, not what has been taken from them; and where they are, not where they think they would like to be.

*What you get by reaching your
destination is not as important as what
you become by reaching your
destination.*

Dr. Robert Anthony

*The thing always happens that you
really believe in; and the belief in a thing
makes it happen.*

Frank Lloyd Wright

*Never give up, no matter what is
going on...no matter what is
happening, no matter what is going
on around you, never give up.*

Dalai Lama

12. Cultivate integrity and character

Adversity is normal in life. It can develop character, strength, courage, self-confidence, and self-belief.

To define character, the dictionary uses words like fortitude, honesty, and distinctive. I use words such as persistence, courage, and self-reliance.

For years I have had an on-going verbal battle with several people about the value and importance of letting people fail, not helping them at every turn of life's wheel, and not giving them whatever they think they need or are entitled to for them to succeed, survive or even just make it through another difficult day.

Now, don't get me wrong: I believe in a safety net and support system at those critical times in people's lives when they really need it. It can often mean the difference between overwhelming discouragement and

making it through another day. I also believe, however, that the more you help some people, the less you help them in the long run.

I ask you: If you help someone every time they are in need or have a perceived need, what do they learn? They learn that their life outcome is always in someone else's hands. They learn that whenever you are in trouble, you pick up the cell phone and call for help. They develop the attitude that just because they are here, they deserve everything.

No one owes anyone anything. Parents don't owe children an education, they provide it because they love them, can afford it, or want to, but not because the children are entitled to it. Companies offer employees opportunities for growth, responsibility, and opportunity for economic freedom, but they do not owe the employee respite from life's troubles and challenges. Life is not easy. When you make it too easy for people, they seldom develop the ability to handle those future

tough times when those who helped them in the past are no longer here or are able.

The problem is that these people never learn self-reliance, self-confidence, the skill in handling life's difficulties or character. And, the need for these will come sooner or later, I guarantee it.

I am reminded of Tom Hanks's role in "Castaway." Would his character have survived better or sooner with help? Maybe, maybe not. But would he have developed the same inner strength, courage, self-belief, and self-reliance in the process? I doubt it.

Integrity and trust go hand in hand with character as qualities for success. It is not possible to have one without the other. If you trust someone, it is most likely because they are trustworthy; they have ethics, integrity, and character. If a person lacks any one of the three, they generally will lack them all.

So, what is integrity? There are many people more expert than me who have written books, articles and given speeches on this important topic. But let me give it my best shot here.

Integrity is behaving in such a way that you know that your every action, your words and deeds and thoughts – yes, your thoughts, too – would be posted on the company bulletin board or the Internet for all to see.

It is the willingness and ability to do what IS right – not what you think is right – and there is often a difference. Most people who have been brought up in the right surroundings know what IS right, yet they hope they can get away with something, anything, and that their words and/or actions will remain forever locked in their own mind.

Sooner or later we all get caught. We may not get caught in the way we were anticipating, but there is a law of cause and effect in place that has been operating for millions of years. Break the rules, pay the

price – no matter where: in your health, relationships, career, etc.

The question we must ask ourselves when we consider doing what is not right vs. what IS, is: Can I handle getting caught? Is the price worth it? How will I react to getting caught? Wouldn't it just be easier to deal in truth? All the time? The answer is yes. So why do people misrepresent, lie, tell little innocent fibs etc.? I don't know. We are all guilty – at least one time in our lives and most of us several times – of shading the truth with what we feel is a justifiable cause. Is this wrong? I am not a moralist. But I do believe that character and integrity are related.

Here are a few simple questions to ask, the next time you are considering anything less than truth, integrity, or character:

1. What will I lose or gain by dealing in un-truth or poor ethics?
2. Who will be impacted other than me?

3. Is it easy for me to shade the truth, and do I do it often? Why?
4. If I deal only in the truth – all the time – what will that do for me?

Yes there are many successful people who have virtually no ethics, integrity, or character. The media has been filled with them for the past few years. But I ask you: If you viewed these people with the previous eleven success qualities in mind, would they have even made the initial cut? I seriously doubt it.

So you might say, “But some of them achieved financial independence, wealth, fame etc.” Well, I’ll leave you with one parting thought.

Were these people successful? Really successful?

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This image shows a full page of blank, lined paper. It features approximately 20 evenly spaced horizontal black lines across its entire width, providing a guide for handwriting or typing. The paper is otherwise completely empty, with no margins, text, or other markings.

*Everyone who got where he is had to begin
where he was.*

Robert Louis Stevenson

*Change your thoughts and you change your
world.*

Norman Vincent Peale

*Decide what you want, decide what you are
willing to exchange for it. Establish your priorities
and go to work.*

H.L. Hunt