

How to Succeed At Anything



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HOW TO SUCCEED AT ANYTHING

It all begins in the mind

Whether we like it or not, what we think, we are! Thinking and what we think about precedes every action. We can think failure and despondency, or success and satisfaction. Within reason it's part of our make-up to become what we imagine ourselves to be.

People we contact are consciously or unconsciously affected by the personality atmosphere we radiate. The apprehensive person creates an uneasy aura, giving the sense of a lack of confidence. When we are confident we tend to engender assurance with others. It's contagious, because they're relaxed and genuine, giving the feeling that whatever they are advocating is worth investigating. They tend to know where they are going and are secure. Others are attracted to them.

Successful persons do not visualise difficulties or failures, but neither do they ignore them. They set out to overcome them. Remaining optimistic, they have a mental picture of success.

From failure to success

Sometimes the best way to succeed is to fail first – like I did. As a teenager I pursued a trade in the metal industry. I successfully completed my apprenticeship and was satisfied with my accomplishment as a fully qualified tradesman. But I felt compelled to move into an entirely different field of work. After one year I decided to apply for a sales position. I had no experience in selling yet this type of work and the financial possibilities were appealing. To the disappointment of my parents I left my well-paid job to train for a selling position.

My results were appalling. I was an absolute failure. The assistant sales manager suggested that perhaps I should find another field of work before I was asked to leave. I was desperately discouraged and didn't know which way to turn. Logically I should have quit, but I had a gut feeling that I could succeed.

I decided to spend several days alone to contemplate my future. After a lot of thinking, and even praying, I decided to win, rather than be beaten. I studied sales books furiously and came back with an almost invincible zeal to achieve the roll of a successful salesperson. I returned to the field with a new spirit and sold better than I even imagined. I became one of the top salespersons in Australia and New Zealand. After almost four years I was promoted to state sales manager. What happened to me can be the experience of all who are determined.

Future vision

Bart Simpson, the television cartoon character, boasts of being an under-achiever, and is proud of it. If you put yourself down, and like Bart, concentrate on your inadequacies and difficulties, you're beaten before you begin. If you desire success, but don't picture yourself in your desired role, your chances of accomplishment are limited. Wanting, wishing and desiring a goal is not good enough. You need to believe you can achieve and then act on your belief. Think success and in time you will be more likely to have success. It may be a vision today; tomorrow it can become reality.



Perhaps at present you're not successful. You may be struggling financially, or restricted by your current employment. You may have failed exams. So first decide what you really want to achieve. Perhaps it's good health, financial security or a university degree. Whatever it is, (providing your goal is realistic) you can have it, if your mental attitude is positive and determined.

Imagine your mind as a garden. An essential garden requirement is soil cultivation. Perhaps you need more soil, watering, fertilising, weeding, and tender care. Neglect can cause plants to wither or die. Maintain proper nourishment, watering and protection against pests, and a productive garden will emerge. The sturdy green shrubs, the multiple colours in roses, petunias, pansies and others are a delight to the eye. Or admire the vitally healthy vegetable garden with deep green silver-beet, white-hearted cauliflower, or rich, red tomatoes. A good garden doesn't just happen. It grows because of constant care and effort.

The mind works in a similar way. Each day, manage your thinking by visualising your future. Don't think about giving up but constantly see yourself in your mind's eye reaching your desired goal, even though it hasn't yet happened. The future will become easier to imagine, until finally it becomes reality. It all starts and continues with your thinking.

Does this seem like pie in the sky - too good to be true? You'll be surprised at the opportunities that will come your way when you keep a picture of your future before you. So don't let the "pests"

destroy your crop. What are the pests? Thoughts; such as failure, doubt, discouragement, impatience and apprehension. Replace them with thoughts of achievement, belief, success and determination. Be positive, emotive, and feel as if you're actually living your success. Then add a little emotion. This can give just the stimulation you need when things look tough.

Avoid using defeatist statements like, "It's not possible", "I'm a born loser", "It'll never happen", etc. Rather, say, "I'll never give up", "My future looks bright", "Success will one day be mine", etc. Life isn't always easy, so see it as a challenge, to meet and if possible, beat. Not every detail of your life will succeed, but at least you will have tried and learned, and will be wiser for the future. Don't let a small slip along the way make you give up. Some battles we win and some we don't. Just keep moving forward, until you have a better chance to win.

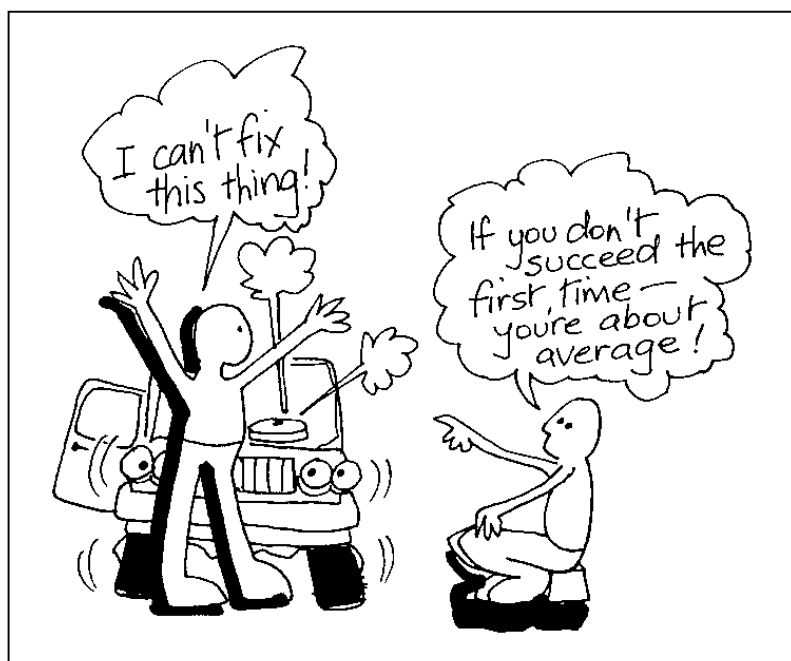
Anticipate success

Some try hard, but still fail. Is it because they don't have ability, haven't had any lucky breaks, or they were not realistic? Were they living in a fantasy world? It seems that some people are prone to failure, while others seem to win.

Success doesn't come when we receive a diploma, win the race, or when we're financially flush. These are more the rewards of success. Success comes the moment we set our goal. If we expect success, we are more likely to achieve. If we don't believe we'll be successful, we probably won't be. That's it, in a nutshell.

A positive person will develop a habit of anticipation, placing his/her future in the realm of possibility. Negative thinking places one's venture in the improbable zone. The basic reason behind this phenomenon is that people are attracted to a person who is striving toward a goal but are not likely to be attracted to a drifter. Such persons forge the mould for failure from the beginning. They expect defeat, and get it, whereas the person with drive is on the winning way.

Negative thinking persons can change by changing their thinking. This may be difficult at first, but it can be done. Set clear, realistic and achievable goals, then go for them. In some cases hard work may be required, but as the chosen position is mentally pictured, the visualisation can merge into reality when the time is right. The power to succeed is potentially within us all.



Some people never set goals and therefore do not achieve. Those with goals succeed because they know where they're going. To illustrate, a boat's motor is started and set to drive. If there is no captain or crew, and no course set, what will become of the boat? It will probably end up as a shipwreck.

It's the same with people. Many fail in life because they don't set goals, so achieve nothing, or experience a shipwrecked life. It's a simple fact that people with goals succeed, and people without them fail. Why do people with goals succeed?

Remember - **We become what we think about.** If we are negative toward life, we will reap negative results. If we are positive, set goals and work toward them, life will almost certainly be successful.

What **is** success? Success is achievement of a worthwhile goal. But it's even more. Success begins when we start working toward that goal. In fact, a successful life commences when we first endeavour to reach an ideal. For example, to have a job simply to earn a living is not living at all. Those who work at a job because they have trained, and enjoy their work, find more satisfaction. They had an aim and achieved their desired goal.

So consider. You are successful if you're a teacher, if that's what you planned. A scientist because that's what you studied for and aimed to become. A carpet layer, because that was your choice. A wife and mother, because that's what you find fulfilling in life. Sadly, only a small number do what they want and enjoy their occupation.

Worry, fear and apprehension fade away if our thoughts are directed toward positive goals. Attitude is vitally important. The mind is powerful to the point where we can achieve many things, providing the ideal is realistic. So many blame circumstances for failure, but the truly successful people do not allow themselves to be diverted by obstacles. They'll turn adverse circumstances to their favour and continue in pursuit of their goal.

Coming back to our garden illustration, our minds are like soil. It will produce according to what is planted. If we plant carrots, it will produce carrots. If we plant thistles, we get thistles. Our minds are more incredible and complicated than garden soil, but one fact remains, if we are positive we plant success, while negative thinking tends toward failure. We can be sure that whatever we plant, will return to us. Life can be exciting. Life can be an adventure. There's no need for boredom. Be like an architect and make plans. Then be like a builder and mould your life. Do this and you will feel purpose in living.

To make something of life comes at a price. Just as some professionals require many years of study before they qualify, almost every worthwhile venture in life requires time in preparation. Self-discipline is needed to endure, but this is a small price to pay for achievement. Don't readily accept defeat. Act promptly and decisively.

You may find change hard at first, but if you maintain self-discipline for at least a month, you'll find the pattern of visualising growing on you and changing your life for the better. Effort is needed, but after several weeks it becomes more natural to be positive and enthusiastic about the future. Have courage and act. Ideas are worthless if you only think about them. For example, if you choose to be a scientist, it won't happen if you don't study.

This way of thinking is difficult for some temperaments. It may be a completely new experience.

New habits are hard to form, but if you make a determined effort, you will establish a habit that will endure and enrich your life. There's a character called 'Glum' in 'Gulliver's Travels'. He continually made negative statements like, "We're all goners", "We'll never make it", and "We'll all be killed". The hero, Gulliver, was always optimistic, and always succeeded. This fictional story relates closer to real life than we sometimes think.

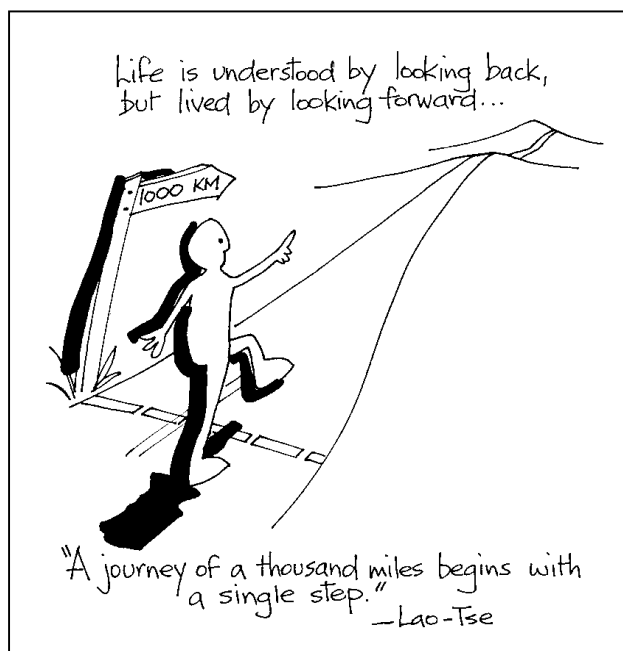
To know where you are going is a rare thing with most people. Put yourself in this category and you have joined the ranks of the successful. As you make progress, the answers will unfold a little at a time, like the rose bud. It opens slowly, but finally into full bloom. Think of yourself as the rose bud, continually opening and looking forward to a more meaningful future.

Success is being persistent and acting as though failure is impossible. Be determined. Don't let petty things upset you, be above that. Don't worry. Choose a happy attitude. If you are tempted to give up, look at the alternative, failure or mediocrity. There's no comparison. Real life isn't freeloading. We need to get up and do something to uncover the opportunities.

Many years ago I heard a story about the importance of aiming high in life. It was set in the early days of America. The old grandfather told the story like this:

"One day I was walking through the woods when I came face to face with a big she-bear. It was coming down the path straight towards me. Of course I ran down the trail in the opposite direction. I was travelling fast - but the bear was travelling faster. Soon I saw a great big limb hanging out over the path. It was over three metres up, way too high for me to reach, but I made up my mind to grab that limb. As I came under it I made a mighty leap - and I missed it! That is, I missed it on the way up, but I caught it on the way down! Let that be a lesson to you, son. If you don't reach your aim in life on the way up, you can grab it on the way down!"

An interesting story, perhaps exaggerated a little, but the lesson is a good one. Without any aim for the limb, an angry bear would have mauled him. With adrenalin pumping through his body, his leap was probably a record high jump. He had an aim. He jumped and succeeded. Not many are going to be chased by a bear, but we do need to set goals. No goal - no achievement, is the inevitable outcome. So set your goals out clearly. Write them down. Visualise your achievement, then steadily move toward your accomplishment. Don't sit there and think. Do something to make your goals happen!



Setting goals

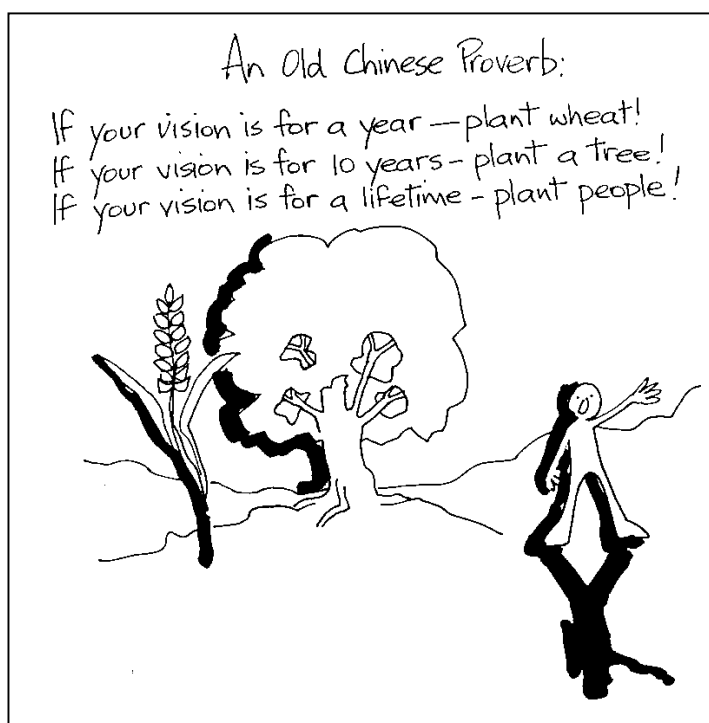
The Wright brothers were called crazy because they believed they could make a flying machine. Today we take flight for granted. Thomas Edison's teacher said he was dull and it would be a waste of time to send him to school. Where would we be today without his great inventions - especially the electric light? Bruno was burned at the stake for believing there were other worlds in the solar system other than earth. The Middle Age's prejudice and superstition was too much for this brilliant man. An American businessman advised his nephew not to invest in the Ford Motor Company because nothing could beat the horse. Congress told Morse they would rather build a railroad to the moon than to bother with his telegraph invention. A famous author stated that a submarine would do nothing but suffocate its crew. People, who limit their thinking, stand in the way of progress.

Here's a few more! Leon Uris, author of the best seller *Exodus*, failed three times in high school English. Lucille Ball, a successful actor, was told by her drama school to try another profession. In 1959, Burt Reynolds was told, "You have no talent". The same executive told Clint Eastwood, "You have a chip on your tooth and you talk too slow." In 1962, executives were not impressed with four young musicians. The rock group called the 'Beatles' was turned down. One executive said, "We don't like their sound. Groups and guitars are on their way out". But these 'experts' were wrong.

If you have a goal that seems a little adventurous, and you really believe it can be accomplished, don't let others stand in your way. Make a positive attempt to turn your dream into reality.

Sometimes we give up too quickly. A gold miner in northern California laboured for many months during the gold rush, but found no gold. In despair he left the gold fields, went home and vowed never to return. Some time later a large mining company bought the property and re-opened the mine. With the first blast they struck a rich vein of gold. One extra day's work would have made the unsuccessful miner rich. He was almost there, but gave up too soon.

Don't let discouragement beat you. At times you may have to travel alone, but the gold may well be in the next blast. Keep going, and you will surely succeed.



Visualise your future

There is an ancient saying, "Where there is no vision the people perish".ⁱ What does this mean? It means we all need a goal for the future to maintain our zest for living. Life becomes meaningless if there's no challenge or anticipation. That's why we need to set realistic goals, then work toward their accomplishment. Become a visionary, not a daydreamer. A daydreamer only wishes and thinks about desires. He/she thinks about what they would like, but don't do anything. He/she may procrastinate, so never starts, or starts but doesn't pursue the goal. Sometimes we make mistakes and discover the idea is a bad one. This doesn't mean we've failed. It means we've found a way that doesn't work. Be positive. Set out in another direction, towards perhaps a different goal. Visionaries work toward achievement. When we are involved in a project we receive the greatest satisfaction. Working toward a goal brings a happy feeling. This is because life has direction.

Sometimes our pursuit of a target can be like a heat-seeking missile fired in aerial combat. Directions may change many times as our goal alludes us. Just as the missile will surely accomplish its work of destruction, so we will hit our target, provided we keep going. Along the way we'll learn self-discipline, determination and confidence. We can learn from every experience.

Look ahead. There may be setbacks, but you need not be deterred. There may be struggles; but you can win. There may be some loss; but keep going. You can win ultimately, simply because you won't give up. Recognise you are growing every day. Mighty gum trees begin as tiny seeds, develop into young saplings and finally grow into massive eucalypts. That's how you can grow as you strive toward your ideals.

You don't have to be brilliant to be successful, just determined. Your goals need to be your dominant thoughts to propel you towards achievement.

Write your goals down. They will become set in your thinking. They become more real when you see them on paper. Refer to them often. Write down your progress and your changes in attitude from time to time. Work out how much closer you are to achievement, and also write this down. If doubts creep in, think of the obstacles that many have overcome to find success. Such as the young lady stricken with polio who later became an athlete and an Olympic champion sprinter. Or consider the weakling who through determination became the world's strongest man. Also, think about the school dropout who became a successful businessman. The inventor who had many failures but finally succeeded, or the politician who waited sixty years to become president. Some of these people can reflect your life. They all had one common ingredient - they didn't quit. They kept going. They met many obstacles, but they persevered, and finally won.

Points on goal setting

1. Goals need to be clearly defined.
2. Figure out what you want.
3. Figure out how to achieve your goal.
4. Set out goals in writing.
5. Your goals must be believable and achievable.
6. Commit yourself to your goals.
7. Vividly imagine your goals.
8. Ardently desire your goals.
9. Pay the price to realise your goals.

It really isn't hard to achieve a goal. It's more difficult to set a plan in motion. Most people don't set goals, so if you do, you are one of a few. It's good to reach your goal. It's fun working towards an

accomplishment. Achievers tend to set new goals to continue an enjoyable and rewarding experience.

False success

Some measure success in terms of wealth - if you become a millionaire you are successful. The millionaire has certainly succeeded in making money, but is wealth creation the only criteria for success? Certainly not! There are many rich people who, in their effort to make a fortune, neglect their health by overwork and stress, dying before their time. There's no virtue in being the richest person in the cemetery! It's a fallacy to think wealth alone brings happiness.

We all have different talents. When we discover our abilities, where we tend to excel, then we can set our goals and strive to achieve our personal best. Some people are gifted athletes, others are intellectual, and some are practical. You may aspire to become a surgeon, a teacher, a nurse, a carpenter or a motor mechanic. If you desire to excel in any chosen vocation, you are already walking the pathway to success. If you take the attitude that your future work is not just a selfish venture, but a service to your fellow human beings, you will also find happiness in your employment. People spend a lifetime searching for happiness. The truth is, you find happiness when you try to make other people happy. Your work and life give an inward satisfaction.

Characteristics of success

Why is it that so few are successful? While it's a fact that almost no one need ever become a failure, there are basic reasons for success. If you follow them, you will be successful.

Many believe success comes to those with superior talent, and failure is the lot of those with little ability. This isn't correct. Success can be enjoyed by almost anyone. Check the following principles.

- **Be true to yourself**

First of all, be honest with yourself and others. Honesty is a virtue, which keeps you on the right road. Dishonest persons often fail because they are inevitably discovered, perhaps even resulting in the ruin of a lifetime career.

- **Patience**

For some, being patient isn't easy. So many want instant success - to be an overnight sensation. This isn't the way it works. Success is a growing experience, eventually blossoming into maturity. Those who build bridges or skyscrapers put a tremendous amount of work into the foundation, which is not even seen, but it is vitally important for the success of the structure. The same principle applies to life. Behind all worthwhile achievements are exacting preparations.

- **Dependability**

Those who make promises and don't keep them - those who make appointments and don't arrive - or are not true to their word, limit their chances of success. Be a person of integrity - be dependable. Have you ever been let down by someone? Most of us have, and it's not appreciated. Successful persons can be relied on to keep their word. We admire those who can be trusted.

- **Set your goal**

To go through life without goals is a recipe for failure. Have a purpose - plan purposefully. Set goals, which will arouse ambition, not just desire. Remember, take a piece of paper and write down your goals - personal goals - family goals and employment goals.

- **Preparation**

After setting your goals, prepare to confront them. Before a student can graduate as a doctor, he or she must spend many years at medical school. The goal is set, but not achieved until the preparation is complete. Education, preparation and training are necessary if we are to achieve our goals. There are also other things to learn such as, personal development and human relationships, both of which we'll explore in the section on How to Develop Meaningful Relationships.

- **Good health**

The person without health has a great handicap. Success can easily be lost if health fails. The way to good health is revealed in the section on How to Enjoy Vibrant Health.

- **Mental attitude**

Correct mental attitude contributes to good health. Most successful people think constructively, positively and with confidence. They resist fear, worry and discouragement. They are not complainers or mood changers. They are generally emotionally balanced people.

- **Drive**

A dead fish can float downstream, but only a live one can swim upstream. Only the person with drive and determination will reach the set goal. A half-hearted effort is likely to fail miserably. Most people drift along in their job, only doing what is required. Only enough effort is expended to ensure the pay packet. These people need a boss to drive them because they don't have any drive of their own. Success is no more than a dream to a person without energy and drive.

- **Adaptability**

What's our reaction when we set out with energy and enthusiasm to achieve our desired goal, only to face an obstacle, or even many obstacles? Most just give up and feel self-pity. The winner goes around the obstacles, or even over them, but doesn't give up trying. This person is an achiever. It may take a little longer, but success will come at last. When an emergency arises, an achiever doesn't lose control or go to pieces. The facts are calmly assessed and in a clear and logical manner circumstances are adjusted to suit the situation. After coming to a decision it's time for action.

- **Perseverance**

An achiever is one who perseveres, and refuses to quit. Discouragement can get the better of us occasionally, but winners never stay despondent. They accept how they may have lost a battle, but realise that they haven't lost the war. They bounce back like a super-ball and continue. A person with this mental attitude will succeed in life. What is more, the struggle generates strength, and an inner happiness. It takes courage to keep going when things get hard. We become better people when we meet difficulties with determination and don't quit. Some people call it grit. Be like the bulldog and don't let go. You will be more satisfied when you ultimately achieve.

- **Stability**

Persons, who are consistent and know where they are going, are on the road to success. It's hard to be self-disciplined and follow duty rather than inclination, but it's the way to progress. The person, who follows feelings only, is likely to fail miserably. Feelings have their place, but they sometimes lead us astray. Emotions are not always logical. It's certainly safer to have the head rule the heart, rather than the reverse.

- **Like-ability**

If you want people to like you, become likeable. This is a personal choice. You can be as nice or

nasty as you decide. Some nasty types seem to prosper, but generally speaking, they rarely succeed.

A characteristic of a loser

- **Impossibility**

The loser says, "It isn't possible". The successful person doesn't think in terms of impossibility. Of course, we must be realistic, recognising that some desires are out of our realm. Many things however, are impossible only in the mind. Because we believe they are impossible, they will be.

I lived in New Zealand for several years. On one occasion, in the course of my work, it was necessary to find lodging in a hotel. The next morning at breakfast I was dining with a stout man who had a large walrus moustache. He spoke with a prominent English accent. His purpose for being in the area was to fish. After talking on the subject for several minutes, he made a simple, yet remarkably true statement. He was hoping to hook at least one that morning in order to have a fish lunch. However, the fish were not biting well, therefore he was not assured of a catch. He said, "Fishing is like anything else; the more time you spend at it, the more fish you catch".

Very true! We get paid and we get results according to effort. But sometimes we need intelligence as well as diligence. The fisherman is smart if he uses the right bait, the right line, the right float and fishes in the right position at the right time. Failure will come if we do and don't think, or if we think and don't do. To succeed we need a wise blend of work and planning. Some things don't work, so we try something else, but we don't give up. When we find an alternative, we try again.

The point is this; preparation, work, and smart thinking bring success. Perhaps the only place where success comes before work is by alphabetical preference in the dictionary. We need to work at accomplishment both physically and mentally.

The easiest way to fail is to do nothing. There are opportunities all around and we'll find them if we search. We make the choice. We can take a dead end road or we can join the achievers. The dead end road is bitter - the road to success is sweet.

Where are you going? It's up to you! Nobody else can choose for you.

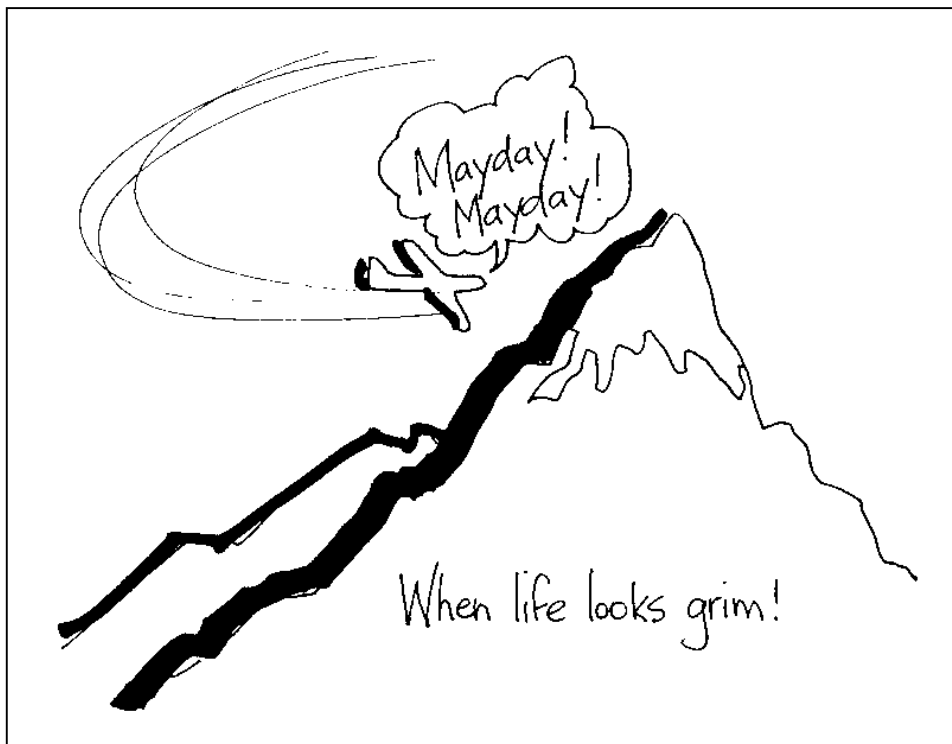
Some obstacles to success

When life looks grim

For reasons we don't always understand we sometimes feel down. Some call it the blues while others call it discouragement. At times like this we feel life doesn't offer very much and we can enter into a 'don't care' feeling. We feel sorry for ourselves.

Sometimes circumstances bring on these unhealthy feelings. We may have lost a close friend or a much loved partner or relative. We may have lost a job, failed an exam, or failed in a venture. Life may not be working out as we hoped. (These crises of life are discussed more fully in the section, 'How to Manage Life's Stresses.')

On the other hand, circumstances often have nothing to do with melancholy feelings. Maybe it's due to an oncoming physical sickness, or a depressed state of mind. Maybe it's just a negative thinking pattern - looking at the dull, rather than the bright side of life. Whatever the reason for glum feelings, be reassured - sunshine usually follows rain. We won't always be in despair. There is usually an escape! Life **can** be happy and cheerful again!



If you find yourself in this situation try to take a calm approach to refresh the nervous system. How is this done? There are several ways: a positive attitude, acceptance of the inevitable, support of others, talking to a friend or loved one, or, exercise. Go for a brisk walk, followed by a warm and cooler shower, and then have a brisk rub down with a towel. For many, this will lift the spirits. The importance of regular exercise is dealt with more fully later, but at this stage we simply need to know that modern research has discovered how exercise is a natural tranquilliser for stress, often making medications unnecessary. The healthy effect of exercise also improves mental efficiency. With this advantage, we can think more clearly and find solutions. Please note I am suggesting possible solutions to the discouraged. Those suffering from depression that requires medication are wiser to follow the directions of their doctor.

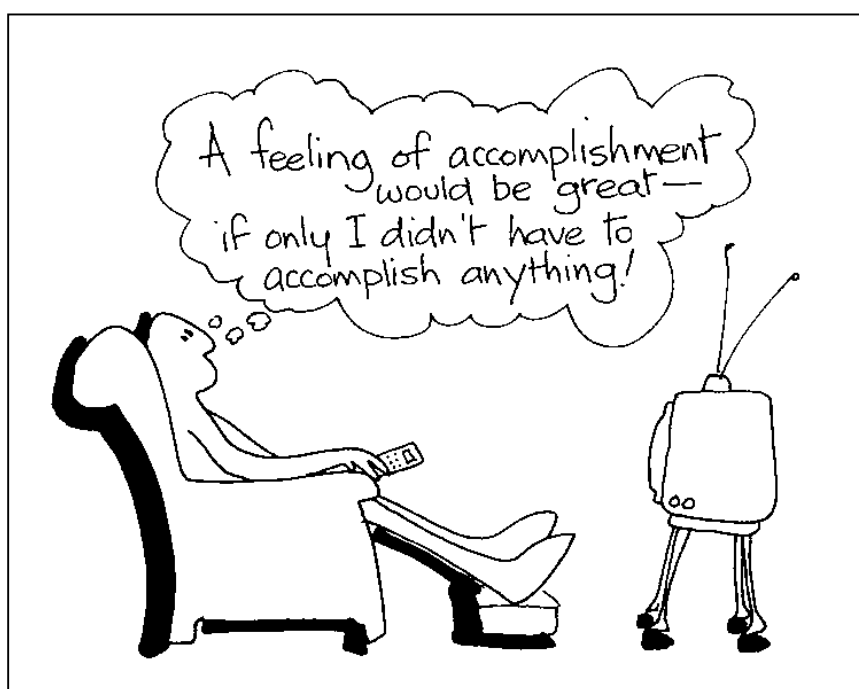
Analyse your personal situation. Create a positive attitude. Write down your problem then consider the worst possible thing that could happen. Give a percentage possibility of such a thing eventuating. It will most probably be very small. On another piece of paper write the good things about your life. Include family and friends, relationships, health, age, job, abilities - anything. If you are honest, you'll almost certainly find that the good reasons for living will tip the scales on the positive side.

You'll discover how life can be worth living after all! Believe you are important. Why? Because there is only one of you in the world. As an individual you are unique. You have a part to play in society. Without you the world would suffer a loss. First of all, do your best with your personal qualities for your own good, and secondly, for your peers. It's disturbing to see people with so little self-dignity. Thinking well of yourself is not egotistical or selfish. Self-improvement is a worthy first duty in life. We cannot be a benefit to the world if we don't first benefit ourselves. With a positive self-esteem, we can more effectively control our thinking pattern.

Refuse to feel sorry for yourself. Wallowing in self-pity can be very destructive to progress. Think success, not failure. Remember: impossibility is in the mind, seldom is it a reality.

The next step may seem a little strange, but many try this method and declare that it works. If your feelings are pessimistic, apprehensive or miserable disregard them. **Act** as though you are optimistic, cheerful and enthusiastic. You may not **feel** this way, but if your actions are positive, amazingly, in a short time, you'll **feel** positive. Sometimes it doesn't hurt to give a little pep talk to one's self like a football coach gives the team. This can be good stimulation. Tell yourself that this day can be special: then choose to be happy, regardless of circumstances. Don't talk in a hopeless or discouraged way. No matter what you must face, talk and act as though you are invincible. You only have to live one day at a time. Don't worry about the future - plan for it - but don't worry. Your worry is a wasted effort and totally unproductive. Live today as best you can, while setting goals for the future.

Giving advice to a discouraged person may appear easy, but it's more difficult to advise one's self. One thing we inevitably learn about life is; it's not always easy. The old statement, "Calm seas never made good sailors", is true. So is this one, "Who is the one who gets the cheers and earns the silver cup? It is the one who perseveres, when all the rest give up".



Enjoy life now

Important as it is to set goals and plan for the future, in reality the only time we have to live is the present. What a waste of quality life if we choose to be miserable now, hoping that happiness will come later. To feel guilty for past mistakes is equally foolish, for the past cannot be changed. Rather, see it as a learning experience for the present and future. We sometimes punish ourselves unnecessarily. If we make a slip, rather than continually remonstrating with ourselves, it's more profitable to resolve the issue, then keep going and choose not to make the same mistake again. We do well if we reaffirm the original choice of being the type of persons we want to become.

In a world of uncertainty, we cannot guarantee tomorrow, therefore, we are wise to make the most of today – it's really all we have! Don't regret the past - learn from it. Don't fear the future - plan for it. Don't dread today - enjoy it!

What if you fail?

Even when you've done everything correctly, you may still fail. But there is no shame in failure. At least you've tried. There is shame in not doing anything. Look upon mistakes as a learning experience. An interesting comparison with mistakes is when we drop the soap in the shower. We can call the soap nasty names and become very angry. After all, it has no right to slip between our fingers. We may even hit the shower wall, but what's the point? The soap has slipped. It's in the past. Nothing we do can change what's happened. But let's be positive, at least we're still in the shower. We can search for a solution! What is the solution? Pick up the soap and begin again! Living is less stressful when we have this attitude toward the stumbling blocks of life.

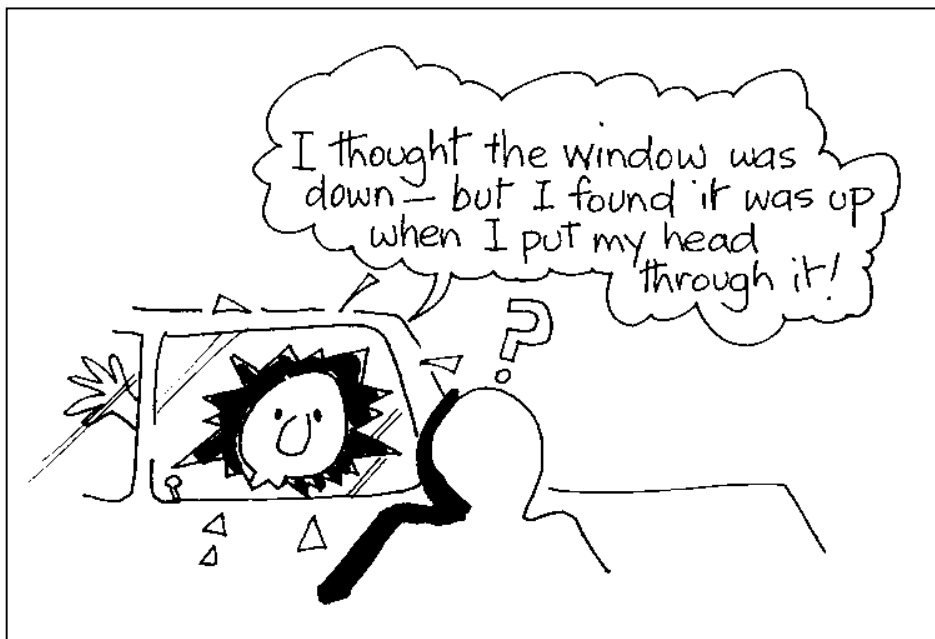
My first attempt at public speaking was a total failure. As a child in Sunday school I was given a very easy task to simply ask everyone to bow his or her head while the superintendent prayed. My turn came on the program. I stood up and haltingly announced, "Will you all bow your eyes and close your heads?" There was a snicker from everyone but me. My embarrassment at such a tender age was intense. When I was a teenager at a youth meeting I was asked to give a small report which would take about five minutes. When I stood up my mind became blank. I said a few words without making much sense, then sat down. Once again I was embarrassed. But I persevered and today I am often asked to speak in public or conduct three-hour seminars or one-day or two-day seminars.

Develop different strategies until you find a way through. Achievers will inevitably make more mistakes because they try more often. At least they're doing something! The quitter makes fewer mistakes, but doesn't achieve a lot. Have an attitude of perseverance and you will be the winner.

Yes, it can be dangerous when you climb out on a limb, but that's where you find the fruit - and it's so sweet! It's waiting for you to enjoy. Reach out for a taste. You'll find it excellent.

Success is not always for the smart

Most are familiar with the story, "The Hare and the Tortoise". The challenge of the tortoise when he asked the hare to compete with him in a race seemed ludicrous. The hare was confident of winning, so took a rest under a tree near the halfway mark. The tortoise was much slower but kept going while the hare slept, and the tortoise eventually won. Why did the tortoise, with little ability for running, beat the hare, which had the ability to run at great speed? First of all, the hare went to sleep. Secondly, the tortoise persevered to the end. This old fable has real life connotations.



Many talented people become non-achievers. Why? Perhaps they do too little, or they don't plan adequately, or they don't know how to use their abilities. Many less talented people achieve success because they have the characteristic of perseverance. If you are talented like the hare, and don't sleep on the job, there is almost no limit to your future achievements. If you have talents equal to the tortoise, don't despair. Hang in there. You can make it!

Sometimes society places too much emphasis on intellectual ability. There are other abilities and levels of intelligence, just as important. Not everyone can be a doctor or a professor or a teacher. Where would we be without our tradesmen and labourers? We all have a part to play in balancing the needs of society. Every job has its part to play in meeting someone's need.

To me, it seems a tragedy when I hear people say how they hate their job. Fancy hating most of your waking time! I well remember when I was a teenager doing an apprenticeship in the metal industry. I hated work. All I lived for was finishing time so I could go and have fun. My problem was a wrong mental attitude. I was making my life unnecessarily miserable, when I could have enjoyed my work simply by thinking differently.

After my experience in selling and sales management, at the age of 28, I decided to attend university. Here I discovered a new philosophy of life, which came as an awakening to me and completely changed my attitude. In class, one of the lecturers mentioned how he had to do some mundane work to pay his way through university. His attitude was different. He saw every occupation as a science and determined to do his best to learn as much as he could while doing his "ordinary" job. His work, though boring, became a challenge to him. I was surprised to hear him say how he looked back on these times with pleasure because it taught him so much about life.

Here I was in the same position, paying my way as I studied at university. I wasn't enjoying my work, especially the cleaning which I had taken as a second job. I was only looking to the future when I would be finished with my studies and do the work for which I was training. This was a worthwhile goal, which I achieved, but I was making life unnecessarily miserable along the way by hating my job.

I decided to make a change in my thinking. I took an interest in my work. I didn't complain when I was given a difficult task, rather, I accepted it as a challenge and decided that the work I did would be my best work. I remembered the words of my father, who quoted the cliché, "If a job is worth doing, it's worth doing well". I took an interest in the cleaning job and decided that no cleaner could make a place cleaner than I could. This new attitude, which I had not learned until my late twenties, gave me a new lease on life. I actually found I was enjoying my work. Why? It was all in my mind and a change of attitude.

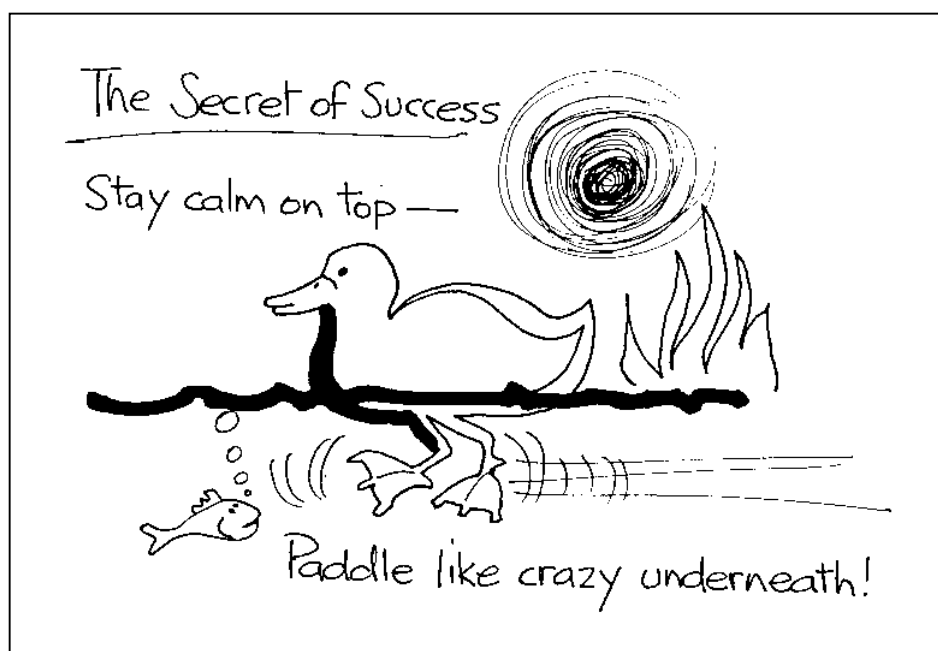
Do you hate work? If you decide to, you will! Do you hate study? Again, if you decide to, you will! Every job has its good and bad features. If you can accept taking the good with the difficult or uninteresting, you'll find it's not so bad after all. If you can redirect your thinking to the positive mode, you will actually come to like your work, or study. I am not saying it will be easier. You may have to push yourself a little and allow time to accomplish a different mental attitude. But hold on and your rewards will make it all worthwhile.

A lesson from nature

On one occasion when I lived in Christchurch, New Zealand, I had my lunch break on the bank of the river Avon. It was a beautiful, warm, sunny day, and perfectly relaxing as I watched the clear water flowing swiftly down the river. While I was enjoying this pleasant environment, I noticed a

duck, with several ducklings. This was nothing extraordinary at this time of year, for there seemed to be hundreds of ducklings. However, these fluffy ducklings were paddling against the reasonably strong flow of the river. The mother duck glided over the water effortlessly, but while the ducklings' webbed feet were going as fast as possible, they seemed to be making little or no headway. A few minutes went by during which time I didn't take a great deal of notice of their almost impossible struggle against the river. Then I noticed how they had progressed upstream several metres. I thought they were fighting a losing battle, but I was wrong. Because they kept trying without giving up, they made sure progress. Also, because of the effort on their part, they strengthened their little legs, so that next time they made their way upstream they would be much stronger.

Sometimes we feel we are not making much progress as we swim against the strong current of life's obstacles, but if we keep going and trying, we can eventually achieve our goals.



I also noticed that although those ducklings seemed to be using every ounce of energy possible, there was still a strong reserve available if they wanted to put forward extra effort for an emergency situation. Something very appealing to the ducklings' palate was floating downstream. Two of them made a dash for this delicacy, and they seemingly ran on top of the water: upstream: to reach the tasty morsel. If they really wanted, they could travel three or four times faster than normal, even though they appeared to be using all their effort.

Sometimes when we find the going tough, an added spurt of energy and enthusiasm will produce wonders. The ducklings beat the river because they tried. We will beat the rivers of opposition and be winners - if we keep trying. We only lose the battle when we give up the fight.

An example of courage

"**Endurance**" was the name chosen for the ship captained by Sir Ernest Shackleton, the British Antarctic explorer. He and his crew sailed on their expedition to the South Pole on August 8 1914. When they arrived in the icy waters it seemed that everything was against them as they met one obstacle after another. Finally their ship was frozen in the ice, which meant they could not move unless the ice split and gave them a safe passage into less dangerous waters. The great danger was

that the ice could come together again and crush the ship. Sure enough, when the great, thick sheets of ice started to move they gripped the "Endurance" in giant jaws, mercilessly crushing the ship, leaving it splintered beyond repair.

The only safe and wise thing to do was to disembark and make their way in smaller boats to Elephant Island. As soon as the ice began to move they set out in their small craft. In a very short time the ice closed in again.

A number of very noisy penguins gathered around the wreck of the "Endurance" as the men were waiting to go to the island. This was unusual, as these penguins were normally very quiet. Some of the superstitious sailors believed this to be an omen of death, but Shackleton would not entertain this thought. "We'll win, if we stick to it", he said.

With little hope of surviving, now their ship was destroyed, they made their way over the rough, stormy sea to Elephant Island, about forty-eight kilometres away. While safe, they were disappointed, for it was a desolate island where ships never passed.

Shackleton suggested that he, with a few of the men take the largest boat and travel to South Georgia, a small island in the south Atlantic, thirteen hundred kilometres away. The men insisted that this was impossible, yet in reality, it was their only hope.

After sailing for some time, one of the men woke Shackleton with dangerous news. As he climbed out of his damp sleeping bag he saw that the temperature had dropped incredibly, causing the spray from the sea to freeze on the boat. Unless the ice was removed, the boat would sink. Weary and numb with cold, Shackleton chipped a portion of the ice away with his axe. At first it seemed unmovable. The men said, "Maybe the penguins were right". But Shackleton said again, "We'll win if we stick to it".

After travelling for many weeks, their food and water supply was almost gone. Still there was no land in sight. Then, toward the end of yet another long day they saw land - South Georgia. But as they made their way to the island, a fierce wind blew up, making them land on the wrong side where there were only cliffs and almost unclimbable hills.

The boat was wrecked, and to wait any longer would be dangerous. As most of the men were sick, Shackleton chose two men to go with him to climb the cliffs and make their way on foot to the inhabited side of the island. To prevent themselves from freezing they walked all night until they finally came to the whaling centre and township.

The manager of the whaling station could hardly believe that these men with icy beards and dirty clothes almost torn to shreds belonged to the Shackleton expedition. He had heard the crew was lost.

Immediately they made their way back to pick up the men left on the other side of the island, after which they travelled to Elephant Island where the rest of the crew had been waiting for four months. They were expecting him to return and were ready to move with very little notice.

The men shouted in triumph when they saw the ship approaching, then said, "Shackleton said he'd be back. He said we'd win if we stuck to it". All twenty-six men survived the ordeal.

Endurance is too mild a word for all that Shackleton and his men faced. Everything was against them, but they endured. They persevered and consequently won.



Rewards of endurance

An Australian tourist was making his way up the steep trail to the Vernal Falls in Yosemite National Park, where he came across an elderly couple. He was surprised to notice the man was a cripple and walking on crutches, so he said, "You're a brave man to tackle a trail like this."

The man replied, "I've done it before, and I hope I'll do it again." Then he added, "It may be my last time, so I must make it". After a few pleasant words the tourist moved on and spent some time enjoying this pleasant place. On his way back he again met the couple just a short distance from the top. He said, encouraging them, "You're almost there".

"Yes, I'll make it. I told you I'd make it", the man said. "I can take only a few steps at a time, but I've got all day".

Yes, he made it to the top even though he was a cripple and had every reason to say he wasn't able to take such a difficult walk. He made it because he didn't quit.

Whatever goal you set in life, always keep it before you and it will almost certainly be achieved. You see, **people don't fail - they quit.** Or, to put it another way - **A quitter never wins and a winner never quits.**

Are you a winner or a quitter? You will be what you choose.

IT COULDN'T BE DONEⁱⁱ

Somebody said that it couldn't be done,
But he with a chuckle replied
That "Maybe it couldn't", but he would be one
Who wouldn't say so till he'd tried.
So he buckled right in with a trace of a grin
On his face. If he worried he hid it.

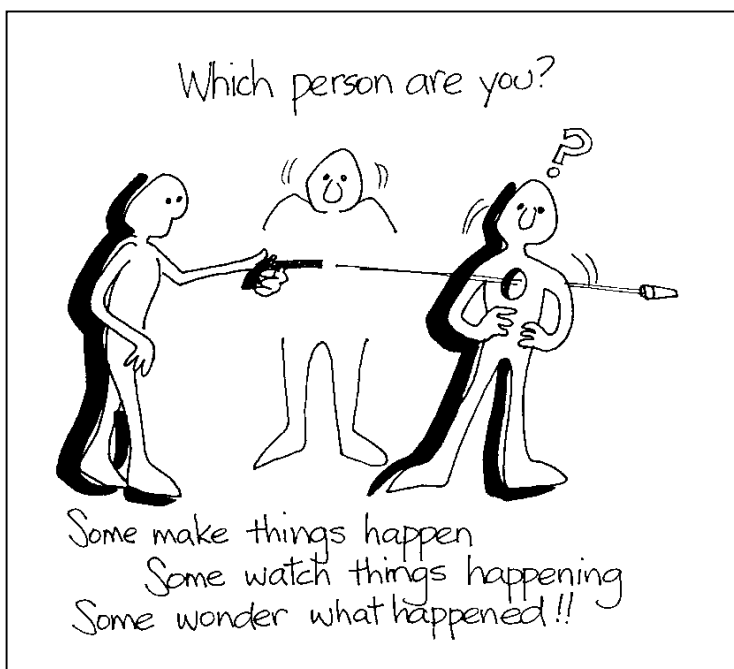
He started to sing as he tackled the thing
That couldn't be done, and he did it.

Somebody scoffed: "Oh, you'll never do that;
At least no one has ever done it";
But he took off his coat and he took off his hat,
And the first thing we knew he'd begun it.
With a lift of his chin and a bit of a grin,
Without any doubting or quiddit,
He started to sing as he tackled the thing
That couldn't be done, and he did it.

There are thousands to tell you it cannot be done,
There are thousands to prophesise failure;
There are thousands to point out to you one by one,
The dangers that wait to assail you.
But just buckle in with a bit of a grin,
Just take off your coat and go to it;
Just start in to sing as you tackle the thing
That "cannot be done", and you'll do it.

Give yourself credit

As you progress toward your desired goal, reflect on your accomplishments each day. You'll now find it more natural to concentrate on the positive instead of grovelling in the negative way of thinking. Concentrate on the positive aspects of your life. Look at your abilities in work, sport, your hobby or your ability to communicate with other people and see the type of person you are becoming. Sure, you may still have a few rough edges, but don't major on them. Give yourself credit for progress and live your life as the type of person you want to become. Work out the talents, abilities, nature and image of this person you are targeting in the accomplishment of your goal. Practise that image by living it today as much as possible. For example, the way you dress, the way you talk with people, the way you work and your attitude toward life. The law of your mind will gravitate towards you becoming that person type.



Adopt the attitude, I can and I will and you will become a winner. This new attitude habit will not happen over - night. You'll need to make a conscious effort every day for a while until it comes naturally. After about one month it will start to happen, but may take a few months to become automatic. Persevere and you'll be well rewarded. Become engrossed in your new way of thinking until it totally becomes you.

Don't surrender

Tim was a young man who faced life with a semi-defeatist attitude. He looked on the negative side most of the time and could never see past his obstacles, real or imagined. He changed when he discovered the positive approach to life. His thinking was transformed from defeat to victory. From a previously mundane existence, life became an exciting adventure. As he looked back he couldn't believe he'd been crawling through each day on his hands and knees. But he changed. Instead of his habitual surrender, he stood up to his obstacles and discovered they weren't anywhere near as bad as they seemed. He always said he was a realistic person, which was true. However, his realism was only in observing the difficulties he faced but not the solutions to overcome them.

That's the trouble with many people who look at the mud on the ground, but never look at the stars.

Anybody can be bright and optimistic when everything is going fine, but extra power is needed to keep moving when everything seems against you. Some even feel they are so far down they can't go any further. This isn't usually the case. The mind tends to exaggerate when you feel a little discouraged. If you have reached the bottom, you can still be hopeful because you have only one way to go, **up**. People often think that nobody has found life as tough as "my" situation, but this usually isn't true. You don't have to look far to see people worse off than yourself.

At your lowest point you need to repeat those famous old words, "When the going gets tough - the tough get going", and "I'm tough!"

I have been a loser, but now I choose to be a winner. I will overcome all these obstacles intelligently and positively. If I can't go around them or over them, I will go straight through them. They will not stop me. I will conquer them.



While your attitude is one of determination, don't become tense or uptight. Relax. It's like hitting a golf ball, if you try too hard, you may miss it or hit it in the rough. A positive, intelligent, easy stroke with good follow-through gets the result. This is a healthy way to face each situation - intelligently, calmly, but with a determination to win. Remember the vital principle - if you think success, you have a better chance of achieving success. Keep your visualisation before you and your goal will almost certainly become a reality.

Thomas Edison was asked this question about his experiments on the electric light. "Mr Edison, how do you feel, having failed more than a thousand times?" He replied, "I did not fail, I simply established over one thousand ways that would not work".

Aerodynamically speaking, a bumblebee cannot fly. The bumblebee doesn't know it can't fly, so flaps its wings and flies anyway! From babies, some trained elephants are chained by one leg to a stake to prevent them wandering. When they reach maturity, only a rope and a small stake is needed to hold them. With their superior strength, they could easily pull the stake out of the ground and escape. But the elephant doesn't believe it can move away, so doesn't. Success can come by belief and failure through unbelief. Our future is enhanced or limited by what we believe.

Who could ever imagine that a fat, hungry caterpillar would be transformed into a beautiful butterfly? It seems incredible, but we know it's true. This is an illustration of how we, as individuals, can change for the better. There may be a time when we feel dark and alone, but finally we emerge to a new life. It may take a little while for the wings to dry, but then we are able to spread them wide and fly to our desired goal. Some people may negatively label us, but don't be perturbed. We know we are soaring toward the happy life.

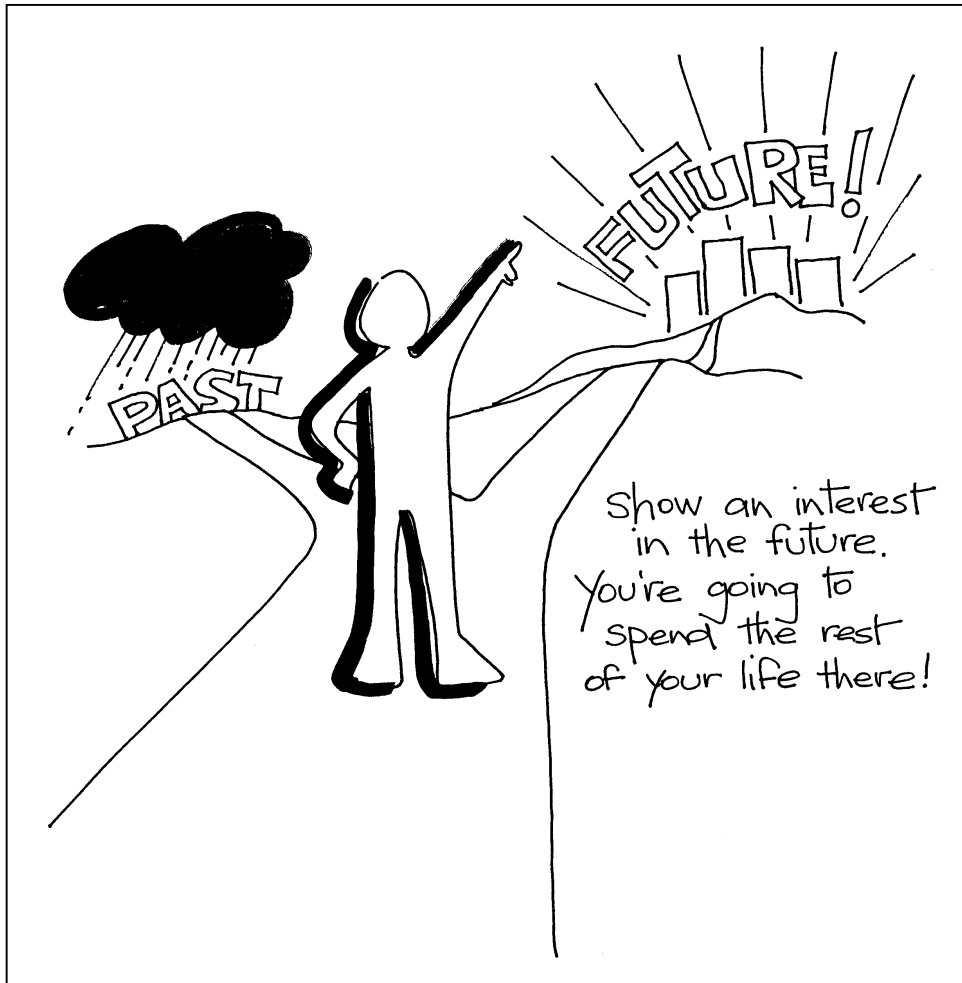
Yes, a life of happiness and achievement can be summed up in one word. **Attitude**. If your attitude is healthy, positive and determined, nothing will impede your progress.

The ultimate happiness

Getting the most out of life is satisfying. We gain tremendously when we do the best we can. We are wise, however, to remember that we aren't invincible. Even if we live to be more than one hundred years of age, we will still eventually die. This is the fate of all people. Many ask the question, "Is there life after death?" I am a deeply spiritual person, though not fanatical, and I believe there is life beyond tomorrow. To achieve this reward would have to be the **ultimate happiness**. From my personal experience, I feel certain that the happy life cannot be fully achieved without including the spiritual dimension to our being. Choosing the spiritual road, promises a spectacular future. Read the Bible, it contains incredible revelations.

¹ King James Version -Proverbs 29:18

¹ Edgar Allen Guest (1919)



ⁱ King James Version -Proverbs 29:18

ⁱⁱ Edgar Allen Guest (1919)

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Disclaimer

This information is based on the experience and knowledge of the author. He believes that those who follow the principles outlined in this section will find their lives greatly enhanced. However, he assumes no responsibility for reader's personal choices.

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