

THE HIDDEN POWER



OF SETTING GOALS



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Introduction

Isn't it interesting that so many people talk about the power of setting goals, but so few people ever seem to actually set them?

I used to be one of those people. For years, I read every book on goal setting that I could get my hands on. I attended every workshop about goal setting that came to town. I knew everything there was to know about setting goals, but I just never set any. I knew that goals worked, but I was never willing to put them to work.

Then one night as I was trying to get to sleep, I was fantasizing about “the good life” I would have if only I could make my wishes come true—like in a fairy tale. It was a fabulous fantasy—but it was only a fantasy!! In a fairy tale you could always count on a fairy godmother or leprechaun for help. Unfortunately, it was real life, and all I could count on was myself.

That thought, however, really got my attention! What if I really could count on myself? That's not so bad! What if I could determine exactly what I wanted from life and then make it happen? What if setting a goal was as easy as just making a wish?

Wishes *are* goals—but goals with some added pizzazz. Goals provide the course of action that can take you to wherever you want to go, but they lack the motivation to get you there. Wishes are a little different. They have more impact—like being struck by a semi-truck instead of by a Hotwheels car.

Wishes let you dream. They let you fly. Wishes help to unleash a source of limitless opportunities and mighty forces that gives you the power to accomplish what you might otherwise never even have imagined. If you really want to make good things happen in your life, think of setting goals as making wishes.

Wishing was the extra motivation I'd been looking for. I never felt much enthusiasm in getting out of bed in the morning and telling myself, “Yippee!! Today I'm going to work on my goals.” But saying to myself, “Today I'm going to make my wishes come true” was a completely different story. This way of thinking made me feel as though I could accomplish anything.

This new way of thinking suddenly and drastically changed my life. It catapulted me from the minor leagues of achievement to the major leagues of success. The very instant I changed my behavior and way of thinking, the world around me started to change. The things I wanted to happen began to happen. The kind of life I had always dreamed about started to come true—like in a fairytale.

The purpose of this book is to share with you the incredible power to make your wishes and goals come true. To help you get what you want out of life--regardless of your background, your age, or your present circumstances--we are going to give you a concrete strategy, not just a speech about how great success is.

Many people think that luck or good fortune is ultimately what determines our fate. That is only slightly true.

Luck contributes its part in what happens to you, but what you will learn here is how to do your part. Luck essentially deals the cards. The goal of this book is to teach you how to play them. While fate rules, it favors those who learn the tricks. And this book is about the most important trick of all—*cause and effect*.

The Importance of Cause and Effect

Have you ever been caught running a red light and not been given a ticket? Luck was on your side; you got away with it. Have you ever jumped out of an airplane without a parachute and not been hurt? If so, you probably weren't as lucky. You may be able to break the laws of man, and occasionally get away with it, but you can't defy the laws of nature.

Take into consideration the law of cause and effect. For every effect, there must be a cause. That cause must always come before the effect. Simple and to the point, it's the easiest natural law to remember and probably the easiest to forget.

Who would stand in front of a fireplace and expect flames without first filling it with wood? Certainly no one in his right mind. But how often have you heard someone say that from now on he will do only what he is paid to do—and nothing more—unless he gets a raise? According to the cause and effect law, he'll be waiting quite a while. He must first do more than he is being paid for, to make himself worth more than he is being paid.

Who would expect to make a withdrawal from a bank account before first making a deposit? No sensible person would! Have you ever seen a spouse who wanted more out of a relationship, but wasn't ever willing to invest more in that relationship? Because of cause and effect, this kind of spouse will always be in for a rude awakening.

Who would stand before a bare piece of land and expect corn without first planting the seeds? No sensible person would! But have you ever met someone who feels as if they are owed the rewards of success without first being willing to put forth the time and effort it takes to become successful? According to the law of cause and effect, the investment must always come first, if the rewards are to follow.

Life teaches us that we have to put wood in a fireplace *before* we get flames; we have to make a deposit *before* we can make a withdrawal; we have to plant seeds, water them, and nurture them *before* we can harvest the corn. Too often, unfortunately, we don't apply this practical knowledge to the way we conduct our lives.

If you yearn for a particular effect in your life—whether it involves a relationship, or a career, or something else—you must first set in motion the cause of that effect. When you don't get a desired effect, you can be sure that you have not set the appropriate cause into motion.

You can be equally certain that once the cause is set in motion, the effect you want will follow. The cause needs to come first. Once it does, the effect will follow.

One of the most important decisions you will ever make in your life is this: *Do you want to be a cause or an effect?* When you choose to be a cause, you make things happen. When you choose to be an effect, you settle for whatever happens to you.

When you decide to be a cause in your game of life, you get to call the shots and make all the plays. But when you choose to be an effect, you only get to watch the game on television; you have no control of the game. You're satisfied to laugh and to cry, to live and to die, based on the actions of others.

The difference between being a cause and being an effect is the difference between being a screwdriver and being a screw. One acts; the other is acted upon. This book presents strategies for those who would rather be a screwdriver than a screw.

The Process for Making Your Wishes Come True

As mentioned earlier, this book will show you how to set in motion the causes that will produce the effects you want. After you're done with this book, you will understand why you simply don't need strong-minded discipline to succeed in life. You will also learn why you don't need to be very talented or gifted to make your wishes come true. You only need to follow these steps:

Step 1—Make your wish

Determine what you want to wish for. Think of it as selecting the effect you wish to cause. Once you have selected that effect, stick to it the way bees stick to honey.

Step 2—Make a plan

Create a plan of action to make your wish come true.

Step 3—Take action

Set into motion the causes that will make your wish come true.

Step 4—Never Give Up

Finish what you start and always persist. Never give up.

Keep in mind the following principle:

To get whatever you want from life you have only to set in motion the appropriate cause, and the effect will take care of itself.

Step 1 – Make Your Wish

Imagine you are out for a walk one evening and you stumble upon a brass lamp—the kind that a genie might be in. As you try to make out the inscription carved in its side, you take your shirt and start polishing off all of the centuries of dirt and neglect.

KA-BAM! All of a sudden, the lamp erupts into a cloud of smoke and flames. Falling backward, you drop the lamp and cover your eyes. When you open them again, standing before you, clear as day, is a genie.

He looks at you with a gleam in his eye. And with a strong, powerful voice, he says, “I am the Genie of the Lamp. What will you have, Master, what will you have?”

What would you ask the genie to do?

Believe it or not, you own just such a lamp. It is located behind your eyeballs and is right between your ears. It’s called the human brain—the most powerful computer on earth. In fact, it is so powerful that it has invented all the other computers on earth. It has invented everything from supercomputers to yogurt.

And you own such a brain, free and clear. Yours is the equal of any other brain on the planet. You are its sole proprietor, the only one who can summon forth its awesome power to make your wishes come true. You are essentially your own genie, brimming with the godlike power of creation.

But that still leaves you with the same problem, doesn’t it? What will you ask the genie to do?

Before you can make your wishes come true, you must decide what to wish for. When people don’t get what they want from life, usually it’s because they don’t know what they want. They grind through one work week after another, daydreaming about the good life, but they rarely muster a clear idea of what that “good life” should be. As competent and hardworking as they are, they lack purpose. They’ve been taught how to shoot, but they’ve never been taught how to aim.

Perhaps the most startling truth about human nature is that anyone can do something truly remarkable in life if he or she has something truly remarkable to do. Once you decide what you really want, the rest falls into place. You wake up each morning with a reason to get out of bed. Your days are filled with meaning because you fill them with meaningful work. You are able to take advantage of your talents, your time, and your

opportunities because you have a purpose. Without this purpose the astonishing power you have to grant your own wishes sits idle, double-parked, the motor running with no one behind the wheel. But with this purpose, you shift smoothly through the gears, traveling at speeds far beyond your comprehension.

So go ahead, get into the driver's seat. Figure out what you really want—not what you're supposed to want, not what someone else wants for you, but what you in your heart of hearts want for yourself.

Brainstorming

The easiest way to find out what you really want is to ask yourself. Specifically, ask your subconscious mind, the powerhouse of your intellect. This is where your deepest and best thinking is done.

To help you tap into the power of your subconscious mind, it is helpful to use a tool referred to as *brainstorming*. Follow these five steps:

1. *Write the topic you want to brainstorm in the form of a question at the top of a clean sheet of paper.*

The human mind is the most powerful computer on earth, but unlike computers, you don't have to learn a programming language to make it work; all you need to do is ask it a question.

2. *Write whatever pops into your head.*

Ask yourself the questions you've written at the top of your page, then listen to all of your answers. Write every thought that floats into your mind when you ask your question no matter how silly or dumb it may sound.

3. *Accept with gratitude whatever pops into your head.*

No matter how silly your thoughts may seem, no matter how impossible, remind yourself how fortunate you are to have so many interesting ideas.

Think of each idea as a gift. We might not like every gift we receive, but we accept each one, we open each one, and we thank the giver. It's the thought that counts. If you accept all your thoughts gratefully, your subconscious—like any other gift giver—will be that much more willing to keep them coming.

4. *Keep your pen moving.*

Tell yourself you're going to write for a fixed amount of time—whether it be a minute, two minutes, or five—and then keep your pen moving until the time is up. Keep writing even if you have to write the same thing over and over again.

5. *Save your criticism for later.*

Write, don't judge. You can judge later. Brainstorming is a tool to generate ideas, not to evaluate them.

Have you ever offered a suggestion in a meeting, only to have someone point out how stupid it was? After that, you probably decided to keep your thoughts to yourself.

Your subconscious mind is just as sensitive. If you reject its suggestions, it stops making them.

There is no time like the present to begin your first official brainstorming session. So take out a blank sheet of paper and write this question at the top:

What would I really want from life if I were absolutely, positively certain I would get it?

Now write your answers. Don't worry about how you're going to accomplish the things on your list; we'll deal with that later. For now, just focus on what you want, not on how you'll get it.

Write whatever pops into your mind. Keep your pen moving for at least two minutes. You might find it helpful to think about specific areas of your life. For example, what do you want from your work? From your home life? From your relationships? What kind of health do you want? What kind of physique? What do you want from your hobbies? From your community activities? From your love life? What kind of impact would you like to have on the world? How would you like to be remembered?

If you run out of steam, write the same answers over and over, each time with a slightly different twist. Change a word, change a color or a size, change an adjective. Whatever you do, keep writing for at least two minutes—longer if the ideas keep flowing. So go ahead, and write!

Prioritize

Congratulations! You have just created your first honest-to-goodness wish list. At this point in your wishing career, it's a good idea to work on only one wish at a time, so you

need to decide which item on your list you want to work on first. Here's how to go about it.

The first thing you do is to number the items on your list. Then look at items 1 and 2. Which is more important to you? In your mind, label that item the *Current Choice*. Then move to the next item on your list—number 3—and compare it with your Current Choice. Which of them is more important to you? The one you prefer then becomes your Current Choice. Now move on to the next item on your list—number 4—and compare that with your Current Choice. The one you prefer becomes your Current Choice.

Repeat this process for each item on your list, comparing one with whatever your Current Choice happens to be at that moment. Continue until you've gone through your entire list.

When you come to the end of your list, the Current Choice that remains is the single most important item on your list. It has become your *First Choice*. You have compared it directly or indirectly with every other item and preferred it every time. Now write a big “#1” beside it. It's the first wish you're going to make come true, and the wish you're going to work on for the rest of this book.

Purpose

The people who are most successful at making their wishes come true are the people who know who they are and what they want. They choose wishes that help them fulfill their purpose in life. To make the most of your astonishing power to make your wishes come true, the first thing you need to do is to choose a purpose, and then choose wishes that will help you fulfill that purpose.

Earl Nightingale, one of the great modern philosophers of human achievement, used to distinguish between river people and goal people. He said that river people are those lucky few who seem to be born for a particular purpose. From the time they are children they seem to know what they are meant to do with their lives. They find themselves in the middle of a great river of interest, and they flow with that river all the days of their lives.

Then there are the rest of us. We are the goal people or, the wish people. We aren't born with an all-consuming interest. We aren't born into our purpose in life. Instead, we have to define it.

For years, I wondered what I was supposed to do with my life. I envied people who knew what they were about, people who seemed to have been born with a sense of mission, people who were fortunate enough to pursue their river of interest. If only that could happen to me, I used to tell myself. And then one afternoon, it did.

I was walking down the street wondering what I was going to do with my life. Suddenly, I had the answer. As clearly as if it had been engraved on my forehead, I understood that

my great purpose in life was to define my purpose. That was my mission. That was my river of interest. And it always had been. For years, I had been pursuing the same mission—to define my purpose. But I had never realized it and had never accepted it as a valid purpose. Once I did, I understood with absolute certainty what it was that I was supposed to do with my life: I was put on earth to define my purpose.

For the first time in my life, I felt like a river person. I knew what my life was about. I had a reason to get out of bed in the morning. My days were filled with meaning because I had suddenly filled them with meaningful work. I had something vitally important to accomplish—a purpose—and I couldn't wait to get started on it each day.

What I learned that day is that it doesn't matter what purpose you have. It simply matters that you have one. And if you don't have one, then your purpose is to define one. That becomes your river of interest.

Once you adopt this frame of mind, you will find that everything else falls into place. You will embark on a journey of self-discovery. You will open yourself to new thoughts, activities, and interests that you would never have considered before. Everything you do from that moment on will become part of your newly discovered purpose, your newly discovered mission in life: to define—to invent—yourself.

To find your purpose, start with what interests you. It's rare to find someone who doesn't have an interest in something. But there are many people who have never allowed themselves to acknowledge their interests. They feel that the things they like to do are unimportant in the great scheme of things, so they look elsewhere for meaning and purpose. Meanwhile, what they are looking for is right under their nose.

Finding your purpose in life doesn't have to be some complicated quest. Instead of asking, "What do I want to do with my life?" why not make it easy on yourself? Instead, ask "What do I enjoy doing?" Then listen to all of your answers. Write them on paper. Write everything on paper—even the trivial or silly things. If what interests you doesn't seem important enough to put on paper, that's only because you're trying to judge your interests instead of trying to live them. Try living the, instead, and you'll take your first great step toward making your wishes come true.

If you enjoy doing something do it. Do you like to listen to music, go to the movies, read, watch TV, cook, fix cars, clean house, watch birds, teach, build furniture, surf the Net, or build sand castles? As long as your activity or hobby is not self-destructive (like substance abuse), hurtful to someone else, or damaging to the environment, why not allow yourself to enjoy it for all it's worth?

If you enjoy something, pursue it. You don't have to make it your official purpose in life—but what if you did? What if you decided to spend your life doing what you enjoy? That's what river people do. Sometimes they're called eccentric, or absentminded, or obsessive. Sometimes they're called geniuses. But whatever they're called, all they do is flow with their river of interest and allow themselves to enjoy the journey. They don't

care if what they're doing is important to the rest of the world; they care if it's important to them. They aren't out to save mankind; they're out to save themselves—from a life without joy or meaning.

If you want to maximize your contribution to society, you owe it to them, and to yourself, to follow your dreams, to follow your purpose, to follow your bliss.

Do what you think you're meant to do, not what you think you're supposed to do. If you're worried that you'll never amount to much unless your purpose is "worthy," don't waste your time. You already amount to something. Your achievements in life are not the source of your worth as a human being; they are the result of it. Self-worth comes before purpose, not the other way around. Once you accept your value as a person, once you accept that you already amount to something, then you free yourself to make the most of your life. You free yourself to define your purpose. And that's where the fun begins.

Finding your purpose is a matter of asking yourself what you enjoy doing, and then doing it. That's what river people do. They aren't making a huge sacrifice to follow their dreams. They don't have to practice iron-willed self-discipline to keep themselves on track. They simply do what they enjoy doing. That's their payoff. That's why they do it. Their achievements are simply a byproduct of that enjoyment.

Once you define a purpose—even if that purpose is simply to define a purpose—the rest will take care of itself. Your life will take on a focus and intensity of which you've never dreamed. One by one you will begin to make your wishes come true. Day by day you'll find yourself growing, contributing more to those around you, and making the most of yourself as a human being. That is the noblest purpose of all.

Paying the Price

Every wish has its price. You can have anything you want if you are willing to pay that price. The price may be in dollars and cents. Or it may be in effort—the weeks or months or years it will take you to make your wish come true. Or the price may be in sacrifice; what you have to give up in order to get what you want. Whatever the price turns out to be, you have to pay full retail—you can't bargain with fate.

Your willingness to pay the price is what gives you the power to cause your wish to come true. If you are 100 percent willing to pay the price, then you are 100 percent likely to succeed. If you are only 50 percent willing to pay the price, then you are 50 percent likely to succeed. It's a simple matter of cause and effect. The price is the cause; the wish is the effect. Pay the price—set in motion the appropriate cause—and the wish will take care of itself.

Take a look at the First Choice from your wish list. How much will it cost you? How much will it cost in dollars and cents? How much will it cost in effort? How many

months or weeks or years will you have to work on it? How much will it cost in sacrifice? Will it mean less time with your family, less time with your friends, less time watching TV, less time with your hobby, or playing golf, or puttering around the house? Once you have an idea of what that wish will cost, are you willing to pay the price?

Now here is an interesting question: Why are you willing to pay that price? What reasons do you have to make that wish come true?

The people who are most successful at making their wishes come true are the ones who have the most compelling reasons to do so. Instead of trying to psyche yourself into paying an exorbitant price for a wish, why not choose a wish that is worth the price in the first place? Choose a wish that compels you to make it come true.

If your First Choice doesn't compel you, choose another wish. Go to your Second Choice or your Third Choice. Redo your wish list if you have to. Brainstorm new ideas and set new priorities until you choose a wish that compels you to pay the price, a wish that makes it more than worth your while to overcome every obstacle that will stand in your way. Choose a wish that is so compelling, you refuse to settle for less. You're not going to get very far until you do.

While you are looking for a compelling wish, keep this in mind: Choose a wish for what it will make of you to achieve it. The greater the wish, the greater you have to become to make that wish come true. That's the real payoff. That's why human beings strive for more than what they have. It's not what you achieve that brings you joy and fulfillment; it's the person you must become in order to achieve it. You don't get what you want from life; you get what you are.

That's why it takes effort to make your goals succeed and your wishes come true. If all you had to do were to snap your fingers to get anything you want, you would never have to develop your potential. You would never have to become more than what you are. But by insisting that the only way to earn your wish is to become the kind of person for whom such a wish is possible, the universe gives you one of the greatest gifts of all: *growth*.

Along with this gift comes a warning: Beware of any wish that turns you into someone you don't want to be. That price is too high. No wish is worth sacrificing your values, your character, or your integrity. No wish is worth losing the only things worth having. If a wish forces you to become less of a person that you want to be, it's not worth the price.

Presenting Your Wish

Wishing is the most powerful force at our command. But most of us don't know it exists; let alone how to command it.

The secret is this: Don't just make a wish; make it *presentable*. The power of your wish comes from the way you present it to your conscious and subconscious. If you present it effectively, you will harness the genie-like power of your mind and cause your wish to come true. If you present it ineffectively, your mind will shrug it off as just another one of those good intentions, ill-timed and unachievable.

What follows are eleven steps that will help you make your wish (goal) so presentable that your mind will just naturally make it come true. As you learn about each step, apply it to the wish you have decided to work on first.

1. **Write it.**

If you think your wish is fixed so clearly in your mind that you don't have to put it on paper, you are fooling yourself. Write it, or kiss it good-bye. When you write your wish, you give it the kind of clarity, focus, and urgency that you can't give it any other way. You hang it out there in the world right in front of your eyes. You turn it into something real, something that stares back at you from the page and dares you to make it come true.

If you want your wish to come true or to succeed with your goal, whether long term or short term, write it down. If you don't want to make it come true, then don't write it down.

2. **Be specific.**

A presentable wish is specific down to the last detail. When you can picture precisely what you want—when you can feel it, hear it, touch it, smell it, and taste it—that's specific.

The more specific you are, the better your chances for getting what you want. If you want money, how much money? By when? If you want a new house, what kind of house? Where? How many rooms? If you want a better job, in what field? At what pay? For what company? If you want a richer relationship, with whom? What will it feel like? Sound like? Look like?

When you make your wish specific, you give yourself a host of powerful advantages, such as:

- You can track your progress. If you don't know what you want, how will you know when you get it?
- You avoid unintended results. Vague wishes can be dangerous because they can be granted in unintended ways. For example, if you wish for "more freedom at work," you might find yourself

fired. If you wish to “lose weight,” you might find yourself with a serious illness, one symptom of which is weight loss. If you wish for “lots of money,” you might find yourself the beneficiary of a large life-insurance policy, but the person you love the most had to die for you to collect it. Wish for exactly what you want, and you won’t find yourself with what you don’t want.

- You focus your brainpower. Have you ever noticed that you tend to pay attention to the things you’re interested in? You buy a new car, and you begin to notice how many other people are driving the same car. You read a book about nature, and you begin to notice the sunsets and the songbirds, though both have always been there.

When you’re specific about what you want, you alert your brain to notice all the people, information, and resources that can help cause your wish to come true. Everywhere you look, you discover helpful coincidences—what the rest of the world calls luck—but these coincidences you have made possible by being aware of exactly what you want. The more specific you are, the more luck you will create.

3. **Set a deadline.**

A wish or goal without a deadline is just an idle daydream, with no beginning and no end. A deadline imparts a sense of urgency, the way you feel when you’re about to leave town. But a deadline isn’t meant to make you panic, it’s meant to make you focus. Don’t wear it like a straitjacket. If you find you’re going to miss a deadline, go ahead and change it. Be comfortable with it. But keep your eye on it. If you want to make your wish come true, know exactly what you’re shooting for—and when.

4. **Make it something you can measure.**

You can be winning and think you’re losing because you aren’t keeping score. Measurement is your way of keeping score. Measurement lets you see how much progress you have already made and how far you have to go. If you can’t measure your wish, you won’t know when you’ve made it come true.

Some wishes or goals are easy to measure, such as making a certain amount of money or losing a certain amount of weight. But how do you wish for things that aren’t measurable, such as a better marriage, or a more satisfying job, or a sense of inner peace? It’s easy—just turn those wishes into something you can measure. Turn them into specific actions.

For example, suppose your goal or wish is to have a better marriage. To turn this unmeasurable wish into something you can measure, ask yourself these questions:

1. What specific changes can I make in the way I act toward my partner in order to improve our marriage?
2. Will I make these changes all at once or gradually?
3. By what date will I complete them?

Once you have identified specific measurable actions you can take to improve your marriage, you can phrase your wish in terms of these actions. For instance, instead of wishing for a better marriage, which you can't measure, you might wish to rub your partner's back a couple of nights a week. You might wish to cut the grass every other week instead of letting your partner always do all the yard work. You might wish to take the kids to soccer practice on Saturday mornings so your partner can sleep late. You might wish to take out the garbage, or wrap the Christmas presents, or clean up after dinner three nights a week—anything to lighten the load on your partner and sweeten the relationship.

The same approach applies to wishing for a state of mind, such as happiness, joy, or contentment. You can't measure these things, so wish instead for the specific actions that will lead to the state of mind you want.

For example, if you wish to feel fulfilled, and you feel it most when you're performing community service, wish to spend more time serving your community. If you wish to feel happy, and you feel it most when you're with your family, wish to spend more time with your family.

Wish for something you can measure, and you will consistently measure success.

5. **Wish only for what you can control.**

A wish or goal is about what you do—not what anyone else does—because that's the only thing you can control. There is no place in your wish for what you want someone else to think, or do, or feel, because you can't make those things happen. Concentrate instead on the things you can make happen.

For instance, you can't wish to be loved, because you can't make that happen. But you can wish to be loving. You can't wish for that heartthrob next door to go to dinner with you, because you can't make that happen.

But you can wish for the courage to ask that person to dinner. You can't wish for someone else to make you happy, because you can't make that happen. But you can wish to spend more of your time doing the things that make you happy.

If you wish only for what you can control, then success will always be in your hands. If you wish for something you can't control, then success will always be in the hands of someone else.

6. **Wish for what you want, not what you don't want.**

Your mind moves you toward whatever you think about. If you think about what you want, you'll move toward it. If you think about what you don't want, you'll move toward that instead.

Rather than saying, "I wish I wasn't broke," tell yourself, "I choose to have \$10,000 in the bank."

Rather than saying, "I wish I wasn't fat," tell yourself, "I choose to lose thirty pounds."

Rather than saying, "I wish I wasn't stupid," tell yourself, "I choose to educate myself."

Rather than saying, "I wish I wasn't so lonely," tell yourself, "I choose to make some friends."

Ask for what you want and you'll get it. Ask for what you don't want, and you'll be stuck with that instead.

7. **Begin your wish with "I choose."**

The real secret to success is not self-discipline; it's choosing to succeed. The moment you make a choice, you eliminate all the doubt and hesitation that exist when you're trying to make up your mind. Instead of worrying about what to do, you just do it. You throw a little switch in your brain that commands you to do whatever it takes to carry out your decision.

8. **Make it emotional.**

Your wish should include an emotional payoff so you can use the power of that emotion to help you cause your wish to come true. For instance, if your wish is to improve your marriage, you might say, "I choose to *lovingly* help my partner with the chores." If your wish is to get up each morning at six, to give yourself some personal time before you go to work,

you might say, “I choose to *cheerfully* rise each morning at six.” If your wish is to increase company revenues by 50 percent, you might say, “I choose to *joyfully* increase company revenues by 50 percent.”

When you build an emotional payoff into your wish, you tend to work harder at it because you enjoy it more. The harder you work, the more likely you are to make your wish come true. Before you know it, you’ll enjoy the work as much as you enjoy the results. From that point on, the results will take care of themselves.

9. **Be brief.**

Less is more. The shorter your wish, the greater the emotional impact. A single short sentence is perfect. To keep your wish brief, act as if each word costs you \$10,000.

10. **Believe in it.**

Why would a gardener take the trouble to plant a seed, water it, fertilize it, and tend it—perhaps for weeks—before seeing any return at all on the effort? Because he believes the seed will grow into something worth the effort. Perhaps it will turn into a flower, or a fruit, or a useful vegetable. Whatever the expected result, the expectation must come before the result. The only gardens we bother to tend are the ones we believe will grow.

When you make a wish, you have to believe you will succeed, or else you won’t be willing to make the effort. With belief comes action. With action comes results. Without belief there is neither action nor results.

11. **Take immediate action.**

The final step in making your wish presentable is to send your brain the most powerful message of all: Act now. If you don’t, you’ll fall prey to the Law of Diminishing Intent: the more time that passes before you act, the less likely you will be to take action.

Before you get up from your chair, do something to put your wish into action. Make a phone call, create a plan, read a useful article in a newspaper or magazine, write a letter. Do something to get the ball rolling. *Do anything*. The important thing is to take some kind of action right now, before you lose the moment, and with it your chance to make your wish come true.

If you haven’t already been doing so as we’ve gone along, take the time now to go back and make your wish presentable. Take it through each of the eleven steps we’ve just

discussed. Write it. Make it specific. Make it measurable. Make it all the things it needs to be in order for it to come true. Then take immediate action to start you on your way.

If you've come this far and still don't know what to wish for, then make this your first wish: *Wish to know what to wish for.* Make it an official wish. Make it presentable. Take immediate action. **DO** this now, and you will be launched into a lifetime of making your wishes come true.

Step 2 — Make a Plan

You know what to wish for. You have committed yourself to pay the price. You have made your wish presentable. Now you need to create a plan to put your wish in motion.

To create an effective plan, you will construct a simple plan of action in which you break your wish into persuasive steps so small that you can't wait to get started on the first one, then the next, and then the one after that, until before you know it you have made your wish come true.

In essence, your plan is a bridge from thinking to doing. It translates your wish from an idea into the actions necessary to turn that idea into reality.

A good plan motivates you to complete even the most minor details because it drapes each one in the larger purpose. When you work any step of the plan, you feel like you're working the whole plan so every step is worth your best effort.

But the magic of your plan is not in the details, it's in the freedom those details give you. Freedom from the distraction of worrying about what to do next. Freedom to focus all your energy and attention on the single step at hand, knowing that every step you complete takes you that much closer to where you want to go. Freedom to try, because you know you'll succeed. A good plan sets your mind at ease and your body in motion. It removes confusion, uncertainty, and doubt so you can concentrate on getting the job done.

Brainstorming a plan

When I create a plan, I start with my objective in mind and then brainstorm how to get there from here. At the top of a piece of paper, I write this question: *What steps do I need to take to _____?* Then I simply fill in the blank, ask myself the question, and write my answers.

Let's make up an example. Suppose your wish is to become Director of Operations for XYZ Emporium. At the top of a piece of paper you write this question: What steps do I need to take to become director of operations at XYZ Emporium? Ask yourself this question and write the answers. They might look like this.

1. Call my friends to see if any of them have contacts at XYZ Emporium.
2. Identify the specific person I should contact at XYZ Emporium.
3. Line up the references most likely to get me this job.

4. Update my resume.
5. Research XYZ Emporium.

Once you have listed as many steps as you can think of, arrange them in the order in which it makes the most sense to execute them:

1. Research XYZ Emporium.
2. Call my friends to see if any of them have contacts at XYZ Emporium.
3. Identify the specific person I should contact at XYZ Emporium.
4. Update my resume.
5. Line up the references most likely to get me this job.

Then you break the larger steps into smaller steps. For example, Step 4 might look like this:

Step 4: Update my resume.

1. Read a book about writing resumes.
2. Attend a seminar about writing resumes.
3. Ask a friend for advice.
4. Write the first draft.
5. Have some friends proofread the first draft.
6. Complete my resume.
7. Make as many copies as I need.

Some of these steps could even be broken into smaller steps, and those into smaller steps still. The idea is to keep breaking down major steps until you create steps so small that they appear inviting to you. You want to feel confident that you can go from one step to the next without undue hardship. No step should be so intimidating that you can't face it—or else when you do reach it the whole process will come to a screeching halt.

After you've broken down one major step this way, repeat the process for each of the others, until each large step is reduced to a series of manageable tasks. You will then have a list of all the steps necessary to take you from where you are to where you want to go. Once you look at this list and realize how easily you can handle everything on it, you will begin to understand how simple it is to make your wish come true.

Deadlines

You don't have a plan until you have a deadline. The purpose of a deadline is to make you feel a sense of urgency. It lets you know how serious you are about making your wish come true. It switches the light at the end of the tunnel, so you quicken your pace to reach it.

Set reasonable deadlines. If you want to get a new job, give yourself at least six months, not six weeks. If you want to achieve financial independence and you're starting from scratch, give yourself a decade, not a year. A deadline is designed to make you focus, not to make you panic.

The advantage of setting a deadline is that you fix your wish in time, not just in your mind. You begin to plan your life around it, the same way you plan around any other important event. Your wish becomes real, like an appointment, or a holiday, or a business trip you've scheduled for next month. The more real your wish becomes; the more convinced you become that you can make your wish come true.

Milestones

Milestones are intermediate targets designed to keep you on track toward your main deadline. They help you make continual progress over time, so you don't have to accomplish everything at the last moment.

For example, suppose in November you decide to lose thirty pounds by the time you leave for vacation the following July. To help you meet your deadline, you might set a milestone of losing a pound every week. If you meet each weekly milestone, they by July you will have lost all thirty pounds. If you miss a milestone or two, you still have time to take corrective action—before it's too late.

Scheduling

Once you've listed the steps you need to take to make your wish come true, and you've also set milestones to keep you on track toward your deadline, you need to transfer both the steps and the milestones to your daily schedule. Scheduling bridges the gap between planning and doing. It's the difference between a good intention and an appointment. Instead of saying to an old friend, "Let's have lunch sometime," scheduling lets you say, "Let's have lunch next Tuesday at 1:00 p.m."

If you've ever used a planner or pocket scheduler, you already know how to schedule the steps and the milestones of your plan. Simply enter each step in your scheduler the same way you would enter a meeting, or a lunch date, or an appointment with your doctor. You don't have to schedule the entire plan all at once, just the next week or two. Then if a step takes longer than you expected, or your schedule is disrupted in some other way, you won't have as much to reschedule.

When you schedule a step on your calendar, you are making an appointment with yourself. Keep it. Treat it like an appointment with the most important person in the world—because it is!

Take yourself seriously. If you don't, who will? Take yourself as seriously as you want the rest of the world to take you. After all, why should anyone else treat you better than you treat yourself? If you want other people to keep their appointments with you, keep your appointments with yourself. If you want other people to be there when you need them, be there for yourself.

The Limiting Factor

The *limiting factor* is the bottleneck that can affect how rapidly you make your wish come true. For your plan to be successful, it must be designed to get past this limiting factor.

Consider these examples: Gus is a middle-aged lawyer whose wish is to get back into shape by exercising at six each morning before he heads to the office. But Gus hates to drag himself out of bed that early, so every morning he invents a new excuse to sleep late, and every morning he skips his workout. Sleeping late is the limiting factor in his plan. If he's ever going to shape up, he first has to get up.

Mary is a salesperson who plans to double her sales in the next year, but she is terrified of cold calling for prospects. Fear is her limiting factor. She will have to deal with this fear before she can increase her cold calling enough to double her sales.

The distinguishing characteristic of a limiting factor is that once you overcome it, everything else falls into place. If Gus develops the habit of bouncing out of bed at six each morning, he will soon be able to work himself into shape. If Mary learns to enjoy cold calling instead of fearing it, her sales will skyrocket off the charts.

Now consider your wish. What is it that most limits your progress? What factor, once changed, will make everything else fall into place? It might be a habit you need to change as it was with Gus; or it might be your way of looking at the world, as it was with Mary. Once you have pinpointed the limiting factor in your wish, design your plan to overcome it.

Schedule Progress Reports

Once you've listed the steps of your plan and scheduled them on your calendar or daily planner, you need to schedule regular progress reports to see how you're coming along.

A progress report is like looking out the window while you're riding a train. By observing what you're passing, you can tell whether or not the train is going in the right direction. But if you aren't paying attention, you can come to the end of the line and find yourself in the wrong city.

To schedule progress reports, estimate how long it will take you to complete your wish and divide that time into regular intervals. If your wish will take a year, make a progress report every month. If your wish will take a month, make a progress report every week. Include these reports in your plan and schedule them into your calendar, the same way you schedule the other steps of your plan.

When the time comes to make a progress report, write your answers to these questions:

1. Have I met the milestones I planned to meet since my last progress report?
2. Do I need to change my plan to reach my milestones?
3. Do I need to change my milestones?

Circumstances change constantly. Your plan may need to change with them. If you find that you need to make changes, make them. If you need to revise your plan, revise it. That's what a progress report is all about.

Step 3 – Take Action

A plan gives your wish form; action gives it life. Step 1 is to choose a wish, Step 2 is to create a plan for making your wish come true, and Step 3 is to take the action called for in your plan.

When you act, you set causes in motion. When you set causes in motion, you are rewarded with effects. When you take action, you make a giant leap from *thinking* your wish to *living* your wish. You change yourself from a dreamer to a doer. To make that leap, you need to overcome one of the greatest forces in nature: inertia.

When Janie was in college, she decided that she wanted to become a writer. When she got out of college, she got a job as a nurse. For years, she raised her family and did everything she was supposed to do, except write. As she got older, she realized that she was going to have to start writing or give up her dream of becoming a writer. She decided to stick with her dream, but that still left her with the same problem: How was she going to get herself to write?

Then she remembered something she learned in high school physics: the law of inertia. A body in motion tends to remain in motion; a body at rest tends to remain at rest. She began to wonder if inertia applied to human behavior the way it applied to the behavior of comets streaking past the sun. What if her problem was simply inertia? What if all she had to do was to turn herself from a body at rest to a body in motion?

She decided to find out. She made a commitment to herself to write something every day. It didn't matter how little she wrote. It could be a sentence or two if she wanted, or even a single word if that's all she could muster. But no matter how busy she was, or how distracted, or how tired, she had to write something every day. She promised herself she would try this for thirty days and see what happened.

It worked, and she learned one of the greatest lessons of her life. Inertia is the single greatest barrier to success. It's also the easiest to overcome. All you have to do is to act. Any action you take, no matter how trivial, will do the trick.

The easier you make it on yourself to act, the easier it is to overcome inertia. Janie made it so easy on herself to write that she no longer had any reason not to write. Instead of making a big production out of it, she made it as small a production as she could. She gave herself permission to do nothing more than type out a few keystrokes on the computer at a time.

The simple act of typing was all she needed to overcome inertia. With her first keystroke, she turned herself from a body at rest into a body in motion. Once in motion, the most

natural thing for her to do was to continue in motion and keep writing. She would sit to write a single sentence and then stand up after having completed an entire page.

You can overcome your inertia the same way. Think small. Instead of trying to complete your wish in a single day, focus on a single step, the smallest step you can think of. The moment you take action—any action—you will conquer inertia. You will become a body in motion and will tend to stay in motion. The most natural thing in the world will be for you to take the next step, and then the next, until you've completed your wish.

Taking the First Action

A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. Your plan, no matter how simple or how complex, begins the same way.

The first action you take is the one that overcomes inertia, the one that transforms you from a body at rest to a body in motion. Take that action and you have the momentum you need to carry you to the next action. That's all you have to worry about. You don't need enough momentum to complete your whole plan; all you need is enough to complete your next action. Then that momentum will carry you to the next action, then the next, then the next after that, until you complete your wish.

The secret of that first action is to make it so simple that you give yourself no reason to resist it. For instance, if your wish calls for you to become a professional drummer, tell yourself you're just going to practice a few notes. If you want to get a new job, tell yourself you're just going to update the first line of your resume. If you want to become a movie star, tell yourself you're just going to watch a movie to see how the pros do it.

You can never finish what you never start. The easier you make it on yourself to take the first action, the greater your chances to make it to the last action, the one that completes your plan and makes your wish come true.

Forming New Habits

The easiest actions for us to take are the ones we perform out of habit. The easiest way to grant yourself a wish is to make a habit out of the actions you must take to cause that wish to come true.

You can create new habits the same way you created all of your existing habits—through repetition. Every habit you own you formed by doing something over and over again until it became second nature. To form a new habit, all you have to do is to apply the same principle.

Suppose you wish to take a walk each morning to work yourself into shape, but you're having trouble giving up your morning routine—your habit—of reading the newspaper. What you need is a new habit to replace the old one. For thirty days, practice walking each morning instead of reading the paper. At first, you may feel uncomfortable because your old habit still has hold of you. But by the second or third week, you'll begin to find it more natural to walk each morning than to read the paper.

If you try this and find that the new habit isn't taking hold, it's probably because you skipped a day. That won't work. You can't afford to skip even a single day. If you do, your momentum will drop to zero, and you'll have to start over again. During that first thirty days, if you miss even one day of practicing your new habit, reset your thirty-day clock to Day One and start from the beginning. The next time around, practice every day. By the thirtieth day, you will have given yourself a new habit.

The Thirty-Day Plan

You can turn almost anything into a habit if you implement the *Thirty-Day Plan*. All you have to do is to decide what new habit you want to acquire and then agree to practice that habit every day for just thirty days. If in thirty days you don't like the results, quit.

Make sure you schedule practicing your new habit each day and then honor your schedule. Don't let yourself skip days because of weekends, holidays, illness, or because you had to go out of town. Don't accept any excuses for missing even a single day. If you do miss a day, start over.

The beauty of the Thirty-Day Plan is that it minimizes your natural resistance to change. You aren't asking yourself to give up anything; you're just asking yourself to try something new for a while. You can stand almost anything for a few days. After thirty days, if you don't like your new habit, you're free to go back to the old one. But the chances are that by then your new habit will more comfortable than the one it has replaced.

Affirmations

Although we might hate to admit it, we all talk to ourselves. More important, we all listen. Psychologists call this *affirmation*. What that means is: If you tell yourself something often enough, you begin to believe it.

Most of us are pretty good at affirming our shortcomings. For instance, we knock over a drink at a party and say, "Sorry...I'm such a klutz!" We forget to bring important papers to a meeting and work and say, "I'd forget my own head if it weren't screwed on!"

We don't have to just affirm our faults—we can affirm our strengths as well. We can even affirm strengths we don't yet have, as a way of developing them into habits.

For example, if you would like to become the kind of person who bounces out of bed every morning at six, you can tell yourself: *I love to get up each morning at six, refreshed and invigorated for the entire day.* If you're a salesperson and you want to learn to love prospecting for new clients, you can tell yourself: *I love to prospect for new clients.*

I've used affirmations to create all sorts of useful habits. For example, I used to hate speaking in front of people. I avoided addressing groups of people whenever I could. After several years of hiding my head in the sand, I realized that I would never get what I wanted from life until I learned to enjoy speaking in front of people. It wasn't enough for me to just speak in front of large groups; I wanted to learn how to enjoy doing it, so I made the following contract with myself:

For thirty days, at least ten times a day, I agree to tell myself: I love speaking in front of people. I agree to say it with kind of heartfelt conviction that will leave no room for doubt. At the end of thirty days, if I still hate speaking in front of people, I will allow myself to cling to that habit for the rest of my life.

The first couple of days I felt resistance. Every time I repeated my affirmation, an angry little voice in my mind would say, "Who are you trying kid with affirmation crap? You hate to speak in front of people!" I couldn't disagree with that (and I didn't want to lie to myself) so I pretended I was an actor, playing the part of a character who loved speaking in front of people. Before I knew it, the resistance disappeared.

Within a week, I began to enjoy repeating my affirmation. Within two weeks, I began to look forward to saying it. By the end of thirty days, I found myself looking for opportunities to speak in front of people. Whenever I encountered one, I would hear myself say: *I love to speak in front of people!* My affirmation had come true, and that allowed me to make a quantum leap forward in my life.

The first step in creating an affirmation is to make certain it supports your values. If you feel it's unethical or undesirable, then it won't work. The next step is to follow similar guidelines to those you used when you created a presentable wish. Be specific. Affirm what you want instead of what you don't want. Use the present tense. Give it intense emotional impact.

The last point is the one that counts the most. The real power of an affirmation comes from how deeply you feel it, not from how many times you say it. You want emotional content, not repetition for the sake of repetition. But how can you feel emotion about something you don't really believe?

Don't worry about whether you believe an affirmation, worry about whether you want to believe it. If you want to believe it—if you intensely want to believe it—and you repeat it with that same intensity, then you will soon come to believe it, the same way you've come to believe so much negative garbage about yourself. If you're going to pump yourself full of propaganda anyway, why not choose propaganda that serves a useful purpose?

Taking Time to Succeed

You have your wish, you have your plan, and you're taking the action necessary to make your wish come true. Now all you have to do is to give it time.

There are two kinds of time. The first kind is measured by the number of hours you are willing to devote to a task during a single day. We'll refer to this as *vertical time*. The second kind is measured by the number of days you are willing to devote to a task in order to complete it. We'll call this *horizontal time*. The maximum vertical time at our command is 24 hours because that's all the time there is in a day. The maximum horizontal time at our command is an entire lifetime. Which kind of time do you think is more powerful?

Some tasks require vertical time. Others require horizontal time. Choosing the right kind of time for the job is half the battle. Most people approach their wishes as if they are repairing a dam that is about to break in front of their house. But most wishes are more like tending a garden than they are like fixing a dam. Most of what you want to accomplish in life you can accomplish better, and with greater enjoyment, if you do it over time, instead of trying to do it all at once.

Unfortunately, the frantic pace of life points us in the opposite direction. Haste has become an end in itself. We would rather work feverishly on a project for a few days than work steadily for a few weeks. We would rather get rich quickly than get rich slowly. And that's where we miss the boat.

It's a lot harder to get rich quickly than it is to get rich slowly. It's a lot harder to accomplish anything of value in a few days than it is to accomplish the same thing in a few months. When you try to cram too much into a single day, or a few days, time is working against you. But when you spread your efforts over time, time is on your side.

Devote even a few minutes a day to a project, and with enough days, you can accomplish almost anything. Don't get hung up on how long it will take; that's just another way to derail your dreams. If you work on your wish over time, over time your wish will come true.

Finding the time

As stated earlier, success takes time, even if it's just a few minutes a day. You may feel you don't have a lot of time. You may feel rushed, perhaps even crushed by the pace of life. You may be asking yourself: How will I ever find the time to work on a wish into a schedule like mine?

That's the wrong question to ask. Instead of starting with your schedule and trying to work in your wish, start with your wish and try to work in the rest of the things on your

schedule. If you are going to shortchange something, shortchange the things that are at the bottom of your list of priorities, not the things at the top. Make this one change in how you spend your day—work on what is most important to you *before* you take care of everything else—and you'll find that your schedule begins to take on the shape of a life, instead of your life taking on the shape of a schedule.

Getting Help from Others

You alone are responsible for making your wishes come true. You alone are the one who has to make things happen. You alone make or break your own success. But one of your greatest resources is other people.

Whatever effort you make on your own, you can multiply by enlisting the help of other people. Other people have resources you don't have; a different point of view, different ideas, different skills, different experiences, and different contacts. When you enlist other people in your cause, their resources become your resources.

The people you already know can help you ask for help from literally anyone in the country. For example, suppose you're a high school student and you want to ask a favor of the president of the United States. First, you would talk to someone you already know—a teacher, your school principal, a coach, or perhaps the owner of a local business where you work during summer vacation. Let's assume that you've decided to approach the business owner. Chances are that he or she knows many of the leading citizens of your community. One of these leading citizens most likely knows the congressperson from your area. You can be sure that this congressperson has the clout to place a phone call to the president of the United States.

Your plan of action would be to ask the business owner, to ask the community leader, to ask the congressman, to ask the president for a favor on your behalf. Four steps and you're at the very top. If you can reach the president this easily, you can reach anyone else you care to reach.

Think of someone who might help you make your wish come true. If you're trying to land your dream job, you might want to reach the person who is hiring. If you're trying to get your big break as an actor, you might want to reach a Hollywood producer. If you've written a book, you might want to contact a publisher. Think of anyone anywhere who could help you, and then think of how you might reach that person through the people you already know.

People can help you in so many ways. They can give you advice, training, money, feedback, contacts, and emotional support. They can make the difference between spectacular success and lonely failure. They can give you everything you need to make your wish come true. There's just one catch: If you want help you're going to have to ask

for it. When you do, you will want to stack the deck in your favor. Here is a five-step strategy that will help you earn a *Yes* when you ask for something instead of a *No*.

1. Ask for something specific.

The best way to help someone help you is to be specific about what you're asking for. If your helper doesn't know exactly what you want, how can he or she help you get it? For that matter, if you don't know exactly what you want, how can you ask for it?

Be specific. If you're asking for money, ask for exactly the amount you need and when you need it. If you're asking for an introduction to someone, specify who, and why, and exactly what you want your helper to say on your behalf. If you're asking for advice, ask your advisor for a specific solution to a specific problem. If you aren't specific about what you ask for, you won't get it.

2. Ask someone who can help you get it.

Before you ask for something, first ask yourself this question: *Can this person give me what I want?* If the answer is *No*, then find someone who can.

If you want money, ask someone who can give it to you or can help you get it. If you want a promotion or a new job, ask someone who can promote you, or hire you, or put you in touch with someone who can. If you want to sell something, ask someone who has the power to buy it. When you go to the trouble to ask for something, make sure you ask someone who can give it to you.

3. Make it worthwhile for the person you ask.

People may help you out of love; they may help you out of compassion; but they will definitely help you out of self-interest. If you want someone to help you, make it worth their while.

When you ask for something, the question that is most likely to form in the mind of the person you're asking is: *What's in it for me?* How you answer that question will largely determine whether or not that person is willing to help you. If you can find a way to sufficiently enrich the person's life, they will be eager to enrich yours. If you can find a way to serve him or her, you will be amazed how willingly they serve you. You don't have to convince them, you don't have to persuade them, and you don't have to pressure them. You have only to make it worth their while. The rest will take care of itself.

4. Be sincere.

I don't mean act sincere; I mean be sincere. It's not a matter how you come across; it's a matter of how you feel. Do you really want what you're asking for? If not, how can you expect someone else to want to give it to you? Are you certain about what you want? If not, the person you're asking for help will be uncertain about giving it to you.

Whenever you feel a conflict on the inside, it shows on the outside. It makes people more likely to resist you than to help you. If you have doubts about what you want, convince yourself first, before you try to convince anyone else. Then, when you're sure about what you want, you can ask for it sincerely, with absolute conviction. The more convinced you are about what you want, the more likely you are to convince someone else to help you get it.

5. Keep trying until you get what you want.

Some people hear the word *no* and give up. Other people hear *no* and think that all they need is a bigger hammer. When they find one, they keep pounding until they hear a *yes*. Either approach is not recommended.

No means that what you're doing isn't working, so try something else. You don't need a hammer; you need a key—the key that will unlock the other person's heart.

Maybe you haven't asked the right question yet. Maybe you haven't made it worth that person's while. Maybe you haven't been specific enough. Maybe you haven't been sincere. Somewhere along the line you haven't done whatever it is you need to do to inspire that person to help you. So try something else. Or try someone else. And keep trying until you get what you want. If you keep trying until you get what you ask for, you will always get what you ask for.

Step 4 – Never Give Up

How many times will a baby try to take its first step before it gives up?

A baby doesn't know how to give up. A baby doesn't know the difference between success and failure. It doesn't understand self-discipline. It doesn't know anything about courage. All a baby knows is what it wants, and it keeps going until it gets it. What if you had the same approach to life?

Getting what you want boils down to a single word: persistence. No matter how presentable your wish, how good your plan, how tireless your work, your success will ultimately hinge on persistence. Are you willing to go the distance? Then you will succeed. Are you willing to endure when others are ready to quit? Then you will succeed. Are you willing to pursue until you get it, however long it takes? Then you will succeed. Success belongs to those who refuse to settle for less. Persist until you get what you want, and you will always get what you want.

Next to persistence, your skills, intelligence, and talents amount to little. The most skillful person who gives up will always finish behind the most inept person who does not. The most intelligent person who gives up will always finish behind the most simple-minded person who does not. The most talented person who gives up will always finish behind the least talented person who does not. The most gifted person alive, if he or she gives up, will always finish behind someone—behind anyone who does not.

Belief

The most common reason we give up is that we no longer believe in what we're doing. Either we don't believe our effort can succeed or we don't believe that success is worth our effort. Either way, once we lose our belief, we lose our will to continue.

And who can blame us? Why should we plant a garden unless we believe it will bear vegetables? Why should we build a house unless we believe it will provide shelter? Why should we undertake personal sacrifice unless we believe that our efforts have a chance of succeeding? Without belief, there will be no effort. Without effort, there will be no results.

Belief is the foundation of persistence. Without belief, you have no reason to complete a task. But with belief, you have no reason to quit.

Whenever you find yourself tempted to give up on a wish, ask yourself these questions:

1. Do I believe I can make this wish come true?
2. Do I believe this wish is worth the effort?

If either answer is no, then you need to work on your belief before you can effectively work on your wish. Belief causes persistence. Persistence causes success.

Wish Destroyers

By now, you've locked on to your wish; you're taking the appropriate action; you're managing your progress; and you're ready to persist in your efforts until you make your wish come true.

But there may yet be forces at work inside you that can make it difficult or even impossible for you to succeed. These are called *wish destroyers* because left unmanaged that is exactly what they will do.

Fear

The first wish killer is fear. Fear is a negative wish. The more you focus on what you fear, the more likely you are to make it happen.

The human mind does not distinguish between a mental picture of something you want and a mental picture of something you are trying to avoid. The more clearly you picture what you want, the harder your mind will work to give it to you. The more clearly you picture what you're trying to avoid, the harder your mind will work to give you that instead. Whatever you consistently picture on the inside, your mind will do its best to reproduce on the outside. Unless you want to make your fears come true, think of something else.

When you're afraid, the movie you're running in your mind is likely to be a gut-wrenching feature presentation of what you fear. You react to that movie the same way you react to a good horror movie—with sweaty palms, a churning stomach, and a racing heart. Change the movie, and you change your reaction.

For example, what would you do if you found yourself watching an unpleasant show on TV? You would change the channel. Right? You can do exactly the same thing when you find yourself watching an unpleasant show in your mind: you can change the channel and watch something else.

When you're afraid of something, you're picturing what can go wrong. If you want to change the channel, picture what can go right. Instead of picturing the worst thing that can happen, picture the best thing that can happen. Instead of picturing the pain, picture the gain. Instead of picturing what you have to lose, picture what you have to win.

When you change the movie you're watching in your mind, you change your emotional reaction to it. You turn your fear into excitement, your dread into anticipation, your avoidance into action. You can accomplish all of this simply by changing your mental pictures.

Thinking like a victim

Another wish killer is to think like a victim. As Webster's defines it, a victim is "someone harmed by or suffering from some act, condition, or circumstance."

Do you know anyone who doesn't fit that description? We are all victimized by something—crime, poverty, discrimination, a handicap, a broken home, a lousy boss, or fly-away hair. But the only real victim is the person who thinks like one.

Life is like a self-service gas station. You can sit in your car and honk, or you can fill the tank yourself. No one honks longer, louder, or with less effect than a victim.

It's easy to think like a victim. For one thing, it feels good. It lets you off the hook. When you're not responsible for what happens to you, you can't be expected to do anything about it. When the cards are stacked against you, you have no choice but to fold, so you never have to face the pressure of playing to win. And you never lack for something to do. You can fill every idle moment with the bittersweet memories of your misfortunes. And unfortunately, you can never fulfill a wish.

When you think like a victim, you turn yourself from a cause into an effect. Nothing will kill a wish faster than that. When you blame the world, you lose your power to change it. In the name of what you can't fix, you sacrifice the things you can fix.

It's not what happens to you that matters in life, it's what you choose to do about it. We are all victims of forces beyond our control. The people who get what they want from life focus on the forces they can control. They choose to live as a cause instead of as an effect.

If you want to be a cause in your own life, don't think like an effect. Instead of worrying about the cards you've been dealt, play them. Instead of asking, "Why me?" ask, *What am I going to do about it?* Instead of feeling sorry for yourself, refuse to settle for less than what you want.

The world owes you only what you are willing to collect. The best way to collect is to make your wishes come true and achieve your goals.

The Myth of Self-Discipline

Success flows from passion, not from self-discipline. While self-discipline is important, it is not the key factor to achieving your goals and making your wish come true. Self-discipline is the foundation of character, and character is the foundation of all lasting success. News headlines and history books are full of people who fell from grace because they lacked character. Without character, success is meaningless.

But character is only the launching pad—it's not the rocket. The rocket is passion.

Successful people do what they need to do whether they like it or not. That's self-discipline. Exceptionally successful people do what they need to do because they love it. That's passion.

If you have to force yourself to make your wish come true, you're working on the wrong wish. Look around you. The people who are incredibly successful aren't doing what they hate; they're doing what they love. Or at least they've learned to love what they're doing.

It's easy to fall in love with an effect—we all want to be rich or famous, or to make a difference in the world—the trick is to fall in love with the cause. The people most likely to become successful are the ones who fall in love with the processes that cause their success. Fall in love with the cause, and the effect will take care of itself.

When you're in love with the cause, you're following the path of least resistance. Your actions come naturally. You don't have to discipline yourself; you don't have to force yourself; you don't even have to motivate yourself. You simply do what you enjoy doing. The doing then becomes its own reward, and your desired results follow the way dessert follows a great meal.

The easiest way to substitute passion for self-discipline is to change the way you think about what you're doing. Instead of asking yourself, "How can I get myself to do this?" ask yourself, *How can I get myself to **enjoy** doing this?* The secret to joy is to find it wherever you look, and to look for it everywhere. Look for it in the tasks that will make your wish come true. Look for it in the challenges you face and problems you have to solve. Look for it in the moment.

Don't try to talk yourself into feeling this joy; imagine yourself into it instead. Change your mental movie. Enlarge your comfort zone. Instead of running a movie that shows how much you hate what you're doing, run a movie that shows how much you love it. Picture how much you enjoy doing the things that will make you achieve your goal, and before long you'll enjoy doing them.

Patience

It may be one of the world's oldest clichés, but patience really is a virtue. Our greatest achievements are accomplished over time, with considerable dedication and perseverance. Neither of these qualities would be possible without patience. “Good things come to him who waits,” as the old saying goes. The secret to waiting is patience.

Patience is the ability to wait for an outcome, instead of insisting on having that outcome at once. Patience is the ability to bide your time while all the forces that you cannot control align themselves to help you accomplish what you cannot do alone. To cure the affliction called instant gratification, all we need to do is develop patience. But how?

We can start by realizing that patience is not just a virtue, it's a skill. Moreover, it's a learnable skill, a skill that can be mastered by anyone. And patience is one of life's most enjoyable skills because it allows you to relax, to regain your self-control, to restore a sense of well-being and balance—even in the midst of chaos.

Patience allows you to rise above the turmoil and confusion of a hectic life and understand that there are forces at work far beyond what you alone can master. If you're willing to wait for these forces—in other words, if you're patient—they can be made to work for you, instead of against you.

But how do you learn patience? The same way you learned every other skill you now possess: through practice. Specifically, you practice waiting.

The next time you have to wait for something, think of it as practice. Think of it not as a waste of time but as a way to use time to your advantage. Think of it as if you've been given a chance to develop a skill that, once mastered, will bring you the kind of joy and peace of mind that otherwise you could only dream about.

Once you embrace patience as a source of strength in making your wishes come true, and you embrace waiting as a way to develop that strength, then delays will only encourage you, setbacks will only strengthen you, and time—perhaps for the first time in your life—will finally be on your side.

Conclusion

Now that you know your own strength; now that you know how to make your own wishes come true; what are you going to do about it?

Are you going to make your wishes come true and start achieving your goals, or are you going to settle for something less? Are you going to take the strategies we discussed and turn them into a habit that can bring you literally anything you want for the rest of your life? Or are you going to let the next ten years pass the way the last ten did? There is

nothing wrong with that, as long as you don't mind being in the same place ten years from now that you are today.

If you want to make your wishes come true, you have a decision to make. You have to decide whether you want to be a cause or an effect. You have to decide whether you want to be a screwdriver or a screw. You have to decide whether, when you are finished with this book, you are willing to set in motion the causes of whatever effects you desire.

Just remember, only you can make that one choice that makes everything else possible.

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