

SUCCESS LEAVES CLUES



*You
just
need
to know
where
to look.*

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Successful people know that success leaves clues, that it's possible to model excellence. In fact, if you ask a successful person what helped them get there, many will say that they had a mentor, or that they studied various keys to success so thoroughly that they should have been awarded a graduate degree in the subject.

With the economy the way it is, and unemployment provincially higher than it's been in years, I've seen an increase in the number of employees and entrepreneurs who are anxious. Existing and new coaching clients are looking for ways to maximize their potential and increase the likelihood of success. From my training and work as ►

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a life, business and results coach, I've found the most definite indicators of success are tied to an individual's psychology. Specifically, I believe that while most of us can learn the mechanics of business, the real challenge is in managing our mental and emotional states.

Studying successful people reveals what they know about that:

Successful people know that to get ahead you have to manage your thoughts. Dr. Daniel Amen, a well known brain scientist, psychiatrist and author, tells us that we think some 60,000 thoughts a day, most of them repetitive.

More often than not, our internal thoughts and conversations, are similar, if not identical, to the ones we got from our parents, teachers and other influential people we grew up with. In short, we incorporated their beliefs about ourselves, whether they were right or not. If you were lucky, you were brought up by parents who adored you and for whom you could do no wrong. But I've found it's far more common for people to have critical voices in their heads, something coaches call "the saboteur".

Tony Robbins, perhaps the world's best known coach, believes that success comes down to communication. Specifically, communication with others, and more importantly, what and how we communicate to ourselves.

Scientific research tells us that our brain and body respond to the thoughts we process. The quality of our thoughts is either helping us, or hindering us. Positive, happy, hopeful thoughts release chemicals that help you feel good. Negative, worried, or angry thoughts release a completely different set of chemicals that make you feel bad and erode the functioning part of your brain.

It goes without saying that thoughts create emotions, which lead to actions and behaviours.

As such, it's important to question or correct the negative words and images that run through our minds. Why? Because these thoughts are often wrong and are at the core of our anxiety, relationship and work problems.

Of course, it's one thing to identify negative thoughts; it's another to correct them. To that end, I've learned it's essential to recognize negative thoughts when they arise and replace them with positive ones.

Neuropsychiatrist Dr. Mona Lisa Schulz says that if we consistently replace our negative thoughts with more positive thoughts, over time the more positive thoughts will dominate, because the new, positive neuro pathways become stronger. In other words, it becomes habit forming.

Successful people know that there's a significant difference between failure and learning. In truth, the only way to fail is if you tell yourself that you've failed. No one else can determine that for you.

Generally, successful people make their own rules about what constitutes failure and success. Indeed, some refuse to even accept that there is such a thing as failure. Whatever your rules are, though, establish them in a way that makes them achievable. You might want to define success as giving it your all and learning something from the situation. In any event, only declare failure if you give up and don't try something else, or are unwilling to change your approach.

Successful people know that the past does not equal the future. This knowledge helps them overcome their fear of rejection.

A story about Colonel Saunders, of Kentucky Fried Chicken fame, illustrates this point well. The colonel, while in his 60s, approached 1,008 people before he got someone to agree to be a franchisee. Can you imagine the conversation he had to have with himself to

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continue approaching people after the first 100 rejections? After 200? And after 1,000?

What the colonel clearly appreciated was to not take rejection personally. That's hard for many of us, but the only way someone can feel truly rejected is if they allow themselves to feel that way. There is nothing and no one outside of yourself who can generate that painful emotion inside of you, so don't allow the fear of rejection to control your life; it's one of the main reasons that people fail.

One way to overcome fear of failure is by getting enough leverage to follow through, by using the carrot and the stick. That is to say, write down the long term consequences of not overcoming fear of rejection and weigh it against the benefits of coming to terms with it. This done, create a new set of rules for what must happen in order for you to experience rejection and make it hard to feel that way.

Successful people know the importance of discipline. Many of them establish a "no exceptions policy," in certain areas of their lives. This involves making a 100 per cent commitment to doing something every time, no matter what.

While coaching, I suggested to one of my clients, a young lawyer just starting out, that he make it a rule every week to find two people he considered centres of influence and take them out for lunch, as a way of building his practice. Today, after three years of doing so, his business is about 70 per cent referral-based.

Adopting a disciplined policy has two benefits. First, it saves you energy because you don't have to wrestle with the decision every time, over and over again. And second, you reap the results of something you are committed to.

Successful people know a thing or two about time management. In particular, they know better than to waste time and energy on unproductive outcomes; when faced with a problem, they spend their time on finding a solution, not dwelling on the problem.

Successful people know that the controlling forces in our lives are those things we link pain and pleasure to. Unfortunately, the vast majority of us will do more to avoid pain in the short term than we will to gain pleasure over time.

It need not be so. We all have the ability to change our focus and therefore our behaviour. The key is to develop control by recognizing what it is that we link pain and pleasure to. We can then use this understanding to our advantage by acknowledging that our reality is based on whatever we focus on.

For example, if you're dieting, change your focus and think less about the pain you'll get from not having chocolate and more about the pleasure you'll get from fitting into your clothes and not having to buy a new wardrobe. Or even how good it will feel to have more energy.

In short, if you want to change your behaviour, you must focus on how not doing something is going to be more painful than doing it. The secret to success is using pain and pleasure, instead of having pain and pleasure use you.

In the end, success is chiefly about you, not your environment, your circumstances or other people. It's about mastering your mental and emotional states. You can do it! ➔

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