

"Why, having been endowed with the courageous heart of a lion, do we live as mice?"

Brendon Burchard



The
LION
Within.

Robert N. Jacobs

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By

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Chapter 1

The Lion Inside.

One of the most valuable things to come into anyone's life is that moment, that experience, that person, or that learning that touches your soul and reveals the real you. In some cases it can be an incident, accident, emergency, or even a catastrophic event that leads to the discovery of an inner strength and resilience that was hidden deep within, and it's in these moments that you realise your true self and recognise that you already have all the resources you need within you to become the best you can be.

There's an old fable about a lion cub that makes this point beautifully...

One day, a lion cub was playing in the forest while his mother took a nap. He was staying nearby, but interesting things soon began to attract his attention and before long, he'd wandered off deeper into the forest to explore the world beyond his den. There were so much to see that he forgot all about finding his way home, until he realised that he was lost. Suddenly feeling frightened, he called out for his mother, frantically running in all directions in the hope of seeing her, but no response came. He was lost and alone.

Tired and weary, the little lion cub had all but given up when a sheep that had recently had its lamb taken away heard his cries. Taking pity on him, she approached and comforted him, and became the cub's adoptive mother. She grew very fond of her foundling, but the cub very quickly grew in size, so much so that she was almost fearful of him at times. He often had a far-off look in his eyes that she could never quite understand, but the pair lived happily together as mother and son.

Then, one day, a magnificent lion appeared on the horizon. Standing proud, silhouetted against the sky, he shook his huge mane and roared from his vantage point on the top of a hill. The mighty roar echoed through the hills, leaving the mother sheep trembling with fear, but the lion cub found himself spellbound by the strange sound; a sound that sparked a feeling in him he hadn't experienced before. The lion's roar had touched a chord in his nature and aroused a force within him that brought a strange new consciousness of power – a whole new desire. Instinctively, without any conscious thought, he answered the lion's call with a roar of his own. Trembling with a mix of fear and surprise, the bewildered cub felt suddenly awakened. With only a glance toward his foster mother, he leapt away in the direction of the lion on the hill. The lost lion had found himself.

Until that roar, the cub had gambolled around his sheep mother believing himself to be a lamb, never for one moment imagining he'd become anything more or do anything more than his sheep companions. He never dreamed of having a power within him that could strike terror into other beasts, he simply thought he was a sheep. Like the other

sheep, he would run at the sight of a dog and tremble in fear at the sound of a howling wolf. In discovering himself to be a lion, he was amazed to see the creatures he'd feared now fearing him. For as long as he'd believed himself to be a sheep, he had been as timid and retiring as a sheep. Thinking of himself as a sheep, he had no more strength or courage than an ordinary sheep, and if it had been suggested to him that he had the strength of a lion, he would not have believed it, believing himself to be no different to any other of his kind. But, when the lion within him was awakened, he instantly became a new creature; king of his domain with very few beasts to rival him. This awakening unlocked the cub's conscious power, a power he may never have realised had he not heard the lion's roar. The roar from the hill top had not added anything to his strength, or given him a new power, it had merely unlocked what was already there within him. Of course, after such a startling discovery, this young lion could never again be content to live the life of a sheep. The life of a lion, the liberty of a lion, and the power of a lion was now his.

The moral of this fable is that there's a sleeping lion within all of us. We all have the power we need to succeed in life within us, it's just a question of reaching deep inside and awakening it. In the same way the young lion could no longer be satisfied with the life of a sheep once the lion within was awakened, we, as people, can no longer be satisfied with an ordinary life when we realise that we have all we need to live an extraordinary life.

You Are Not a Sheep

Why live a half-life when you can live a full life? Why follow the path through life that someone else chooses for you when you can choose your own path? And why limit your achievements to those others believe you are capable of? Set your own limits, and keep resetting as you aspire to be all you can be.

Think of all the people that have grown up in impoverished circumstances believing themselves to be no different to those around them, and therefore destined to live a life of poverty. The way they think becomes their reality, but then something happens – that moment of awakening. It may be an emergency, a catastrophic event, an encounter with another individual, or some other challenging experience, but in facing it, they discover the 'inner lion' and inner power they didn't know they had. Through this discovery, they realise that they are not destined to be the same as those around them, they have what they need to be more: they have all they need to live the life they want.

Self-belief is key to success. If you believe you are a sheep, you will go through life following the path of all the sheep that have gone before you. Until you believe that you can be more than you are, you will remain as you are. If the life you currently have is not what you want, you have the power within you to change it – but you must *believe* that change is possible. You are not a sheep; you can choose to take a different path.

Of course, this can be easier said than done. There are lots of examples of people throughout history who would not have believed the things they would go on to achieve in life if they'd been told they would in their childhood. The path you'll take in life is not always clearly defined from a

young age, and it's fair to say that many young adults will embark on the career path they think is right for them, only to discover that it's not providing the fulfilment they'd hoped for further down the line. When this is the case, it takes self-belief to change direction and try a different path, but in so doing, you are choosing not to settle for a half-life, you are choosing to be and do more, and to realise your true potential.

You Are Not Alone

It really is your life to live and your success to achieve, but no one makes it to the top of their 'game' on their own. As humans, we're all connected; everything we do, say, think, and believe has an effect on others. In the grand scale of things, we're all just a small part of something much bigger than ourselves. For some, the something bigger is a higher power found in their religious or spiritual beliefs, for others it might be the strength found in being a part of a team with genuine team spirit. Even those who choose to go it alone are connected to others who have followed a similar path before them, and it's in these connections that inspiration is found.

"If I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants." – Isaac Newton

Many children grow up wanting to be just like the people they know and admire, whether that's their parents, aunts and uncles, or people they encounter in daily life such as teachers, bus drivers, and shopkeepers. These are people in roles they're familiar with, but it's not unusual for children to also imagine themselves growing up to become a storybook character, a superhero, or some other fantastical being. Children don't get hung up on practicalities or realities, they simply use their imagination and dream of being whatever they want. For them, nothing is impossible.

As we grow into teenage years and adulthood, life has a way of taking the ability to imagine ourselves being whoever and whatever we want to be away. Sometimes this happens because of the negative influences of others around us. You might have your dreams for your future shot down by someone saying, "Dream on! You need to get your head out of the clouds and get real," or little nagging doubts put into your mind by those around you saying, "Things like that don't happen to the likes of us." Over time, the beliefs of others can subconsciously become your own... you believe yourself to be a sheep, no different to the other sheep around you. This raises the importance of surrounding yourself with positive, like-minded people who will not only inspire you to achieve more, they will support you in all you do, helping you to awaken your inner lion.

Ask yourself, are the things you believe to be impossible *actually* impossible, or is it more a case of them just not being possible *yet*? Think of it this way, before Neil Armstrong took his "one small step" in 1969, how many people would have believed it was possible to walk on the moon? In more recent history, consider the idea of having 3-D printing machines in our homes and medical specialists being able to print out prosthetic limbs and body parts for use in surgical procedures. Not so many years ago, how many people would have believed this to be impossible? What about the capabilities of the latest smartphones? You don't need to go back a great many years to find a time when few people would have believed that we'd all have access to this type of technology, not just James Bond.

If no one had believed these things were possible, they would never have happened. The inspired thinkers and doers behind these happenings *made* it possible, and in so doing, they made it possible for others to believe in greater possibilities. To get what you want in life, you must believe it's possible for you to achieve it. Entrepreneur Sir Richard Branson's backstory is a good example. In his teenage years, he wanted to be a magazine editor. However, with dyslexia, a poor academic history, and no relevant experience, no magazine would employ him. He could have chosen to give up on his dream, but instead, he chose to establish and publish his own magazine, giving himself the position of editor. From those early beginnings, Richard Branson became an internationally recognised billionaire business magnate. To all intents and purposes, he's a self-made man, but it's important to recognise that he didn't get there on his own. From an early age, he had the support of his parents in all his endeavours – even those that failed – and as an entrepreneur herself, his mother undoubtedly provided an inspirational influence. When asked about his decisions to start new ventures, his airline in particular, he has said, “My interest in life comes from setting myself huge, apparently unachievable challenges and trying to rise above them... from the perspective of wanting to live life to the full, I felt that I had to attempt it.”

Knowing What You Want

When you know what you want, you're already taking a step towards achieving it – mentally. The word 'want' adds power to your thoughts and actions, compared to thinking that achieving something might be a 'nice idea' someday but in the back of your mind you're not convinced it will ever happen. Achieving what you want takes commitment and dedicated effort, and it's always going to be easier to do what you *want* to do rather than something you feel you *have* to do, or *should* be doing.

Of course, not everyone knows what they want from a young age. However, something all successful people have in common is that they always want to be the best they can be. For example, when the Beatles were writing songs, they weren't intent on achieving a string of No.1 hits, they were simply focused on writing the best song they could – one song at a time. Olympic medallists aspire to win gold, but they succeed by focusing on one training session at a time and always giving a best effort.

Everyone has the capacity to be the best they can be, and your circumstances do not dictate who you are or who you can become. You may not set out in life knowing exactly what career path you want to follow, but you *can* set out knowing who you want to be as a person. When you know that you want to be the best version of you it's possible to be, you're on your way to realising your true potential – no matter where your journey is beginning from. Those who succeed know that success is a journey, not a destination. Not achieving 'instant' success doesn't mean you can't succeed, and failure to achieve something doesn't make *you* a failure. Your journey to success begins with your decision to succeed. Continuing on your journey takes commitment – the *want* to succeed.

Something it's important to question is whether the dream you're pursuing is *your* dream, or the dream someone else has for you. When your dream is in fact someone else's dream for you, you're in danger of doing what you feel you *should* want to do, not what you truly want to do. 'Want' is a word that has power, but when it becomes 'should want', its power is instantly diluted.

Successful people do what they love and love what they do. What you love to do may not be what others believe you should do, but if you're doing what you love, you're going to be doing it often, and through doing – and doing your best – you are going to get better and better at doing it. You may not have all the external resources you need to succeed initially, but when you have the *want* to succeed, you have all the inner resources you need to bring the people, the things, and the opportunities you need into your life.

Believing in You

Knowing who you want to be, not who others believe you to be, is essential if you are to become that person. The negative voices of doubt can come from many directions, both external and internal, but Vincent Van Gogh once very wisely said, "If you hear a voice within you say, 'You cannot paint,' then by all means paint, and that voice will be silenced."

To further illustrate this point, here's some food for thought:

- Elvis Presley was turned away by the manager of the Grand Ole Opry. He told him, "You ain't goin' nowhere, son. You ought to go back to drivin' a truck."
- Charles Darwin's father told him, "You will amount to nothing and be a disgrace to your family and yourself."
- Michael Jordan was initially prevented from joining his high school basketball team because he wasn't tall enough. On his second attempt, he was cut from the team because the coach didn't think he could play well enough.
- Thomas Edison was informed by a teacher at school that he was "too stupid to learn anything."
- Walt Disney was fired from his newspaper writing job by a boss who told him he "lacked imagination."

Imagine if all these famous people had chosen to adopt the negative opinions of those who didn't believe in them? Instead, they chose to believe in themselves and to continue pursuing their own dreams. They chose to follow their own path and to become the person they knew themselves to be. They recognised their inner lion.

Chapter 2

How to Get What You Want.

Successful people believe in their ability to succeed; they believe in themselves. No matter what the goal may be – big or small – those who achieve are those who believe. No matter how far from achieving the goal they may be as they set out to achieve it, they *believe* it's possible for them to get the outcome they want. So, the question you now need to answer is, "How strongly do you believe you can have what you want?"

You Are As You Think You Are

The way you think impacts *everything* you experience in life. Your thoughts influence the way you feel, and those feelings influence the way you perceive reality, or what you believe to be true. What you believe influences the way you feel about things, and those feelings influence the thoughts in your mind... and so the cycle continues. To help put this into context, think of a time when you felt really bored. If your thoughts are all linked to being bored, you're *thinking* about how bored you are, generating *feelings* of being bored, leading to experiencing a sense of total boredom as your perceived reality. You *think* you're bored; therefore you *are* bored. When you realise this, it becomes clear that getting what you want begins and ends with believing that you can get it.

Everything in the universe is a form of energy, thoughts and feelings included. Everyone is familiar with the reality of physical vibrations, but not everyone is familiar with the equally real existence of mental vibrations. Thoughts and emotions are energy, and every thought and feeling creates its own unique vibration. To understand this, just take a moment to consider a time when you have walked into a room or some other place and felt an 'atmosphere' in there. What you're feeling is the energy in the room; energy being created by the thoughts and emotions of the people in the room. Those people may not say a word or even appear to move, but the good or bad vibe you feel is their mental energy.

A 'good' or a 'bad' atmosphere is being created by the mental vibrations of others, but your own mental energy is responsible for those moments in life when you get a 'good' or a 'bad' feeling about something. You might consider it a gut feeling; that moment when you feel in your gut whether the thing you're about to do is going to be the 'right' or 'wrong' thing for you to do at that time. Energy is all around you, and when you're getting a good feeling about something, it's because you're choosing to think positively about it. Your positive thoughts are being sent out into the universe, and the positive energy attracts positive outcomes in return. Of course, if you're getting a bad feeling about something, it's because you're thinking negatively about it. You are as you think you are; your circumstances are as you believe them to be, and what you think about, you bring about.

Like Attracts Like

Thinking positively attracts positive outcomes. Now, this is not to say that sitting around daydreaming about all the great things you want to come your way in life will make them magically materialise. Thinking

positively leads to positive actions being taken, and it's those positive actions that lead to achieving what you want. The key thing to realise here is that it takes positive thoughts to drive positive actions, and as you know already, your thoughts and feelings influence your perception of yourself and your circumstances. This means that outwardly saying you want to achieve something holds no power if inwardly you don't believe you can. *Saying* that you want to pass your driving test is of no value if inwardly you're thinking that you'll probably fail; *saying* that you want to quit your job and start your own business is of no value if inwardly you don't believe you have what it takes to actually do it; or *saying* that you want to save up the cash you need to fund a dream trip but inwardly doubting your ability to ever do it can only lead to your thoughts becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy. Like attracts like, but it's not just what you say that matters, it's what you believe and what you do that attracts positive outcomes. In this sense, you might think of it as being a bit like a battery – when you think positively, your thoughts charge up the energy in the universe, and when you think negatively, those thoughts deplete it.

On the topic of energy drains, have you ever found yourself in the company of people who seem to suck all the positivity out of any conversation or situation? They have a way of being down on everything, and no matter how good your mood is before you hook up with them, their negativity rubs off and you find yourself getting dragged down into their negativity. As the saying goes, 'misery loves company,' meaning that miserable people like to share their woes with others to ensure that everyone around them is put in a position to feel their pain. Being able to empathise with others is a good thing, but too much time spent in the company of misery will lead to their negative energy depleting your positivity.

Just as there are energy drainers in the world, there are energy boosters. Think of the people you've met that seem to generate a positive 'buzz' in a room and have a way of adding positivity to any conversation or situation. These people are putting out positive energy into the atmosphere and it positively charges the energy of everyone around them. Clearly, time spent with positive people is a good thing, making it important to step back and consider how the people you spend most time with might be influencing your thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and therefore actions. This is not to say that you should go through life turning your back on people experiencing tough times, it simply means avoiding the potential to have misery as your only companion. You can be there for people who need to share their problems, but you also need to spend time with positive people who can give your mental energy a boost.

Be a Success Magnet

Like attracts like, and what you think about you bring about, so think of yourself as a success in the making and all that you need to achieve your goal will be attracted to you – you become a magnet to success. What you focus on, you give energy to, so keep your thoughts focused on what you want, not what you don't want, and on what you *can* do, not what you can't. When you think positively, the positive energy you put out into the universe is returned to you, taking you closer to the outcome you want and bringing the things you need closer to you. Negative thinking, or not truly believing in the things you say you believe in, can only ever result in repelling rather than attracting the outcome you want.

To attract the best outcomes, you need to be your best and give your best in all you think and all you do. If you're putting in a best effort, you're giving yourself the best opportunity to get the best return for your efforts. This is easily put into context by simply reflecting on the outcomes of any projects you've half-heartedly embarked on. If you're not fully committed to making something happen, it won't happen, and if

you're setting out with doubts over whether you'll see something through, you won't see it through. Like attracts like.

See Yourself as a Success

Success is always going to mean different things to different people, so *your* success can only be defined by you. In knowing what it is you want to achieve, you're already taking a step towards achieving it and, as you know, the *want* to do something adds power to your potential to succeed. However, getting what you want is always going to be inextricably linked to how strongly you believe you can have it. In effect, you can only get what you believe is yours for the taking.

For those with religious beliefs, it's perhaps easier to accept that whatever it is you need is already yours. There's a quote by Harriet Emilie Cady, 19th century homeopathic physician and author of 'Lessons in Truth', that sums this up beautifully: "A desire in the heart for anything is God's sure promise sent beforehand to indicate that it is yours already in the limitless realm of supply." With this belief, the desire you feel to pursue a particular course in life might be considered your calling – that deep inner feeling that guides you in the direction of your true purpose. Of course, discovering your purpose can take time and a bit of trial and error may be needed, but achieving your true potential and becoming the best you can be in whatever you choose to do in life comes down to believing that all you need to succeed is available to you.

With or without religious or spiritual beliefs, believing in yourself and seeing yourself as the person you want to be, living the life you want to live, is key to making it your reality. Seeing yourself as a success is made possible through a technique known as visualisation. Utilised by top-level athletes for many years, visualisation (also known as mental imagery) is now used in all areas of life, and by anyone interested in realising their true potential. It's a technique that effectively allows you to turn your dream life into a movie, with you in the starring role. The film begins with you as you are and in your current circumstances. It then ends with you living your dream life as the person you want to be. The bit in the middle is all about how you turned your dream into a reality, including how you created a clear image of what you wanted, and the action steps you took to keep moving towards your goal, even when obstacles threatened to block your path. The great thing about visualisation is that you can watch the film in your mind's-eye whenever you like, and you can skip backwards and forwards to whatever scenes you want to focus on. Life doesn't always go to plan, but without a clear plan of where you're aiming to be, you're in danger of drifting. When you can visualise your success, you're sending out positive mental energy into the universe which will be returned to you in the form of the things you need. And, being able to visualise how you will successfully overcome the inevitable obstacles that will get in your way helps to develop a powerful habit of positive thinking, giving your self-belief a boost whenever needed. You could say that through visualisation you have what you need to awaken and inspire your inner lion.

Finding Passion and Purpose

The question now is what to do if you're not sure of your purpose in life. What if you haven't experienced a calling; what if you're drifting through life feeling there's something missing that you just can't put your finger on, or what if you've reached a point in life where you feel stuck in a rut?

There's an inspirational way of thinking that can be traced all the way back to the ancient Norse people. It was their belief that everyone has their own "fire" within them and that those who could keep that fire alive and carry it with them throughout life would achieve most in life. The fire represents a burning passion. As

they saw it, the individuals destined to get most out of life were those that found something they loved to do and continued to do it. Using this as inspiration, you can discover your own “fire” by taking a moment to question what you love to do, and what fills you with enthusiasm? What gets you all fired up just thinking about it? What do you feel passionate about being or doing in life? What do you wish you could devote more time to doing – or wish you could do all the time? Answering these questions will help you find your passion and your purpose.

Of course, if you’re feeling stuck in a rut, you might not feel fired up or inspired by anything and, without realising it, you might be drifting through life waiting for inspiration to come your way. Your inner fire has all but gone out, making it hard to visualise what it is you want out of life. At times like this, an ‘inspiration board’ can be a positive way to actively seek out the things that are going to relight your fire! Gather together images or words that catch your attention, or you feel drawn to in any way. These could be images of places, people, memorable moments in time, possessions, things you admire, or anything at all that sparks your interest. These images can now act as reminders of things you’ve loved to do or things that matter in your life. Is there a connection between them? Are they things you’ve enjoyed in the past, or are they forgotten dreams that were never realised? Remember, it’s your life to live and your path to find, not the path someone else believes is the right one for you. If you’re feeling there’s something missing in your life, could it be that you’ve allowed the things you once loved to do and felt passionate about to fall by the wayside to concentrate on things you felt you *should* do, rather than *wanted* to do?

An inspiration board can help you to rediscover and rekindle your inner fire. All the clues you need to help you find what inspires you will be there, but sometimes it takes a physical visit to a meaningful location or time spent in the company of inspirational people to relight the fire-starting spark. From there, visualisation allows you to *see* yourself being who you want to be and doing what you want to do – fulfilling your true purpose, and realising your true potential. When you find your inspiration, you also find the source of positive energy that makes you a magnet to success.

Successful people don’t always start out with a clear picture of what they will become successful in, but they all start out with a vision of becoming the best they can be, and they all believe in their ability to achieve whatever they put their mind to. The things you put your mind to are the things that inspire and motivate you, so they’re things you feel passionate about and love to do. There are lots of successful individuals out there who have come to understand with the benefit of hindsight that the success they have in doing what they now do has come through always doing what they love to do. They may have dabbled in a variety of career paths and changed direction numerous times, but there will always be something they love to do connecting each choice – something that has allowed them to keep their inner fire alive and carry it with them on their journey. The road to success is rarely straight and smooth. Twists, turns, bumps, and detours are part of life, but when you know in your heart where you want to go, everywhere the route takes you along the way is another step to getting there. The connections are there, and those connections will lead you from where you are to where you want to be.

To begin building a clearer picture of where you want to be, try asking yourself these questions and answering them with total honesty. When you get to where you want to be...

- Who are you?
- Where do you work?
- What do you do?
- Where do you live?

- Who do you have around you in your life?
- What are you most proud of in your life?
- What makes you smile?

Honest answers to these questions, and detailed answers to these questions will give you what you need to visualise yourself being that person and living that life. Use your inspiration board to give you visual reminders of things that matter and things you love to do, and this will help you to build an ever-clearer picture of where it is you're going. The positive mental energy generated through seeing and experiencing what you want becoming yours will keep your inner fire burning bright, and by keeping your focus on what you want, all the positive energy you put out into the universe will be returned to you, and all that you need to succeed will be attracted to you.

Chapter 3

Choose Happiness

“The grass is always greener on the other side.” We’re all familiar with this expression, and it’s not unusual to occasionally slip into believing that if you only had a certain something, you could then be happy. The ‘something’ could be a possession, a lifestyle, a certain amount of money, a house, a job, an opportunity... the list goes on. In this frame of mind, your focus is fully on what you *don’t* have in your life; the something you believe you need to have to be happy, and with this being the case, the unhappiness you’re experiencing is put down to *not* having that something. Of course, this is flawed thinking. The problem with believing that the grass is always greener on the other side is that there’s always going to be another side: no matter where you get to, you’re always going to see somewhere greener.

Let’s imagine you’re unhappy in your work. You believe that if you could just get the promotion you’re after, you’d be happy. You then get the promotion, but you find you’re no happier than before. Now what? The disappointment of not finding the happiness you imagined would come with the promotion can actually lead to even greater unhappiness... and so the cycle of looking for the next certain something you need to be happy continues. The happiness you *think* you’ll find continues to elude you because you’re always looking for something more, rather than finding happiness in what you have.

Happiness Is a State of Mind

The key message here is that if you’re always looking for happiness in material things or ‘certain somethings’, you’ll never find it – or you won’t find *lasting* happiness – because there’s always going to be something else. True happiness is found internally, meaning it’s found in your thoughts and your frame of mind.

For as long as you continue to think about all the things you *don’t* have, or dwell on all the things that *haven’t* gone the way you wanted them to, you continue to keep yourself in a negative frame of mind. Negative thoughts can only ever lead to negative outcomes in life, effectively keeping you trapped in a downward spiral of negativity – like attracts like. Of course, it’s important to understand and accept that no one is happy all the time, even those who always appear to be upbeat whenever you’re around them. Everyone experiences upset and sadness at times in life, so setting out with the expectation of never feeling unhappy ever again is unrealistic. It’s all about being able to put things into perspective. Negative things happen, but there are positives to be found in every situation. All it takes to find them is a positive frame of mind or a change of perspective.

A good way of thinking about this is to consider the popular categorisation of glass half full or glass half empty. Which type of thinker do you consider yourself to be? If you’re a glass half empty type of person, your natural tendency will be to adopt a pessimistic viewpoint and to focus on negatives, so much so that you become blinkered to any positives in your life. This is something Oscar Wilde once summed up beautifully when he said, “The optimist sees the doughnut, the pessimist sees the hole.” What you focus on, you give energy to, so in the same way that thinking you’re bored generates feelings of boredom, thinking you’re unhappy generates feelings of unhappiness. In this state of mind, you’re unable to see anything other than things that confirm your belief: you *think* you’re unhappy, so you *feel* unhappy, and your perception of reality is that there’s nothing to be happy about.

Change Your Thinking, Change Your Life

Changing the way you see the world is a matter of changing your perception of reality. If you're naturally pessimistic, this might seem like a tall order, but the way you see yourself and your world can also be described as your mindset, and your mindset *can* be changed. Psychologist Carol Dweck spent decades researching this topic and the effects of an individual's mindset on their potential to succeed in life. Through her work, the traits of having a fixed or a growth mindset were set out as follows:

Fixed Mindset:

In a fixed mindset, you believe that who you are is who you will always be. You believe that any abilities or skills you have (or don't have) are just the way things are, and there's nothing you can do to change any of it. In effect, you're stuck with your lot in life – for good or for bad.

Growth Mindset:

In a growth mindset, you believe that change is always possible. You believe that who you are now and the skills you have (or don't have) now are not fixed, and that everyone has the potential to achieve their own version of success with dedicated effort. You're *not* stuck with your lot in life.

The conclusion of Carol Dweck's research is that it takes the development of a growth mindset to achieve your full potential in life. A fixed mindset can only ever hold you back, but it's fair to say that most of us adopt a mixture of both mindsets at different times in life depending on the circumstances. The good news is that when you recognise yourself slipping into a fixed mindset, you can take steps to move into a much more productive growth mindset. How you view your circumstances at any given time is entirely down to your perception, and how you choose to deal with the inevitable ups and downs of life comes down to your mindset. Your perception and your mindset are always your choice.

To put this into context, imagine you're job hunting and you apply for six positions. Out of the six applications, you only get invited to the interview stage for two of them. Does this constitute success or failure? If you're in a negative mindset, you're going to view the failure to get an interview for all six as a setback, but take a moment to consider how your invite to two interviews will be viewed by someone who applied for six positions and didn't get an interview for any of them. You see, a change of perspective can be all it takes to change your view of yourself and your life. Now imagine you go through both interviews but you don't get a job offer. Thinking negatively, you might slip into an attitude of "things never work out for me" and choose to wallow in self-pity, but thinking positively, you remain open to seeing things differently. In a growth mindset, you accept that you didn't get the job, but you also accept that you did gain valuable interview experience that you can take forwards with you and use to your advantage next time around. There are always positives to be found in every situation if you remain open to seeing them.

Unfortunately, society once again has a way of leading us into comparing ourselves negatively against others, and this is perhaps especially true for young women. There's pressure to look a certain way, behave a certain way, think a certain way, and generally conform to a set of preconceived ideas of what it means to be a woman – both in the workplace and at home. The world is always changing and things have improved over the last few decades, but young women today can still find themselves up against old-fashioned and outdated points of view and opinions that can threaten to hold them back, or at the very least crush confidence. It takes self-belief to pursue a goal and commit to doing whatever it takes to achieve it when it feels like others around you are determined to stand in your way or undermine your every effort. This might rear its ugly head in the form of glass ceilings in the workplace or it might be in the subliminal messages of social media and the world of advertising, but either way, the outcome can be a gradual slip into self-doubt as the negative beliefs of others are adopted as your own.

Bigger Is Not Necessarily Better

Even when you're able to maintain self-confidence, the 'bigger is better' attitude that exists in almost all areas of life can generate an unhealthy atmosphere of extreme competitiveness. This also piles on the pressure to have more, do more, and just be more in general in order to experience the sense of happiness and satisfaction the world of advertising constantly promotes as the something we should all be chasing. When this becomes the backdrop to daily life, it's no wonder happiness continues to elude us because there's always something we don't have – and without it we can't be happy!

It's fair to say that by today's standards, 'success' is measured mainly in terms of fame, fortune, and bling, and on top of that, the success everyone aspires to is *instant*. Marketing campaigns promise 'instant happiness' or 'instant wealth' if we buy into their products, and the pressure to conform to certain ideals as a young woman continues to build with promises of 'instant weight loss' or 'instant love' if certain celebrity-endorsed programmes are subscribed to. All of this adds up to a brainwashing effect and the false belief that *not* having everything – and having it now – makes you a loser in life.

This is not to say that all competitiveness is a bad thing. In fact, life scientists believe that it's part of human nature to be competitive, something that began with our ancient hunter gatherer ancestors' need to compete for resources simply to ensure survival. Our innate ability to cooperate with others can also be considered a survival instinct because being part of a 'tribe' provided crucial protection. Of course, competing against others and competing against yourself are two very different things. Striving to have more simply to compete with others can't bring you happiness, but striving to be your best self can. True success can only ever be measured in terms of realising your *own* dreams, and finding your own sense of satisfaction in what matters most to you – no one else.

The Pursuit of Happiness

Okay, the main message here is that happiness isn't found externally, it's found internally. Nothing makes this point clearer than the many stories of lottery winners who find themselves no happier with stacks of money to buy absolutely anything their heart desires than they were before their big win, and some even confess to being unhappier. This is backed up with research and the findings of several studies that have revealed true happiness is essentially found in 'doing good':

- Doing good deeds for others
- Doing things you're good at and bring you joy
- Taking care of yourself and having a good work/life balance.

However, perhaps the most interesting finding to come out of these happiness studies is that happiness is a choice. Those who report the highest levels of happiness in life are those who choose to be happy with what they have at any point in life. This is not to say they're settling for what they have and choosing not to realise their true potential, it means they're choosing *not* to lose sight of all the good things they already have in their life – as happens when your focus is only on what you *don't* have.

This brings us neatly to the well-known proverb: *The best things in life are free*. Another danger associated with an attitude of bigger is better is that envy creeps in all too easily. If you're being subliminally told that having a certain gadget, car, designer brand, etc., is the route to happiness, seeing others with those things when you don't have them might lead to feelings of jealousy – an emotion that can become destructive in terms of relationships with others if left unchecked. One way to check it is to remember that the best things in life are free. As the Beatles once sang, "Money can't buy me love..." and the love, support, and companionship of family and friends is priceless. Sadly, the pursuit of material possessions or fame and

fortune have led many to abandon, neglect, or take for granted important relationships, and by the time they realise the error of their ways, it's too late. It is, however, important to note that 'free' doesn't mean free of any effort on your part. You can't buy the best things in life, but getting comes with giving. The more love you give, the more love will be returned to you, so the more happiness you bring to others, the happier you become in return.

Being busy is somehow linked to being important. The busier you are in your life, the more important you must be, but the problem here is that 'being busy' doesn't always equate to doing anything that really matters. If you become so caught up in trying to be everything society says you should be in order to live a fulfilled life, you have no time to discover and enjoy the things that really bring you a true sense of fulfilment, and the things that really matter – your relationships with family and friends, health, mental wellbeing – may have gone before you realise it. Being busy or important *isn't* important, being happy and fulfilled is. This isn't to say that having a high-powered job or earning a large salary is a bad thing, far from it, it just means that to find fulfilment, you need to set your own goals and then, crucially, remember to stop and enjoy the view at each stage on your journey towards achieving them. Think of it this way; there's absolutely no joy in having a prestigious job if you hate every minute you spend at work, and there's no happiness in having money to burn if you're lonely and have no one to share it with.

To bring positive things into your life, you need to think positively, feel positive about who you are and what you're doing, and then take positive action steps as a result, allowing you to continue growing and moving towards realising your true potential. Becoming the best you can be should never be at the expense of others, and as the research has shown, happiness comes from doing good deeds for others, not looking out for number one. If you're thinking selfish thoughts, harbouring jealousy, hatred, or other negative emotions, and behaving in a way that matches your negative outlook, the trouble you're expecting to find is all that will come your way. If, on the other hand, you choose to look for positives and to be happy with what you've achieved, you can see and be grateful for the many good things you already have in your life. Choose to go through your daily life taking note of all the things you have to be happy about, not things to be miserable about, and you'll very soon become a master of finding happiness. Remember, happiness is a state of mind, and it's not something you should be putting on hold. Choose to be happy now, today, and choose to end each day with positive thoughts of three good things you saw or experienced that day, allowing you to wake up in a positive frame of mind for the new day ahead.

There's a famous quote by Buddha that serves as a wonderful reminder to us all to be thankful for what we have on any given day or in any moment in time:

“Let us rise up and be thankful, for if we didn't learn a lot today, at least we learned a little, and if we didn't learn a little, at least we didn't get sick, and if we got sick, at least we didn't die; so, let us all be thankful.”

Chapter 4

Turn the Tide

There can be no guarantee that every plan you make in life is going to work out just the way you want it to, that's just the way life is. The question is, how do you respond when things don't go your way? You can't control every element of the world around you, but you *can* control the way you deal with setbacks and disappointments. You already know that nothing is possible unless you believe it's possible for you, so now it's time to question how prepared you are to keep striving for what you want, even when it feels like everything is against you.

Retired soccer champion Mia Hamm once said, "No-one gets an iron-clad guarantee of success. Certainly, factors like opportunity, luck and timing are important, but the backbone of success is usually found in old-fashioned, basic concepts like hard work, determination, good planning and perseverance." As the face of the Women's United Soccer Association, the first professional women's soccer league in the United States, Mia was a trailblazer in her career, twice becoming the FIFA Women's World Cup champion and twice winning Olympic gold. Her determination to succeed kept her striving not only to be the best player she could be, but also to change attitudes in what was a male-dominated sport. Mia's passion for her sport inspired an entire generation of young women and girls to get involved, and thanks to her hard work, determination, good planning, and perseverance, young girls following in her footsteps had the opportunity to become professional soccer players, allowing them to turn their own sporting dreams into reality.

You don't need to be a football fan, or a fan of any professional sport, to appreciate the years of dedicated effort and training it takes to make it to elite level. Before Mia Hamm was known to the world, many young boys dreamt of becoming professional footballers, but there was no such thing as a professional football career for young girls to aspire to. She changed attitudes, not just in a sport steeped in centuries of tradition, but also in the minds of spectators. What can be learned from her story of success is that change is always possible. She may have grown up being told that it was impossible for her to turn her passion into a profession, or that soccer as a career is 'not for girls', but she chose to play anyway, and through her self-belief she changed the long-held beliefs of others.

Failure Happens

Professional sport may revolve around winning or losing, but the important thing to remember here is that losing and failing are not one and the same. Negative things happen, but there are positives to be found in every situation. In sport, no one wins every competition, it's simply not physically possible to maintain peak fitness throughout an entire year, let alone an entire career, so progressive training plans are put in place to ensure appropriate periods of rest and recovery allow athletes to perform at their best when it matters most. Failing to win an event isn't failure when it's part of a training programme and a bigger plan and, as in sport, so it is in all other aspects of life. What constitutes success or failure is never anything more than your perception of either state.

"Failure happens all the time. It happens every day in practice. What makes you better is how you react to it." – Mia Hamm

Everything in life is relevant to something else. If you're having a bad day, then it's only 'bad' because you're comparing it to a 'good' day; if you never experienced a bad day, then how would you know you were having

a good day? When you think about it this way, without one there could be no other. Without downs there could be no ups, so without failure there could be no success. However, this is not to say that to succeed you *must* fail, it simply means accepting that there can only be the potential to succeed if there's also the potential to fail, but *accepting* is very different to *expecting*.

The Tide Will Always Turn

'This too shall pass' is an important message conveyed in several Bible passages. With or without religious beliefs, it's easy to see and accept that everything in life moves in natural cycles. The ebb and flow of the tide, the changing seasons, and the phases of the moon for example. Just as athletes train in progressive cycles of hard work followed by rest to maximise performance, farmers plant their crops in rotation to gain the best return from the soil, and it's this natural cycle of things that needs to be remembered when it feels like nothing is going your way. Armed with an acceptance and understanding of this natural way of things adds power to positive thinking through rough times because you know that better times will come around again. The highs and lows of life are just part of a natural and continuous cycle, and just as the tide will always turn and the seasons will change, you can emerge from setbacks and difficult times to once again enjoy good times when you maintain a positive outlook.

As tempting as it is to wallow in self-pity when things are not going the way you want them to, dwelling on negative thoughts can only ever hold you back and effectively delay the natural return to better times. What you think about, you give power to, so focusing your thoughts on disappointments and "disasters" won't change anything or make things turn out differently. You can't change what has already happened, but you *can* change what happens next when you adopt a positive attitude. Anger, frustration, and despair are negative emotions that can keep you trapped where you are, prolonging your stay in a low, and all it takes to begin your return to a high is a change of perspective. Look for the positives, learn from the experience, and take what you learn forwards with you. We all know that what goes up must come down, but when you understand the natural cycle of things, you also know that when it comes to tough times, what goes down must also come up!

Be Your Own 'Boss'

You already know that positive thinking isn't a magic wand that can be waved to make everything go the way you want it to, but success comes firstly from believing it's possible for you to succeed and then thinking and acting accordingly. Successful people believe in themselves, even when others don't. History is full of examples of creative people who carried on pursuing their dreams despite criticism, rejection, or initial failure. The belief they had in their ability to achieve what they wanted came from within, leaving no room for the doubts of others to become their own, and the positive thought process gave them all they needed to stay on track and *not* give up on their goals.

It's a sad fact that there are always going to be people around who seem to take pleasure in putting others down. They're ready and waiting with negative comments designed to undermine your every effort, and they'll tell you with great confidence that whatever it is you're aiming to do is impossible. If you're being bombarded with this level of negativity, it's hard not to begin questioning yourself. When others are doubting you, the negative energy they create can lead to the voice of self-doubt entering your mind and your thoughts, bringing with it a barrage of confidence-crushing 'what if?' questions: What if it all goes wrong? What if I can't do it? What if they're right and I'm making a fool of myself? What if I'm not ready? What if...? Self-doubt promotes fear, and fear can paralyze you. To get from where you are to where you want to be, you need to move, and it takes positive thoughts to drive positive actions. Banishing self-doubt is

the only way to prevent fear from stopping you in your tracks, so the key message here is that while you may hear the nagging voice of self-doubt, keep in mind that it doesn't have all the answers and you don't have to listen. *Your mind, your thoughts, your choices* – be your own boss. With a positive attitude, negative 'what ifs' can be turned around. Instead of asking, "What if I fail?" you can ask yourself, "What if I succeed?" By focusing your thoughts on what success will bring into your life, you set a positive cycle of thinking, feeling, and behaving successfully in motion, and you choose to keep moving towards your dream.

Of course, just as there are people out there all too willing to crush the dreams of others, there are also people out there who seem to have no lack of self-confidence – yet they still 'fail' to get what they want. Good examples of this can be seen in TV talent shows such as 'The X Factor' in which many positive thinking individuals confidently proclaim themselves to be the next big thing, only to find themselves rejected by the judges. In most cases, this leads to tears, tantrums, and wailing words of life being over. At the first hurdle in their path, these individuals fall. They may have *thought* of themselves as winners, but winners in life don't just think about becoming successful, they *act* on those thoughts and put action plans in place. Self-belief is not self-delusion, and thinking positively is not looking at life through rose-tinted glasses. Winners in life *commit* to doing whatever it takes for as long as it takes to succeed, and the journey to what you want is not guaranteed to be a straight or a smooth one. Obstacles in your path are only journey-ending roadblocks if you choose to view them as such; positive thinkers find a way around or over them.

Be a Trailblazer

Being a trailblazer doesn't have to mean blazing a whole new trail that makes the world sit up and take notice, it can simply mean having the courage to follow your own path in life. Breaking away from convention and traditional ways of thinking or doing things can be challenging, but only through setting and pursuing your own goals can you realise the life you want. Remember, successful people do what they love and love what they do, and many, like Mia Hamm, continue to do what they love despite so-called voices of reason discouraging them or telling them they're wasting their time. They choose to trust in themselves, and while they're always open to advice from knowledgeable and supportive others, they listen to the 'gut feeling' that lets them know they're doing what's right for them.

When you know in your heart of hearts that what you're doing is what brings you a true sense of fulfilment, nothing can stand in your way – or at least nothing you can't find a way through or around. When you're pursuing your own goals in life, you put a best effort into everything you do, and there's no failure in doing your best. Not everything you set out to achieve is going to work out just the way you planned, but as the ancient Japanese proverb states, "Fall down seven times, stand up eight." There's no failure, there's only failure to learn and try again, and don't forget that the potential to succeed only exists because the potential to fail also exists.

Choosing to follow your own path or blaze a trail takes self-belief, but when you know what inspires you, what lights your fire and fills you with joy, you know you're on the right track. Choosing your own path is choosing to recognise your inner lion and set (and reset) your own limits in life. The only real limits you have are not those set by convention or society, they're the ones you set yourself, and the overriding message in this chapter is that no matter what obstacles you face, maintain a positive attitude and the way forward will come to you. The last word on this topic must go to a beautifully succinct old Chinese proverb:

"Those who say it can't be done should stay out of the way of those doing it."

Chapter 5

Move Mountains

Self-belief is key to achieving your goals in life. No matter how big or small the goal, those who achieve are those who believe. Successful people have faith, and faith can move mountains. Whether you have faith in a higher being or faith in yourself, faith is having total trust in that something or someone and an unshakeable belief that whatever it is you dream of doing *can* be done. With faith, you have courage in your convictions, and with faith comes hopefulness and positive expectation.

Basketball legend Michael Jordan once said, “You must expect great things of yourself before you can do them.” These are wise words. No matter how big the ‘great things’ may be, or how impossible to achieve others believe them to be, with faith and positive attitude you have what you need to achieve the outcome you want – you can move mountains.

Faith In You

Another famous sports legend once said, “Everyone needs something to believe in. It’s lack of faith that makes people afraid of challenges, and I believed in myself.” These words were spoken by boxing champ Muhammad Ali, an iconic character known for his positivity and bold statements. He also used to make the point that he wasn’t bragging because he always did what he said he was going to do! As you know, what you *say* you’re going to do or what you *say* you believe in has no power unless your actions match your words. Positive thoughts drive positive actions, but negative thinking, or not truly believing in the things you say you believe in, can only ever hold you back.

In saying that faith can move mountains, you’re saying that truly believing in something can make the seemingly impossible possible. What constitutes a ‘mountain’ is an individual thing, but it’s a challenge or a task you’re facing that feels huge. The thought of attempting to move a mountain is overwhelming, making it all too easy to give up without trying at all, but with faith you remain optimistic and hopeful, and you roll up your sleeves to begin doing whatever it takes for as long as it takes to achieve what you want. You believe you have what it takes, or that what you need can and will be yours if you stay positive and do your best in all you think and all you do.

Be a Bumble Bee

The story of Mary Kay Ash is one that demonstrates the power of self-belief and its ability to move mountains. Recognised today as one of America’s greatest female entrepreneurs, she founded Mary Kay Cosmetics, Inc. in 1963 – a time when women in the workplace were rarely promoted above secretarial roles. By the time of her death in 2001, the company had over 3 million independent sales agents across 35 countries and an estimated value of around \$2.6 billion, so it’s fair to say that she rolled up her sleeves and put her faith in her ability to achieve whatever she put her mind to. One of Mary’s most famous quotes is: “Aerodynamically, the bumble bee shouldn’t be able to fly, but the bumble bee doesn’t know it, so it goes on flying anyway.” In the male-dominated business world of the 1960s, she was the bumble bee that shouldn’t be able to fly – but she went ahead and flew anyway.

As a child, Mary had grown up with the responsibility of caring for her father who had tuberculosis while her mother worked long hours to support the family. The responsibilities and difficulties she faced were often daunting, but her mother guided and encouraged her by saying, “You can do it, Mary Kay. You can do it.” Her dream was to become a doctor, no doubt influenced by her experience of caring for her father, and her ‘you can do it’ upbringing saw her graduate from high school. However, her parents couldn’t afford to send her to college, so at the age of just 17, Mary Kay married. When World War II broke out, her husband left to serve in the armed forces, leaving her at home with three children to support, a challenge she rose to with her ‘can do’ attitude by selling books door-to-door.

The war took its toll on the marriage, and soon after her husband’s return in 1945, they were divorced. Mary Kay had been hugely successful as a door-to-door salesperson so she now took a job with a direct sales firm to support herself and her young family. Her continuing success soon found her head-hunted by another company, and her marketing skills quickly put her into the role of national training director. But, after 25 years of hard work in the direct sales business, her success had yet to be acknowledged by her supervisors and Mary Kay left the company when one of the men she’d trained was promoted above her and given double her salary.

This was the 1960s and Mary Kay believed that she was living in a man’s world. After quitting her job, it became her intention to write a book that would help women to succeed in the workplace. She sat down to write out a list of everything she felt the companies she’d worked for got right and another that highlighted the areas where she felt there was room for improvement. However, it soon became clear that she’d inadvertently created a business plan for her dream company.

In 1963, at the age of 45, Mary Kay put her \$5,000 of savings into turning her plan into her business – a business designed to help women achieve unlimited opportunities for personal and financial success. With the help of her son, she opened her first Beauty by Mary Kay store in Dallas and her dream began. With dedication, determination and hard work, Mary Kay turned her small business with a sales force of nine into one of America’s largest direct selling cosmetics companies with an independent sales force of millions. She did it with the ‘you can do it’ attitude passed on to her by her mother and she said, “Sometimes I wonder if my mother was aware of the seeds she was planting in my life as a child and where they would take not only me, but thousands of other women. What she sent into my life I sent into others’. And they in turn have sent what they have into many lives as well.”

Mary Kay Ash’s story is one of having faith. Her faith in herself to be and do better moved mountains, not only for herself but for all the other women she inspired to have faith in themselves. She chose not to settle for the business world’s view of a woman’s role, she believed in herself, her ideas and abilities, and she had enough courage in her convictions to blaze a whole new trail. In her words, “In the heart of every successful person is, ‘I can.’”

See Your Strengths

Most of us slip into moments of self-doubt from time to time, and anyone claiming to have no fear of anything is probably kidding themselves. It can be hard to stay positive when facing challenges, and no one is immune to the occasional negative thought, but choosing to turn your focus to what you *can* do rather than what you *can’t* is the most effective way to ensure that negative thoughts are only ever passing thoughts. This can be done in an instant by changing negative what if questions into positive what if questions. You know that by changing the energy of your thoughts, “What if I fail?” becomes, “What if I succeed?” and by thinking positively, “What if I succeed?” soon becomes, “I *can* succeed,” and then, “I *will* succeed.” The confidence to move from one state to the next comes from taking a look at the skills you already have and

then having faith in your ability to utilise what you have to gain any additional skills you need to achieve what you want.

Doubt is rooted in a lack of self-belief. If you're in the habit of telling yourself that you won't be able to do the things you want to do, you won't be able to do them. If you've allowed yourself to take on the doubts of others concerning your abilities, then those doubts will undermine your efforts because those efforts will be half-hearted. Only consistent thoughts have power, so what you habitually focus your mind on becomes your reality – and it cuts both ways. What you think and say must be congruent with what you *believe* and what you do. Random thoughts have no power, so the message here is that telling yourself you can be whoever you want and do whatever you want in life is of no value unless you believe and have faith in these words: repeating positive affirmations in the mirror each morning is of no benefit unless you believe what you're saying.

Of course, getting from where you are to where you want to be is going to take time. Believing you *can* get there is essential, and then maintaining a positive attitude with each step you take helps to keep you moving towards your goal. This is where focusing on what you *can* do and what you already have rather than what you *can't* do and what you don't have holds most power as you develop a habit of positive thinking. Successful people have successful habits, and you can develop your own...

- Use the power of positive self-talk and positive affirmations, and make it a daily habit. The key to real success here is to really believe what you say.
- Make it a daily habit to be thankful for all the positive things you already have in your life. Recognise the skills you already have and celebrate every achievement and success, no matter how small.
- Use visualisation to see yourself as the person you want to be, and have faith that you are this version of you in the making.
- Create a vision board of everything becoming the best you can be will mean in your life. Reflect on it daily to inspire and motivate your every thought and action.
- Surround yourself with positivity by reading books and listening to music with a positive message, and find inspirational quotes that resonate with you.
- Believe in yourself and your ability to achieve your dreams, and behave each day as the person you dream of becoming. Be your best and do your best and you will become your best.

Building Belief

Self-belief and self-confidence go hand in hand. To succeed, you need confidence in yourself and belief in your ability to achieve what you want. In this sense, building your belief can be thought of as anchoring a cornerstone building block in the foundations of your success. Other building blocks you need to succeed include knowledge, skill, experience, and attitude.

Knowledge:

Knowledge is power. Acknowledging what you already know and understanding that what you don't know can be learned is a powerful way to eliminate any doubt-inducing fear of the unknown. With increased knowledge comes increased confidence, and as you can't know what you don't know unless you remain open to trying and discovering new things, developing an on-going love of learning will keep you growing.

Skill:

Identifying what you're good at and where your strengths lie can be very empowering. Focusing on and developing your strengths can be just what you need to maintain your confidence when challenges come your way.

Experience:

The more you experience, the more knowledge you have. Every experience in life can be learned from, and while it's common to hear that we can all learn from our mistakes, it's important to note that just as much can be learned from our successes. Accomplishing any goal, big or small, builds confidence, and any 'failure' is merely a stepping stone to being and doing better.

Attitude:

Developing a positive attitude is an essential element of success. When you believe that change is always possible, you have what you need to remain optimistic through the inevitable ups and downs of life. Combine attitude with experience and there's nothing that can stand in the way of becoming your best self and achieving whatever you put your mind to.

One Stone at a Time

When you put all the above building blocks together, you create strong foundations on which to develop true self-confidence and self-belief. From this rock-steady platform, unshakeable faith can be yours – and faith can move mountains. Be a bumble bee. Don't stop to listen to those saying it's impossible for you to fly, just fly – and fly high. Unless you believe in yourself, no one else can be expected to believe in you. Just as Mary Kay Ash's belief in herself and her abilities allowed her to realise her dreams and inspire millions of other women to believe in themselves and what they could achieve, your belief in yourself is your own powerful source of inspiration. To achieve the life you want, be prepared to roll up your sleeves, and as author Catherine Pulsifer once said, "When faced with a large project, remember you move a mountain one stone at a time."

Chapter 6

The Power of Belief

You already know that with faith comes hope and positive expectation, and the power of that positive expectation should never be underestimated. If you *believe* that good things will happen for you, they will; so much so that positive belief can at times appear to bring about miraculous outcomes in life.

A great example of the power of belief is found in the story of American athlete Wilma Rudolph. In 1960, she won three Olympic gold medals in track and field, making her the first American female to achieve this feat. This in itself put her into the history books, but her story is made even more remarkable by the fact that she was born with health difficulties that meant she needed to wear a brace on her leg. As the 20th of 22 children, Wilma had to battle with scarlet fever, double pneumonia, and polio as a child, but she never gave up hope and remained determined to overcome her difficulties. She said, *“My doctors told me I would never walk again. My mother told me I would. I believed my mother.”* What Wilma *believed* she could do, she did, but the incredible thing is that had she *not* believed she could do it, she wouldn’t have, even though her physical abilities would have remained unchanged.

Wilma’s attitude echoes Mary Kay Ash’s belief that in the heart of every successful person is, ‘I can,’ and that faith can move mountains. Her story backs up the message in chapter 2 that successful people believe in their ability to succeed, they believe in themselves, no matter how far from their goal they may seem, and the message in chapter 3 that how you choose to deal with the inevitable ups and downs of life comes down to your mindset. Just as Mia Hamm, she also accepted that as an athlete, failure is something that happens all the time, once saying, “Winning is great, sure, but if you are really going to do something in life, the secret is learning how to lose. Nobody goes undefeated all the time. If you can pick up after a crushing defeat, and go on to win again, you are going to be a champion someday.”

Of course, becoming a champion in sport may mean winning medals, but becoming a champion in life is becoming the best version of you it’s possible to be. To succeed in life, you need to accept that failure is a possibility, and then you need unshakeable self-belief in your ability to be who you want to be and do what you want to do – if you roll up your sleeves and persevere. It’s also interesting to note that while athletics brought great joy into Wilma’s life, she achieved an even greater sense of fulfilment in life after her retirement from competitive sport when she formed the Wilma Rudolph Foundation to promote amateur athletics for all. Through her own success, she inspired the success of many more young athletes, young women in particular, highlighting once again that the true source of happiness in life is bringing happiness into the lives of others.

Believe It to Achieve It

In every story of success, it becomes clear that what *you* believe is what matters. If you believe in yourself, the doubts of others can’t hold you back, but the reverse is also true; if you are doubting yourself, it won’t matter how many times you’re told by others that you can do something, you won’t believe it. Until *you* believe it, you can’t achieve it.

The area of medicine is perhaps as good a place as any to see the powerful effect of belief in action. The placebo effect is a scientifically recognised phenomenon, and medical research has shown that what a person believes about the treatment they’re being given can hugely influence the effects of that treatment. This ties in with having faith in something and the hope and positive anticipation it brings with it. If you

believe a treatment will help you, it will, but if you don't believe it will help you, it won't. This is the same treatment, whether it's a placebo or an actual drug, so the only difference here is your attitude to it. What you believe is your perception of reality, and in the case of medical treatment, what you expect of it tends to be the outcome you experience. It takes positive expectations to realise positive outcomes.

'Hope springs eternal' is a well-known idiom that's often used when hoping for something that's perhaps a bit of a pipe dream. When it's used this way, the 'hope' is probably much more 'wishful thinking' than it is positive thinking and for this reason it holds no real power. If you're *wishing* something would happen for you, you're not fully committing to *making* it happen and, as you know, success comes to those determined to do whatever it takes to make it happen. Wishful thinking and positive thinking are not one and the same, just as true self-belief is not self-delusion. What you believe influences your thoughts and your thoughts influence the way you feel. The way you feel influences the way you behave and the actions you take, and it's those actions that generate outcomes. Wishing can't bring you what you want unless you *believe* that what you wish for can be yours. Faith, hope, and positive expectation are at the heart of all 'miraculous cures' and without them there can be no hope of success in any area of life. Winners in life accept that losing is a possibility and successful people accept that failure is a possibility. However, winners never dwell on losses and those who succeed never dwell on failures. Choosing not to dwell on illness and to focus on what's good in life inside is arguably an important element of improving outcomes as the positive energy generated by positive thoughts attracts positivity and good things in return. Of course, a positive mental attitude is not a cure all for physical ill health, and thinking positively does *not* mean wearing rose-tinted glasses or denying the reality of a serious health concern, but there's much to be said for the ancient Greek belief that it takes a healthy mind to maintain a healthy body.

The Stockdale Paradox

The need to balance optimism with reality is at the core of what's now known as the Stockdale Paradox, a concept coined by author Jim Collins and named after Admiral Jim Stockdale, an American military officer who was held captive for almost eight years in a POW camp during the Vietnam War. Despite being tortured more than 20 times, being denied any POW rights, and having no way of knowing whether he would ever be released or even survive to see his wife again, he never lost faith or gave up hope. He said, "I never doubted not only that I would get out, but also that I would prevail in the end and turn the experience into the defining event of my life, which, in retrospect, I would not trade." His ability to hold firm to this belief under the circumstances is remarkable, but the paradox comes in his understanding of why he survived the experience when others in the camp didn't, describing those who died as the most optimistic. He said, "The ones who didn't survive were the ones who said, 'We're going to be out by Christmas.' And Christmas would come, and Christmas would go. Then they'd say, 'We're going to be out by Easter.' And Easter would come, and Easter would go. And then Thanksgiving, and then it would be Christmas again. And they died of a broken heart."

The lesson we learn from Jim Stockdale's experience is that optimism without confronting the reality of a situation, no matter how harsh, is a recipe for disaster that can be applied to any area of life, not just life in a POW camp. Self-delusion, denial, sticking your head in the sand, call it whatever you like, choosing *not* to face reality and to hope all the unwanted stuff just goes away only makes the inevitability of *having* to face it more and more unbearable. What he did instead was choose to adopt a positive mindset *and* accept the reality of the situation he was in. He knew the situation he and his fellow prisoners were in was not good, but rather than endure it with blind optimism, he set about *doing* whatever he could to raise the morale of everyone and to increase their chances of survival. He said, "This is a very important lesson. You must never confuse faith that you will prevail in the end – which you can never afford to lose – with the discipline to confront the most brutal facts of your current reality, whatever they might be."

Learned Helplessness

When faced with a difficult situation, we'd all like to think that we'd set about finding a way to resolve the situation, or at least improve it, rather than simply enduring it or letting things go from bad to worse. However, research first carried out in the 1960s concluded that there is such a thing as learned helplessness. The theory of learned helplessness has evolved over the decades but, in a nutshell, the research shows that when some people find themselves in a situation they feel they have no control over, the tendency is to give in to it and to accept their fate rather than try to do anything to change it.

This is something that has been noted in a hospital environment. When people are confined to a hospital bed and they're told to ring for assistance when they need anything, they can develop a mindset of, 'I can't do anything.' As time goes on, the danger is that this thought process then becomes debilitating as the patient gives in to not being able to do anything and remains in this mindset when it's time to begin doing things for themselves again. They get stuck in the *not* doing and accept this as the way things are for them, even when the reality is they could be taking steps to improve their recovery.

In effect, learned helplessness can lead to any thought of taking control of a situation being considered pointless, and an attitude of 'there's no hope' takes over. Without hope, all is lost. Imagine if Wilma Rudolph had adopted the belief of the doctor who said she'd never walk again. Had she given in to this thinking and chosen to accept it as her fate, she would never have walked – her belief would have become her reality. Of course, we know that she chose to believe her mother who told her that she *would* walk again, and it was her faith in this being her reality that allowed her to *make* it her reality, inspiring her to believe in her ability to be and do more.

The findings of learned helplessness highlight the importance of paying attention to the language you use when you're talking to yourself. If you're constantly telling yourself that you can't do something, you're talking yourself into believing that there's no point in even trying. You *believe* you can't, therefore you can't, but is it really the way things are?

Going back to the placebo effect, if you believe there's no treatment that's going to be effective, there is no treatment that's going to change what you believe to be your reality. In fact, you'll probably give up even trying anything new that's suggested. On the other hand, if you believe that there must be a way to improve your situation, your positive frame of mind keeps you open to trying new things and the positive expectation creates an energy that allows you to *keep* trying and to remain hopeful.

Nothing is impossible unless you believe it to be impossible, and with faith there is always hope. Of course, as the Stockdale Paradox teaches us, pretending everything is okay when it clearly isn't is not the way to get through tough times. Not every situation has an easy way out when you look for it, but signs that indicate a learned helplessness tendency include:

- Avoiding situations in which you can't guarantee the outcome, so effectively attempting to avoid potential failure.
- Being overly critical of yourself when you perform poorly in something, choosing to believe it confirms you never had the potential to perform well in the first place.
- After failing to achieve something, avoiding any other similar type of task, believing you're destined to fail there too.
- And believing that it never seems to matter how hard you try, things just never seem to work out for you the way you want them to.

If the above thought processes resonate with you, you no doubt believe that you have no control over the happenings in your life and you're therefore 'helpless' in terms of bringing about any change, but the reality

is that you may not be so helpless. Just as it takes a growth mindset to achieve your full potential in life, learned helplessness like a fixed mindset can only ever hold you back. A fixed mindset can be switched for a growth mindset, and learned helplessness can be switched for much more helpful learned optimism.

Facing Difficulties

Until a difficulty in life is faced, it can't be resolved. Unless you have faith that you *can* find a way to resolve it, it won't be resolved, and unless you believe you have what it takes to resolve it, the difficulty will remain. Wilma Rudolph didn't stick her head in the sand and pretend she didn't have to wear a brace on her leg, she faced the difficulty head on and chose to believe that she could change her circumstances. Admiral Jim Stockdale didn't sit back and wait for it all to be over by Christmas, he accepted the grim reality of his situation and then set about doing whatever he could to survive it. Changing the way you see the world is a matter of changing your perception of reality, but pretending your reality is something other than it actually is *not* facing up to difficulties.

There's a great quote by Yvon Chouinard, the founder of the Patagonia outdoor clothing company, that sums up the need to combine a positive mindset with a healthy dose of reality to be able to benefit from the phenomenal power of self-belief:

"There's no difference between a pessimist who says, 'Oh, it's hopeless, so don't bother doing anything,' and an optimist who says, 'Don't bother doing anything, it's going to turn out fine anyway.' Either way, nothing happens."

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