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Success from Within YOU!

By Austin Fargo

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About the Author

Austin Fargo wanted to be a pilot when he was at school but it took nearly thirty years before he achieved that personal goal in a light plane owned by a friend.

He had some good times and a number of disappointments at times, like most people do.

Austin said, “I kept blaming other people, bad luck and circumstances for everything negative which happened for many years after that.

“I know now that my lack of confidence was probably a significant factor.”

Austin worked as a teacher. He and his wife started a family. That added more pressure.

At times, Austin started to believe that it was impossible for him to ever be successful.

But, he had a great asset in his family. He realized that each decision he made and action which he took was important for his family as well as himself.

“If I gave up, I would be letting them down as well as myself.”

“I read many books and took advice from many people. Some did not work out but I found ways which helped to turn things around.”

“I started to focus better on what was really important and, after a few months, we started to see some light at the end of the tunnel.”

“Following these ideas has brought improvements in us and our lives that I would not have dreamed of just a couple of years ago.”

Austin had also wanted to write a book but had been held back by lack of time and other factors.

“Writing this ebook was not easy but the whole thing has been very worthwhile. I think that my ebook can help many to reach their personal and professional goals faster with less stress.

“I am not a professional advisor but I hope that many people will find my suggestions, based on every day real-life and research, valuable and practical.”

Introduction

My parents were hard working and sincere. They provided me with many material things which they were denied as youngsters themselves.

But, I am most grateful that they gave me their love and encouragement.

Through my early adult years, I tried many things which did not work out.

I started to doubt that I could ever make a success of my life. Like a lot of my friends, I thought that it had to be because of other people and things that were beyond my control.

I asked for help from many kinds of people. Many went out of their way to share their experiences with me and try to give me some encouragement.

I found that many of the good ideas which were offered to me did not move me forward as I had hoped.

Then I realized I was resisting them because they required me to push myself more and be ready to make some changes in my own attitudes and habits.

That can be very hard. But, it became easier after a while because I knew that greater happiness for me and my family was the other side of that self-imposed barrier.

I re-read those same books and courses again. Repeated exposure to some of these suggestions increased their effectiveness many times over.

I have written my book in small bites. Each is no more than a few pages.

I suggest that you read the book right through and then go back to those sections which have particular application to your own questions and concerns.

When I have been reinforcing a habitual response or action for twenty or more years, I know that I can't expect to change it overnight.

I also had to learn that I would not break a habit or install a new action every time I tried.

Austin Fargo.

The Curse of Comfort Food

When we were still babies, two of the most important things which we came to rely on to sustain us were the touch of our parents and the food which they provided to us.

These readily available sources of comfort helped us to deal better with our first few years in a strange new world.

For some people, that connection between food and comfort continues through their lives.

When, for whatever reason, they start to feel any sort of discomfort, disappointment or frustration, they think that solution must be just to grab something to eat or drink.

The bad effects which can flow from this habit are increased when we drink sugary, caffeine laced drinks or eat instant foods which are full of filler and almost completely devoid of healthy ingredients.

That can affect their health and their negative feelings are re-enforced. So, they head back to the refrigerator!

Some people suggest that this is perhaps one of the reasons why we find it so hard to beat bad habits such as over-eating or smoking.

Many people believe that a habit which started to be formed so early is not something which we can easily change or ever eliminate.

Many resort to the diet industry but many just empty their pockets without finding any way to deal with their problem over the long term.

They will only get quick but not sustained results if they don't recognize that their habitual actions are a major part of the problem.

When they start to consciously replace their usual response with something more helpful like a glass of water instead of a coffee or a piece of fruit instead of a comforting snack filled with fat and sugar, they will start to build an improved self image and a better future.

What You “Know” May be Wrong!

Many people have as much difficulty accepting a new idea as they do when they try to change or break an ingrained habit.



Being unwilling to consider other points of view and modify or discard inaccurate information can be dangerous to our health. As Charles Darwin pointed out, a creature that does not adapt to new circumstances, is not likely to be one which survives.

The results for us might not be that drastic but they can limit our potential for development and cause us to miss out on many enjoyable experiences.

A simple example would be if your Aunt Betty cooked her version of a Mexican dish when you were young and it was so bad that you never wanted to try any sort of Mexican food again.

If you stuck by that early decision, you could be denying yourself many fabulous meals and limiting your enjoyment of some social occasions.

Sometimes we might take on other people’s opinions and not test them for ourselves. That’s a good thing where it saves us time and the possibility that we might injure ourselves.

But, there are many people who are too eager to accept the opinions of their older relatives, teachers and even strangers without asking, “Can you please tell me why you believe that?” or measuring the advice against their own experience or considering other points of view before accepting it.

Just a few Minutes a Day!

I’ve seen many people that lose their ability to enjoy their daily life as they get older.

One source of a lot of unhappiness is when they build up a bunch of regrets about what they never got around to doing or even trying when they were younger and probably a bit more agile.

When we are young, we tend to think that we have all the time we will ever need to do everything we want to accomplish in life. That attitude can help us to venture into new areas and try new things.

The downside is that it can cause us to put off doing things we want or need to do because we’re too busy.

I cannot criticize anyone else’s choices about how they spend their time; that’s nothing to do with me.

But, I will always be grateful to the colleague at a business I worked in a few years ago who shared his success formula with me.

He showed me a little card which he kept in his wallet. He said that he believed that his wallet would never be empty while he kept the words on that card in his mind.

They were something like:

**Is what I am doing, the best thing
I can do to move forward right now?**

I thought about it and made a similar card for myself that night.

I suggest that you think about making one for yourself too.

I don’t mean that you should always be doing something which relates to your future personal or professional goals.

Take some time to enjoy TV or other entertainment, especially if you can share it with family and friends. Just keep in mind that you need to devote enough time to achieving your goals.

Make your off-duty time a conscious decision rather than a time-wasting habit.

Avoid Assuming too Much

I used to know someone that was an amateur magician. He was very popular in our local area and got paid well for most of the shows which he did.

But, he was happy with his job and doing the magic in his spare time.

I was intrigued by the tricks I saw him do but never asked how they were done. I knew that they liked to keep their methods to themselves.

One day, a group of us were at a charity show where several local performers, including singers, musician and our friend, the magician, donated their services to raise some badly needed funds.

The magician did that show in a full magician’s suit, including top hat. He took off the hat and dropped it on his table. Then, he waved his wand above his head and a scarf appeared seemingly out of thin air.

He dropped the scarf (he called them silks) into the hat. He asked a girl from the audience to wave the wand over the hat and then started to pull a number of objects out of it.

When he joined us in the audience later, another friend asked him to tell us how he did that trick.

He said, “I don’t reveal my tricks but I’ll tell you how that was done because there was no trick involved!”

“Everything I pulled out of the hat was already in it when I walked onto the stage.”

“I didn’t fool the audience. They fooled themselves because they assumed that my hat was empty when I took it off and put it on the table. The scarves, rubber balls and other things were in a tight bundle inside it all the time.”

Making assumptions on limited information can cause problems for us.

If you assume that someone you like will not go on a date with you, you could deprive yourself of some great times.

As Henry Ford said, “Whether you think you can or you think you can’t, you’re right.”

Work Less and Get More Done Every Day

This suggestion which I got at an expensive course I attended a few years ago has proved to be almost worth the cost of the whole event to me.



I hope that it will be equally useful to you. It doesn't take much extra effort and will cost you nothing. No special equipment is needed either.

But you will find it can help you to get more done in more quickly and with less stress if you apply it every day for at least three weeks.

That's because you will be making a major change from the way which many of us are used to doing our work. A change for the better!

I used to set up periods of about three hours to do my work.

Usually, by the end of the week, I would be wondering and worrying why I had not accomplished very much progress toward the targets and deadlines I needed to reach.

All I needed to do was to cut my working time into much smaller pieces. I found that about forty minutes was what worked best for me. You could start with twenty minute periods and adjust the length until you find what the best is for you.

The difference was in how I focused on my work during those shorted periods. I removed all distractions and took only essential breaks.

I kept my focus on each task in turn until I had accomplished it.

One other important change was that I made a list of the tasks as well as the other materials which I needed before I started and made sure that I had them close to hand before I started my 40 minute timer.

I did not check emails, pick up the phone or do anything else which did not relate directly to the current task during that work period.

The sessions were easy to adjust to because they were so short.

Another advantage was that I was able to plan my work time much better because I could be more confident about how long something would take me when the distractions were removed.

If You can Stand up, You can Move Up!

There are always plenty of reasons for people not achieving their goals.

The only reasons that will stop you are the ones you give in to.

I was lucky enough to have the opportunity to volunteer with a group which helped people with physical or mental challenges to use computers.

I knew some of my friends felt frustrated and even angry about the occasional glitches which interfered with their computer work.

Some of the people I was helping faced greater problems just getting out of bed most days, but their general attitude was very positive and even inspirational.

After seeing the effort they had to put into to achieve what many of us took for granted, I saw that a lot of our frustrations were a form of self-pity.



I now ask myself, “Can I fix this?” instead of “Why does this happen to me?!” We don’t have much reason for regret when we go to bed each day.

The organization thanked my for the time

I put in out there but I felt that they helped me learn something which has helped me focus on fixing things and moving forward instead of letting frustration spoil my day and the results which I was getting.

The Importance of Point of View

One of the biggest problems which reduces our ability to build stronger personal and business relationships with other people is that we are often too focused just on what is important to us.

When we are talking to a potential customer or someone we have just been introduced to at some social event, we probably have not shifted our focus to them enough.



Many people keep part of their mind concentrating on whatever they were thinking about a few minutes before.

They only start to take any serious interest in this stranger when they find out something about them which appeals to their own interests.

If we are not showing any genuine interest in the person we meet, can we expect any better reaction from them? Of course we can't!

It is simple enough to start making a powerful impression on new friends and clients. Just treat them as you want them to treat you.

You've probably heard someone say, "I'm sorry, I always forget names."

That's usually because that person did not pay attention to the name when they heard it – their internal conversation was more important to them than the one with the other people.

Just focus on their name and your recall will improve dramatically.

You will also see a much better response from the people you deal with.

Asking Questions

I have met many people that have unknowingly held their progress to a crawl because they did not feel comfortable asking questions which might reveal they knew little about a particular subject.

I had a few problems when I was teaching because some students were embarrassed about asking questions when they felt their class-mates would all know the answer already.

I tried to encourage questions and would thank those who asked them. They not only helped themselves but probably other students as well who did not know the information.



When we ask someone a question, we are likely to create a positive impression with them.

That’s because we are showing a genuine interest in what they are talking about and we are, without saying so, complimenting them by showing respect for their knowledge and gratitude for their willingness to share it with us.

Answering Questions

One reason for some people’s reluctance to ask for more information is because they have been embarrassed by a teacher or other person when they have asked a question before.

It’s important that we always try to appreciate the trust which people show when they ask us for any kind of advice.

Another advantage of being asked questions when you are teaching a group is that it helps you to know how well your instructions are being understood by the group. That’s valuable feedback which you might find it hard to get any other way.

Fearing the Future

This was a situation I was in a few years ago.

Despite my best efforts, I was not getting the results that I needed to do in my work.

I was very close to losing my job.

I knew I had the skill set and experience to do much better but a series of personal crises had reduced my confidence and enthusiasm to the point where I was not communicating well with clients or making the sort of money which I had been doing.

I didn't know what was ahead and I tried to avoid even thinking about it.



My mind began to fill with doubt and then despair started to creep in.

I felt the way forward was blocked for me.

I was right.

But, then I asked myself a simple question which was the one thing which started to turn things around.

I realized that what I just needed to know was, “What is the worst thing which might happen at this point?”

I had talked with my wife and she was providing strong support, though she was also feeling the same worries that clouded my vision.

We sat down and wrote out the possibilities, potential worst case outcomes and then started to discuss what we could realistically do to deal with them IF they did eventuate.

Injecting reality started to make us both feel better straight away. The “everything on the table” discussion showed that we probably had more and better options than either of us realized.

Another important point was that when we both started feeling better, my attitude and approach to my personal and business responsibilities improved.

I became the person that clients sought out for advice and help instead of the very negative individual who they tried to avoid.

I realize that the question we asked ourselves is probably one which some people will still want to avoid asking.



But, when you find yourself in a serious situation where all hope is fast disappearing, use the question, “What is the worst that can happen?” to focus your mind on the realities of the situation.

That will help you to work out what qualities and resources you actually have to deal with the problem as it really is.

That’s the first step for you to start to make more progress to a better future.

Action, not Aspirin!

My parents had a cure-all for most of their everyday problems.

It was a packet of aspirin tablets.

Today, I think that a lot of people use other headache relievers such as paracetamol more than the aspirin.

These pills have been “miracle drugs” and continue to help many people every day.

But, researchers have found that too much reliance on any of them can have serious side effects.

Recently, I read that even a total of twelve doses in any month might cause some problems.



I found that more that most of my headaches were dealt with just as well when I started substituting taking action instead of the aspirin I had been using before then.

I believe that many people routinely pop a couple of pills without even thinking whether that is really the best solution for the aches which they have developed.

My belief is that aspirin and other pain blockers or relievers definitely have their place but that a little action can often be a better solution.

If I get a severe ache, I decide whether I think I can deal with it or if I should go to the clinic.

If I decide on self-treatment, I try to work out the probably cause.

That will point to the best form of treatment.

I've got a couple of minor recurring pains which the doctor has advised I take a tablet for as a first step.

For lesser pains, I might:

- ✓ Rub the affected part
- ✓ Have a warm bath
- ✓ Go for a walk if the weather is good and the wife or the dog (or both) is willing.
- ✓ Lie down for up to half an hour. Sometimes, I'll put a cloth over my eyes and forehead.



If the pain developed when I was just sitting around, I may find that starting to do something which occupies my mind can take my focus away from the pain and reduce any effect it may have on me.

These different tactics are all no-cost and low impact so you might want to consider trying them instead of hitting the pill cabinet next time.

I just checked ours. The small packet of aspirin in there is over half-full and is past its expiration date.

I think making this change may have helped me to push my expiration date a bit farther away as well!

Keep a Little in Reserve

I’ve never been real good with financial matters.

I’ve always found good reasons to spend what I made and sometimes a bit more as well.

But, as the ants told the grasshopper, that’s a bad policy.

We’re a society of consumers and there are more ways to spend more and more put in front of us every day.



Not only can we buy more things, everything we depend on to keep us safe and comfortable is costing us more and most of it breaks or is out of date quicker than it used to be.

And, of course, most gear which we need to buy costs much more to replace.

It’s also become harder to keep up with the bills and the new “must-haves” because of the on-going temporary financial crisis and its effect on our savings and employment prospects.

I was lucky. Some time before that started to affect everything, I found a little book which had been published in 1955 and which has got a message (maybe more than one) which will still help people who may be affected by financial fears and stresses.

Since that first printing, George S. Clason’s “The Richest Man in Babylon” has been reprinted more than 35 times.

Part of his message tells us to put aside a small percentage of every cent, drachma or pound we earn and run our lives as if we never received it.

Of course, I’m sure he’s not suggesting that we don’t tell the I.R.S. or the Tax Department in your country about any money or related benefits which we get.

The buffer which we build by following Mr. Glasson’s advice can be very handy so long as we don’t raid it for minor reasons but focus on building a cushion to protect us and our family if the need arises in the future.

Does Your Mind or Your Body Control You?

I am asking an important question here but, don't worry, I'm not going to get real technical. I don't know enough about the subject to do that and I don't want you falling asleep while you are reading!

I just want to give you a valuable tip which has helped me to do more, be more successful and enjoy every day a lot more.

I believe that it may do the same for you, too!

At the most basic, subconscious level, your mind controls a lot of your body's actions and responses.



But, many of us put barriers between ourselves and our potential achievements because we let our body's reactions control us, instead of using our rational minds to make an informed decisions and then tell the body what we want it to do!

I used to tend to stop whatever physical activity I was involved with at the first sign of any pain, strain or tiredness.

I'd rest and consider whether I should restart the activity and whether it might lead to greater problems if I did.

That had a couple of unintended negative effects.

This reaction became a habit and I would often not complete some physical task in any sort of reasonable time. But, I would still feel tired because my mind would absorb the message which I had accepted from my body's first warnings.

When I did restart the work I had been doing, I had to allow more time for my body to reach the rhythm which I had before I stopped. It also took a while before my mind was fully focused so that I was effective again.

I was resting after a brief gardening session one day and watching some athletes doing a training session. I admired their fitness and their dedication they gave to the task they had.

“Of course,” I thought. “They're very well paid for the effort they put in”.

But, I noticed that they probably put in equal or greater effort in their training compared to what was required of them during a full game.

They were building up reserves of strength and endurance for their games and also enhancing their general fitness.

They were obviously ignoring the sort of pains which were stopping me in my tracks.

I knew I would not and could not put in the level of effort which they could, but I started to see that I was letting my body off too lightly.

That, over time, was planting the wrong messages in my subconscious. I was probably missing out on advantages in better health and results from the effort I did put in because I let my body call the shots.

Since I started to push just a little harder, my results have improved and I actually have less pain than I probably felt before.

I’m feeling better all round.

I still don’t ignore pain, but I think about what is reasonable for me to push through and what may be more significant.

I’m thinking of having some gym sessions to get some professional assessments which go further than my regular medical check-ups.

How far you go in this area is up to you. But, I believe that most people, both men and women, will benefit if they don’t let their body control their mind and their level of physical activity all the time.

The most Limiting Word in the Language

After reading this far, have you found some suggestions already that you are going to try?

I suggest that you take “Try” out of your vocabulary and just do it.

As Yoda, the character in “Star Wars” intoned, “**There is only Do and Not Do. There is no Try!**”

It is something which every teacher and employer already knows, even if they never put it into words.



If a student or an employee tells them, “I will try to have that completed by ...”, they know that there’s a strong likelihood that it will be later if it is done at all.

It’s a word which can reduce your enthusiasm for the task because it gives you some leeway. After all, you didn’t actually make a firm, unbreakable commitment.

You just have to try and you have kept your word.

The negative effect is subtle and not always intentional.

The only way to avoid it having a negative affect on your results and, eventually, your reputation is to never ever use that particular three letter word again.

Just Say It!

When was the last time you told the people that you are closest to how you really feel about them?

I’m talking about:

- Your immediate family
- Relatives that you were closer to earlier in your life but whom you hardly ever see
- Close friends if you are people that just don’t talk about how you feel about the contributions you each make to the others’ lives



I can remember a couple of years ago, when my wife and I were sitting with a friend who had just buried his father.

The thing which most affected us was his deep regret that he had not spent

more time with his dad in the last couple of years and that it was probably some years since he’d actually told his dad how he felt about him.

It was a strange and very sad coincidence that we had to attend the funeral of another friend’s grown daughter a few months later.

Her mother’s grief was made greater because they had not spoken more than a few words over the phone in several months after some minor argument.

She said, “I so much wanted to tell her how I really felt but my pride and her terrible accident means that I will never have the opportunity!”

It’s even easier to tell the people you live with or see every day.

And, there’s never going to be a better time than today.

How Much is Your Health Worth?

I had a great friend that I met when we both were at school.

He worked for himself in his own business and was very successful. His work required him to walk around the cement floors of his premises and those of his many customers for hours every day.

He spent a lot of time standing around discussing their business needs and, sometimes, just shooting the breeze.

I regarded him as one of the nicest and most successful people I ever knew.

It was a bad shock when I heard that he had to give up taking any further active part in his business because his feet were crippled and he wound up, after some time, having to use a wheel chair for the rest of his life.

Though he was making good money from a relatively early age, he always had a compulsion to buy bargain shoes and these had never provided anything like enough support or protection for his feet and his legs.

He maintained an impressively positive attitude through his last years but that single mistake cost him the chance to enjoy the benefits of his hard work and put a great burden on his family as well.

I think it's very common to do this sort of thing.

My doctor said that many people could avoid a lot of visits to his surgery and costs of medicines, and sometimes even serious surgery, if they gave as much thought to their own health as they did for that of their children or even their pets!

I started walking a lot more when we got a dog. The exercise and the fresh air were great but another benefit was having time to think about current projects like writing this book.

Getting Your To-do's Done

In the last few years, a lot of organizations have been making serious cuts in staff while demanding those that remain become more productive. It can seem like you're having to do two jobs for the price of one.

We have to become more efficient and also ensure that we keep informed about the latest developments in our area of business. This has many people taking home bags of papers and computer files to work on so that they can be ready for the next day.



It is becoming much more difficult to just keep up.

Until now, I never had much success with using to-do lists and the like, even though I had put a lot of effort into using them.

This surprised me because so many people said that they were a great time and stress saver.

One problem is that there are an almost unlimited variations on the basic idea. I checked out a few and found that the cost of putting each idea into action did not always relate well to the value I got from it.

This section could save you some time and perhaps some money because I will give you the best tips and strategies I found for improving productivity.

Another benefit was a noticeable reduction in stress and friction within the family because I had more time to be involved with them.

Some tips could give you good results fairly quickly but others will need a bit more time and tweaking to fit you better. Please keep that in mind.

I found some for myself and others were recommended to me by people that had got good results with them.

I found that there are few which worked equally well for everyone. You will have to do a little bit of personal testing to find what work best for you and what doesn't.

These suggestions are in no particular order. The value of each suggestion will vary for each reader.

Too much on your To-do list: One problem with the to-do lists which I used in the past was that I put too many items in them. I wound up not getting even half-way through the list by the end of the day.

I stayed up late trying to get just a couple more things completed. Then, I would waste more time at the end of each day, carefully transferring all the items I had not completed and those I did not even start onto my list for the next day.

Adding new items then made the new list even bigger than the previous one.

Instead of making me more efficient, the way I used my To-do list almost guaranteed I would fail!

How to trim your To-do list: I was adding everything which anybody asked me to do to my list and never seemed to progress far through it.

If you have that experience, these tips will help you cut down the excessive demands on your time and temper.

Write down all the tasks you have to deal with.

Look for any tasks which are neither important nor urgent and any which can or should be done by someone else.

Now, scan what is left for items which are both important and urgent.

Put them on your To-do list. Dealing with them will get the best value from your time.

Before you start on them, look over the items which are still on your original sheet and contact anyone that might be affected by the items which involve them being delayed.

They'll usually give you some understanding when you let them know in advance.

Sort your most important items according to their priority and get started.

The tycoon’s secret: I read that an American tycoon paid an advisor several thousand dollars for this tip. It seems so simple, even obvious, but many people discount its value for that reason.

Just try it and you’ll understand why that story just might be true!

The advisor told him to write down the most important tasks he needed to accomplish each morning.

Then, he had to choose the most critical item and focus solely on that until it was completed or, if he had passed the responsibility for it to his staff, it was sure to be completed very soon.

Then, he should decide on the next most important item on his list and deal with it, using the same single-minded focus until it was finished.

That advisor was handsomely rewarded because the tycoon recognised the value of the simple secret.

Don’t multi-task: Multi-tasking has been encouraged as a tool which anybody can use to quickly deal with their workload. But, the most recent information I’ve read (and my own experience) suggests that it may be more of a problem than a desirable skill.

It had been thought that multi-tasking was a good thing and that women were much better at it generally than men. But, the evidence was apparently based on limited research and the conclusions drawn were not in line with the original researcher’s findings. He had limited the scope of his findings to specific circumstances.

Other people who wrote up the information started to claim that the results were applicable to everyone and most situations.

Results will vary and it is worth trying, but I know many capable people, both women and men, that actually achieved less when they were multi-tasking than when they focused on one thing at a time.

We Need Problems!

Have you ever seen a chick or some other creature break out of its egg?

I was at a relative's farm when I was about seven years old, and she showed me the latest lot of chicks cracking their shells and pushing their way into the world.

I noticed a couple of chicks seemed to be having a lot of trouble making much impression on their shells and I was about to pick one up.

But, my aunt stopped me. She said, "If you try to help that chick by making the opening a little bigger for it, it will be too weak to survive."

"And, just pushing on the shell could kill the chick anyway."

She said that the effort of breaking out of the shell was important for the chick's development.

It's the same with people. If someone has everything done for them, they have more trouble when the support is not so readily available.

If we haven't had some experience dealing with small problems just using our own resources, we will be set up for failure when things get really tough.

Some people try to give their kids all that they didn't have when they were young. That's understandable and to be admired.

But, you probably know people that have taken that too far. The child has problems when they get a situation where they have to make their own way.

We may not like the problems which life drops on us. But, dealing with them will give us confidence in ourselves and make us better prepared for the next problem to come along.

Feed Your Fire

I don't like being criticized or rejected. Do you?

A friend said, "If you don't get some negative feedback from time to time, you probably aren't trying hard enough." I think you probably aren't getting as much praise as you could either.

A lot of people take any criticism as a personal attack, but most people don't intend to hurt you.

If they do, there's usually no point to worrying about it. That person is unhelpful and any reaction on our part will just feed their ego and encourage them.

If we closely examine what other people say about something we've done, we might find some ways that we might improve our next efforts.

A literary agent wrote that many of her most successful clients told her that their early stories were frequently rejected.

But, she found after discussing their experiences with a couple of hundred successful and not-so-successful authors, many of those that persevered and succeeded used those rejections as fuel for their inner fire. That helped them to become more determined to succeed.

They appreciated the honest and constructive criticism which some editors offered them.

But, the less helpful rejections also made them work harder on their next project.

Of course, that doesn't just apply to writers.

The next time you get rejected, passed over for a promotion or whatever, think about a high school basketballer that was cut from the team in his sophomore year.

He said later that he used it to encourage him to work harder on his skills and he probably felt a desire to show everyone that he was a much better player than they thought.

Michael Jordan did that fairly clearly.

The First Decision

Every decision we make is important.

Many of them may have consequences which affect our future happiness and well-being much more than we realize at the time.



Our first decision every day is whether we are going to have a good day or another one like all the others that we will soon forget all about.

Zig Ziglar said, among many other great observations, “I made a decision years ago that I was going to be happy today.”

If you think about it for even a moment, it’s the only decision you can make that makes sense!

If you start your day determined to find things which are wrong, you will and that will make your mood and your results even worse.

You may have heard the old saying that “opposites attract”. That only really applies to magnets.

The truth is that people attract and stick to people with a similar world-view. So, you’ll join clusters of people whose every word will tend to reinforce and deepen your own attitude and expectations.

If you show a negative outlook, any happy, attractive people that have to do business with you will quickly spin out of your orbit as soon as they can because they don’t want their outlook contaminated by your negativity.

They probably would like to help improve your day but, if they’ve ever tried it, they know it’s almost hopeless.

There’s little chance that your day can get any better because you made the decision to focus on the negative aspects.

My question is, “What is the worst that can happen if you decide that you will be happy today?”

A friend of mine said, “Any day that you can stand up, stay up and speak up, you are already better off than probably 40% of all the people on the whole planet?”

Isn't that worth smiling about?!

Power of Appreciation

Some years ago, I read about a company where the boss gave the receptionists in each of their branches a small sign to put on their desks.

It said, “Director of First Impressions”

He intended it to show that he recognized the importance of the staff and their efforts. This was apparently appreciated by the staff and copied at various other companies.

Some expert said that appreciation was worth more to many people than a raise in pay.

I think that was taking it too far.

But, many companies started giving staff badges with their names and a job title.

A lot missed out one important ingredient which the boss at the original place probably didn't.

Sincerity.

I knew the receptionist at a business here where they handed out little signs. But, she told me privately that it was silly.

She said, “The boss spent good money on a few signs but he shows every day that he does not really appreciate anything we do.”

“We do our best already and that won't change. But, a sign without anything behind it won't keep us there if a better opportunity comes up.”

A lot of companies take their staff for granted. They think that the tight economic situation will keep them working hard.

It does, but a little sincere appreciation can help to keep them motivated.

The same applies to people outside the work environment too.

Has it been very long since you showed a bit of appreciation for the people that give you excellent service in a store or a restaurant.

More importantly, when did you last tell your family that you appreciate them?

That’s also often the reason that people feel unappreciated. Their own attitude has them only focused inward.

They aren’t selfish people but they themselves never or rarely offer thanks for anything

Then they wonder why their efforts to help people are rarely acknowledged.

If anyone finds it hard to break the habit and say something nice to someone who helps them, they could start by smiling a bit more.

The best thing about a smile is it is very contagious.

Integrity

I can remember asking my dad what "integrity" meant. He didn't have to think very hard.

He just said, "Integrity is doing the right thing when you could do better for yourself and no-one would know."

I have met many people that followed that path without thinking about it.

The best illustration I know was told to me by a stock agent in Australia some years ago.

He arranged the details of sales between farmers of sheep and cattle.

At one sale he sold some sheep to two farmers who had agreed to share the cost of the flock and then spilt the sheep between them.

When he got the sheep to the first farmer's property and unloaded them, he saw that the sheep were a mix of good and very poor. That was mostly due to the recent drought and was the major reason that they had been sold.

He went into the house with the two farmers to have a celebration drink. The owner of the farm said that his friend had a long trip back to his own farm and wanted to get back as soon as possible, so he would start putting his share of the flock into his truck.

The agent asked if he could help and the farmer said, No, he'll be right. I want to talk to you about getting me some more sheep."

So, while they discussed another possible sale in the future, the other farmer went down and picked out his sheep.

The agent told me, "They knew that they could trust each other. They had to rely on each other through the years. So, the bloke I was talking too never gave any thought to the other farmer picking all the best sheep."

They lived by their word.

Here's An Extra Half Hour A Day!

You probably would like some more time to get things done.

This is something I heard about from a friend a couple of years ago.

I suggest that you try it for a couple of weeks. If you have the same sort of results which we have, you will keep on going with it for the rest of your life!

This will still work well for you even if you skip a few days every year after a late night party or whatever.

My friend said, "All you have to do is to get up half an hour earlier each day. It may seem too simple. Just do it for at least two weeks."

I was willing to give it a real go but I asked some questions first.

"Did it work for you?"

"Yes," she said. "but I almost gave it away the first time. It didn't seem to have much effect. Then, I remembered I had skipped a couple of days in the first week. That seemed to make it harder. After I had done it every morning for a couple of weeks in a row, it felt a bit easier. I guess that I was too used to having that half hour under the sheets."

"Get started and enthusiastic. After that first few weeks, I didn't worry if I missed a couple of days, but no more than that, in a month."

"Now that I am starting to get some things done which I'd been trying to complete for months, it's a new habit that I don't intend to give up."



I found it hard for the first few days myself. Then I worked out a way which has made it much easier.

At first, I wasn't doing much of anything when I got up. But, then I started to take a small task like walking the dog and completed it in the half-hour.

Make it something simple and enjoyable. It should involve being active. Reading email won't work.

Then your mind and body are ready for the rest of the day.

Getting What You Don't Want

Did your parents and teachers tell you, "Don't do this or that!" a lot of times?

Do you tell your own kids, "Don't eat this!" or "Never do that!" as much or more than you were told?

If you are getting good results, it's probably because you gave them a good basic set of values along with the don'ts.

That's because the research is showing that "don't" doesn't work.

Well, it does but it works differently to what you and I thought it did.

Think about your own mindset. Have you tried to stop yourself from continuing a habit that is either, expensive unhealthy or a waste of valuable time, or even all three?

If you have, you've probably been reinforcing your connection with that habit every day by saying something like, "I don't want another slice of apple pie. I must not gain any more weight!"

The problem is that our minds are apparently wired to ignore negatives!

When we hear, "I must not gain any more weight" the researchers are now saying that our mind takes more notice of "gain weight" than the direction, "must not".

And nobody believes me when I say, "I don't want any more apple pie" anyway!

This could be accurate or just another theory from a well-funded research team.

But, my experience is that focusing on positives does work better, but it doesn't mean you'll always get everything to work out as you want.

A positive focus and saying something like, "I am in control of what I eat and will be fitter and more fun to be around in just a few months!" will work better than trying to deny yourself and keep a straight but gloomy face while you say, "I don't want any apple pie".

What I think about You Doesn't Matter!

A lot of people worry themselves sick about what other people might think of them.

That's a double whammy because they are giving away control of their future to someone else and the other person almost certainly doesn't want it anyway.

They need to change what they say about themselves.



I'm not talking about becoming very egotistical and self-centered.

I'm talking about what you tell yourself you are like.

Have you ever heard someone say, "I just can't remember names!" or "I never can find anything in my desk!"?

These people think that making these self-limiting statements will make people accept them with their supposed faults or challenges.

But, the people they tell could care less about those things except when they cause them to forget their names or can't find their cheque book when they're supposed to write a check.

And they usually realize that these statements are just excuses to avoid having to pay more attention when they are introduced to someone or have to write a check.

A bigger problem for these people is that they cannot improve their situation very much because they are probably telling themselves those same excuses dozens of times a month.

The important thing is what you think about you!

We all talk to ourselves, usually silently. This self-talk is absorbed by our subconscious and stored somewhere in the brain.

When a situation occurs, like seeing someone they were introduced to a few days before, they won't recall the name because the subconscious draws on their previous experience and their recorded self-talk.

"Oops, I can't remember names!"

If they sincerely want to improve their response in similar situations, they will need to put in some conscious effort to over-ride their mind's automatic responses.

The first step is to start watching for those self-conscious statements and stop them being uttered.

That means breaking a habitual action which has had months or even years to settle into place deep in their mind.

It won't be easy but it will be worth it.

Then they have to start paying serious attention when they are introduced to someone. Ask them to repeat or even spell their name if they did not hear it clearly enough.

Then, commit it to memory. If they try to use that person's name at least twice in the conversation, it will stick pretty well.

Even if repeating it seems a bit forced, no-one will mind.

There is no sweeter sound for anyone than their own name. And their new acquaintance is closer to becoming a friend or close business colleague because they recognize that they are making a sincere effort to remember their name.

What if they forget it again and then meet up with the person?

All they have to do is ask them, "Can you help me, please? I've forgotten your name but I really enjoyed our conversation at Jane Hardy's party the other week."

Be honest about having made a mistake - everybody does that.

But, you don't have to accept that you aren't smart enough to improve, do you?

More Inspiration

Ted.com <http://www.ted.com/>

This non-profit organization has been “sharing ideas worth spreading” since 1984.

The focus is on technology, entertainment and design. You can watch the many inspiring and informative talks on their web site but you can also download them and share them as long as you use them only within the terms of [the CC license "Attribution -- NonCommercial -- NonDerivative."](#)

More information is available [here](#) on their site.

I can confidently recommend this site, knowing that you won't waste any time you spend there, you won't be bugged to buy anything and you will come away refreshed with more determination and inspiration.

Afterword.

I hope that you will find ideas and strategies here that will help you to smooth your path to greater personal and business success.

I have tried to encourage you as others have encouraged me.

My last suggestion is to give each new thing you decide to start doing a genuine effort for at least a few weeks.



Finding the seeds of greater personal success within yourself is simple.

Drawing it out will take time, but you will find each step after the first easier because that small bright light at the other end of the tunnel will glow brighter each day.

When you find something which works, share it with others.

Lead by example.

Austin Fargo

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