



Take control of your own life

By Alec Neave

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Alec and Lilian Neave

Dedicated to all those whose constant quest for truth leads them on to
"Love to sail forbidden seas and land on barbarous coasts".
~ **Moby Dick, Melville, 1851**

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Introduction: My story

The joys of failure that can lead to the psychology of success

You have arrived here on a journey of discovery and have within you the unique power of deciding your destiny. I cannot offer you anything or any secret that you do not possess already. Whatever that is within reason to attain you can achieve.

When you are prepared to accept responsibility for your own life and actions, when your envy of others more fortunate is gone, when you have decided to change your attitude to life, when you have committed yourself to a set of principles and action on an ideal, when you can generate the enthusiasm and energy to decide where and what you will be and when you are ready to act, only then will you be ready to sail away from old shores to discover new and exciting continents.

I am a perfectly ordinary person that has possibly been faced with far less difficult problems in my life than many others. I invite you to join me on my own personal voyage of discovery and to share my experiences to demonstrate that hope is eternal.

My daughter encouraged me to initiate this book and I wondered to her who would even bother to read about the fall and rise again of the life of an ordinary person. She insisted I continue.

In addressing the challenges in my own life I became aware of the power of positive thought.

After having been stripped of the wealth I had; the majority of my business ventures collapsing (and been brought to my knees each time that I tried to start again), as well as friends I had trusted in business letting me down, it was easy to take the route of negativity and despair.

In spite of all this I persisted; I am a farm boy you see! What kept me going were the family I loved and my complete faith in the principles I lived by.

I did not allow my experiences to destroy my faith in basic human goodness. Rather I began to direct all my energy and efforts toward a winning attitude.

I still possessed my skills and abilities and my principles. I salvaged what I could from the wreck of my business life and set off on the journey of discovery without any money.

If you are interested, I invite you to travel along with me as I set out on this story of my failures and successes and on the road to success again.

Alec

Failure

Failure is a character building positive experience. Failing a few times can be more beneficial in gaining experience and in overcoming mistakes and handicaps than any onetime success. If you have come here to search for the Holy Grail you will not find it. Only you can ignite the magic catalyst. I make no claims and I make no promises. Rather, my motivation is a way of thinking and a philosophy of life I would like to share in the hope that many other ordinary people can recognize in themselves the greatness that exists within us all, the ability to help each other help ourselves.

We are all taught that success is good and failure is bad. When we fail in anything, the mindset that our subconscious adopts that has been programmed by our education and society, is that this is bad. We suffer from the most pernicious handicap that our society has created - the idolization of the winner. Instead of focusing on the endeavour for excellence, which creates winners, we spend our time and effort looking over our shoulders waiting for the condemnation of society. All our enthusiasm and energy is expended in the negative sentiment of perceived failure instead of searching for the positive opportunities that lie ahead.

Failure exists in the mind of the beholder. Remember that every time you fail you could be that one step closer to success if you are learning from experience. If you are afraid of failure you can never expect to succeed. Success in life is usually achieved only after taking calculated risks.

Attitude, passion, energy and vision pave the road to future success. Ignore the negative and the rejections; use the experience of failure to focus on the discipline of implementing your ideas fearlessly.

My story starts at the age of 9 years of age. I was a small, thin, freckled youngster that grew up in the bush in Africa. I was sent to a school in the city where boxing in those days was one of the manly sports. On the first night of instruction I was called out by the instructor, gloved up and thrown to the mercy of an older boy who proceeded to beat me up. What I never realized was that all had been set up by the master. Special sparring gloves on my opponent and instructions to create maximum mental havoc and noise but minimum damage. When I climbed out of that ring bloodied and sore, I looked and knew that I had lost.

What is the moral in this story? The instructor called me to one side and said, "Now that you have seen what can happen to you when you have no experience maybe you will listen more carefully to me so that I can teach you how to box!"

I never forgot this fortunate experience so early in life. It set the tone for my future. I went forward humbly in life from that day, passionately and enthusiastically willing to learn from my own mistakes and from those of others.

Action it

This example shows how the negative experience of being beaten and seen as losing the boxing bout can be used as an educational experience for life. Focus on how you can use what might be considered a losing experience and turn it into a lesson for winning. In this case you learn that the pain of losing will focus your mind on listening how to defend yourself.

Achievement

A famous South African entrepreneur by the name of Donald Gordon was knighted in 2005. Starting with a humble beginning here in South Africa he established the largest life assurance business in the country. After expanding to the United Kingdom he created the massive Liberty Life International Group which is now one of the biggest property owning groups in that country. I tell this story, not because Donny Gordon came from a very poor or disadvantaged background or that he failed his way to the status of billionaire and knighthood. His achievement has been predicated on principles which have governed his life.

Donald Gordon has been an icon of achievement and an example to emulate. Leaders in finance and industry consider his achievements in financial services as legendary. He has stumbled at times along the road to the pinnacle of financial achievement but has never lost faith in the principles he set as his standards.

At the opening of the Donald Gordon Business School in Johannesburg, South Africa on the 14th March 2000, he delivered an address in which he detailed the principles that have governed his life:

1. Become the most positive and enthusiastic person that you know. Passion in business is everything.
2. In business and in family relationships, remember that the most important thing is trust.
3. Remember that overnight success takes about 15 years.
4. Never accept that existing business practices cannot be improved upon - there will always be a better or an alternative

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way of doing things. If you identify one, see it through to the end with meticulous care.

5. Strive for excellence, not perfection.
6. Demand excellence from yourself and your colleagues and be willing to pay for it.
7. Take care of your reputation; it's your most valuable asset.
8. Learn to listen, opportunity sometimes knocks very softly.
9. Watch for big problems, they disguise big opportunities.
10. Think big thoughts but relish small pleasures.
11. When starting out don't worry about having enough money. Limited funds are a blessing in disguise, not a curse. Nothing encourages creative thinking in quite the same way.
12. Be tough minded but tender hearted.
13. Don't waste time responding to your critics.
14. Never give up on what you really want to do.
15. The person with big dreams is more powerful than the one with all the facts.
16. Be bold and courageous.

Success is not a destination but a journey that must be continually renewed. You can start right now on the voyage to your future success by adopting the same principles.

My own faith in principles and standards I set myself to achieve were often the only reason I continued to survive in an entrepreneurial lifetime of calculated risk-taking.

I digress to a fascinating report by The Sarasin House and Roger Nightingale many years ago. The report was headed, "The Lust for comfort, that stealthy thing that enters the house as a guest, becomes subsequently a host and finally a master".

I quote, "All forms of life crave security and most devote to its pursuit the larger part of their sentient existence. Humans are remarkable in this context, only in the extremes to which they take their preoccupation with safety. Though they have a great deal less to fear than most other creatures they tend nevertheless to worry a great deal more. Sometimes it seems as if there is an emotional need to have something to worry about. When there is no genuine threat available, imaginary ones are conjured up!"

He draws the conclusions that insecurity makes people work harder. That in societies where there might be a perceived threat to security or inclement conditions, that there is likely to be greater entrepreneurial activity. In general, the intensity of work varies with the adversity of the environment. That often a region that is well endowed with natural resources and not subject to recurring disasters never reaches its full potential. It is often handicapped by indolent people. If on the other hand a sector of society feels threatened it tends to work harder and create more opportunities so that more surplus is then often available for the improvement of the community.

This situation existed in the Eastern countries in the past. They felt threatened so their work ethic soared creating a boom in their economies. They built themselves financial security. The unrealized threat was what motivated their efforts into fast rates of growth. The

same dynamic is what created the modern marvel of Germany after the Marshall Plan. The dynamics of what happened in these countries demonstrates that success can be spurred by daunting challenges and material threats. The effects of success can also be dynamically negative in other ways of motivation.

The psychological conclusion to be drawn from this dissertation on the effect of perception on economics is that there is a direct relationship between the threat to safety and the efforts to achieve. As anxiety levels build, the human desire for security from chaos builds, creating an almost manic effort which releases the pent up energy that can create miracles.

I have learned from experience that the greatest inhibiting factor to getting things done is the fear of failure. The Sarasin Report seems to indicate that our fear is irrational and my own experience in life bears this out. The greatest fear is the fear of fear itself.

Helen Keller's famous lines encapsulate what we will all eventually find out, "Security is mostly a superstition. Avoiding danger is no safer in the long run than outright exposure. Life is either a daring adventure or nothing at all."

I ask you to bear in mind our departure point: that we start the journey based on an ethical set of principles and that we never forget that safety and security are not the most effective motivational desires to achieve entrepreneurial success.

Action it

Hardship of any sort can be the catalyst that galvanizes an individual for action. It depends on your attitude to challenges. You can lie down and accept what life hurls at you or you can fight back.

Courage

Growing up on the farms wasn't very easy for many as most parents were not well off. I had to walk over 10 miles through the bush to and back from school daily and learned to be a self sufficient loner (I could certainly write an interesting story on growing up on what was then still a frontier). I was sent away to boarding school in the city with other parents far from home when only 5 years of age. This experience was quite difficult to adapt to at such a young age.

After a number of years, I was moved to another much larger school where I was an even smaller minnow in a larger pool. As a rather timid and rustic little boy from the farm I was subjected to rough treatment by the bullies of the school. I took all manner of abuse for many years and my life was a misery. When the boys were not picking on me, the Latin master delighted in displaying my ignorance in class. I had been so subjected to ridicule that I had no self worth or confidence in myself.

Until the day arrived that the worm turned. After four years of this treatment and at my wits end I was rabbit punched by the usual bully boy and I went mad. I can understand how a perfectly sane person is able to murder another in cold blood. I can recall seeing red images as I followed this bully up the stairs into his dormitory and he must have recognized a raving maniac as he attempted to escape. I admit I was out of my mind. Four years of psychological torture, damaged self esteem and a broken spirit had turned me into a loose cannon.

I remember trapping this boy against the far wall of the building and belting him with the most lethal blow. He ended up laid out cold and I cracked a bone in my hand.

He received no sympathy from the other boys and the teachers took no action against me, probably knowing of my maltreatment over the years.

I was left well alone by everyone after that and the last two years of my life at that school were bliss! However, I left that school after my final year with hatred in my heart for what they had done to me. I blamed the school and everyone else. But, I learned the second valuable lesson in my life and that is that fortune favours the brave. In my case the worm that turned had finally become a serpent and struck back.

I regained some of my self-respect at this stage. If you lack these basic ingredients you cannot succeed. You have to love and respect yourself for what you are. You must have a code to live by and a faith in the principles that you believe in. In this case to stand up for yourself and fight back based on self respect.

I was at the start of a life of discovery and the beginning of an adventure. I had suddenly realized that after having my life decided, directed and brutalized by those around me that if I desired I could decide my own destiny.

Action it

It took years of traumatic suffering in my experience as a schoolboy to raise the sort of passion needed to fight back. When you are goaded this far, nothing, not even life itself matters. The Goliath of the school bully who had only seen retreat in those he picked on quickly recognized the mighty power of a small David and tried to retreat.

Take the risk

One day I discovered the simple truth that destiny can be created by hunting for the opportunities. Once I became confident in my own ability and judgement I began to realize that the world around me was ripe with promise.

But then fear would set in. What would happen if I took the risk and failed? I was hesitant and could not decide. I was ineffective until I became aware of boldness. Once one is committed magic happens and fear recedes.

You will not overcome any challenge or achieve any ideal until you have a complete commitment to overcome. You can change to that positive attitude today.

Until one is committed

Until one is committed there is hesitancy, the chance to draw back, always ineffectiveness. Concerning all acts of initiative and creation there is one elementary truth, ignorance of which kills countless ideas and splendid plans. That the moment one definitely commits oneself then Providence moves too. All sorts of things occur to help one that would never otherwise have occurred. A whole stream of events issues from the decision, raising in one's favour all manner of unforeseen incidents and meetings and material assistance which no one could have dreamed would have come their way. Whatever you can do, or dream you can, begin it.

**BOLDNESS HAS GENIUS AND POWER AND MAGIC IN IT.
BEGIN IT NOW.**

~ Wolfgang von Goethe

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**I look forward to any comments, questions or suggestions you may have.
Please do feel free to contact me via my website:**

http://www.myselfmotivation.com/contact_alec.html

Regards

Alec