

Is Your View of “Success” Leading to a Successful Life?

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How often does the subject of “success” come up in family, social and professional discussions? I hear it frequently as I travel through the world of Personal and Professional Development.

Yet when I ask a person what success means to him or her, I hear vague answers at best. “It’s personal,” he or she will say. And I will agree and then ask again. This time he or she might say “It’s different for everyone.” And I will agree and ask again, “What does success mean to you?” As I continue to ask, the answer is never quite clear and my questioning begins to create some discomfort as he or she struggles to clearly articulate a personal definition of what success means to him or her.

Given my past experiences, asking clients and acquaintances about success, my observations are that the term success is at best something that all of us profess a desire for, yet very few of us can express what success means to them when asked about it.

Why do you think expressing a clear definition of success is so difficult? And if you think you’re different than most of the people I have talked with and your definition is understandable, realistic and attainable, try something for me. Write your definition of success in a paragraph or less on a blank sheet of paper and then put it in a folder that you don’t open for at least 24 hours. After a day or so, and before you open the folder containing your success definition, write your definition again. Now open your folder. What do you see? Are the two definitions the same? And I mean exactly the same, word for word. If so, you are a unique and remarkable person, and I would like to meet you to hear about your life. If the two definitions are not the same, then clarifying your definition of success is something you may want to consider.

You are now probably asking yourself, “What’s so important about having a clear definition of success?” That’s a very fair question, and as you might imagine, the purpose of the first of this two-part article is to respond to that question. There are many reasons why a clear definition of success is important with some being obvious while others not. For purposes of this article, I will focus on just two.

First, most of us use the word success from a very young age in descriptions of the futures that we say we want to ultimately experience... lifestyle... a career... personally as a parent, spouse and/or friend. This lack of clarity when using the term success in this way contributes to the thought that achievement of success is a much larger dream, wish or “hope for” than it really is and therefore makes it seem unachievable. In addition, it causes people to pursue experiences that are often symbols of success created for them by other people. Most often feelings of being inadequate or not good enough result in lack of direction

and failure to take responsibility for one’s life experiences. Imagine the difficulty of graduating from college when you haven’t clarified a field of interest or a major. Or being able to enjoy a family vacation with a vague destination. These two simple examples are no different than someone saying he or she wants to make a lot of money... wants to be happy...wants to have a good job...wants to be a pilot...wants to be a doctor...wants to get married...wants to have children...or any other vague description of success.

Secondly, by lacking a clear definition of success, your life will develop patterns of struggle. These patterns are a result of not understanding the differences between healthy sustainable success and the unhealthy short-term success that our society continues to reward and promote. The struggle I’m referring to are feelings of burnout (low energy, fear, anxiety, anger), job underperformance, chronic relationship issues, and more.

Think about where you are personally and/or professionally. If either of these areas of your life is defined by chronic worry, anxiety, low energy and/or depression, then clarifying what success means to you will prove very important if you want to rid yourself of those feelings and subsequent patterns.

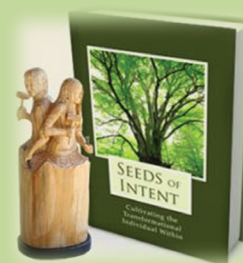
Part II of this article series will focus on a few common beliefs about success that contribute to the reasons why people hold on to vague definitions of success.



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Bestselling Author of
“seeds of Intent – Cultivating
the Transformational
Individual Within”**

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