

## BECOMING WHAT YOU THINK YOU DESERVE

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There is something to be said about the power of positive thinking and the difference it can make between merely living and living successfully. Most of us go through our lives bearing obvious scars from incidents in our past that present obstacles and detours to our ability to have a successful future. In essence, our self-worth and esteem becomes stunted and we sometimes no longer are able to progress in an upward-bound manner. We allow external forces and influences to dictate that which we deserve and, in turn, we subconsciously program ourselves to behave in a manner that only returns the rewards of a limited vision.

That WAS my story not long ago. My childhood and early adulthood were peppered with joyous events, traumatic experiences, and personal setbacks. After many years of “conditioning,” I believed that I only was capable of achieving no more than what I already had achieved, mostly because I had no reason to believe that I was worthy of anything else of real significance. This view was perpetuated in my friendships and romantic relationships. It also prevented me from being able to create beneficial business and social relationships that later would prove vital to my current success. The bad relationships were okay with me because I felt I deserved them. The friendships that I created were dictated totally by the other parties involved. Basically, I was going along for the ride, as long as others were willing to have me around. Their voices became my voice. Their mannerisms and behavior became mine, just so that I could maintain the feeling of worthiness while in their presence.

Then, a couple of years ago, I was laid off from a great consulting position. I had only one day’s notice and there was no clear answer to the problem in sight. I was jobless with a kid to take care of and a home to maintain. Externally, I was the strong and resilient person that I fooled everyone into believing I was. Internally, I was full of negative emotions and uncertainty. I immediately started thinking about my bleak future and what would remain of my life if I did not find a job soon enough. Would we be homeless? Would I have to return to

my hometown in Louisiana and live with parents while I tried to make sense of my life all over again? Would I have to beg for assistance? How soon would it be before we went hungry? All of these questions repeated themselves almost daily and without reprieve. I started job hunting to no avail, and the mental anguish grew stronger. I felt I no longer had control of anything in my life. The interesting point to this story is that I had money available from a savings account that I had started the year prior, and it was enough to sustain us for at least three months or so. So, why was I already planning my demise well ahead of any chance that I might be able to rebound? It was because I could see only as far as what I felt I deserved. Once the negative thoughts invaded my mind, I slowly began to program my actions to reflect my thinking. Therefore, I was reacting in anticipation of my limited view of success. This clearly was not the mindset of a successful forward thinking individual. I was, at the time, sealing my own coffin.

Some time passed and I began to think about everything that I felt I was halfway good at. I enjoyed talking to people and I always found joy when I was able to help others solve a problem or at least point them in the right direction. I also began to think about the adversities in my life and how I was able to navigate beyond them to live a productive life. Granted, I still had a few personal issues that needed resolution, but I found that I no longer was living as a victim. I became excited by the prospect that one day I would be able to manage every issue that currently existed in my life while being able to deal with other issues as they presented themselves. Then, I rediscovered my love for writing, but I no longer was interested in writing poetry or short stories. I wanted to write things that would positively impact the lives of others. I wanted to be an author, but I had to change my perception of my future. I still was stuck in my feelings of inadequacy so I was unable to write anything that I felt made sense. I struggled for weeks trying to find the rhythm I needed to at least begin this journey, but the steam would run out just as quickly as it had gathered. Once again, I was stopping myself in my own tracks.

I slowly began to realize that all of the major deterrents in my life had one common and major denominator. Me. No one else was telling me I could not achieve anything – only me. In fact, I can remember people encouraging me along the way but I had conditioned myself to think that I always would react and live as a victim of my adversities. I had to attempt to reprogram my view of my self-worth and esteem to believe what everyone else believed – that I had the skills and potential necessary to be successful. But the potential has no purpose without ACTION. Once I made the connection, I noticed that I was able to foresee my future in more astonishing tones as opposed to the bleakness that had existed before. I hadn't written a single word yet, but I believed that I was going to be an author. Not just an author, but a successful author who was going to change the lives of all of those who read what I was going to write. I felt like a bird about to take its first flight. I knew I was born to do it, but now I had to train myself to believe that I actually could do it. I had no concept or title for the book but I had mustered up enough courage to write my first five pages in one sitting. It was as if the heavens opened up and gave me the courage and belief that I always had felt was far beyond my reach. I did it on my own. I controlled how I performed in my current state and how that performance would dictate my future success. I was writing my own story and setting the tone for writing my future story. I never had known how it felt to do something without it being influenced by someone else's perception of me. Indeed, it was exhilarating, liberating, and scary at the same time.

I began to apply these concepts to anything I desired. Now, I no longer wait for confirmation from any other source before I follow a dream or aspiration. I perform research, plan effectively, and present the picture of success even before anything has been done. If I want to attract the energy of other successful people, I have to behave as they do and be open and receptive to the guidance and inspiration that can come of it. My energy became so pronounced that I no longer had to approach others for help; it was being offered to me and most times without me even trying to garner it. I learned that I automatically was behaving as if I was worthy of the attention. I had successfully reprogrammed my train of thought and now my thoughts of success are automatic. This type of thinking is not only beneficial in business but can be applied to every facet of your personal life as

well. Simply put, you must become what you want to attract – therefore believing that you are worthy of deserving it as well.

Obstacles in life will present themselves as usual, but with the right mindset and a great support system, you will be able to handle those that are within your control and manage those that are not. For example, I set out to become a life coach. The obstacle for me was that I had no clientele that I could use to build my coaching practice. So, I decided to offer my services for free to friends and associates who I felt could benefit from them. Most of the offers were rejected because of the lack of understanding of the concept of life coaching, but I still kept the faith that I would become a practicing life coach. After a few weeks of persistent offering, I was able to land three clients for whom I rendered services on a pro bono (free) basis. I finally was able to sell myself in a way that made others take notice of the merchandise (me) and what it had to offer. The only requirement I had was that they write a testimonial to attest to my services and the positive results for which my services were responsible. They received what they needed at no cost to them, but the value to me of having positive clientele is immeasurable. I had no problem giving before I was able to receive. If you believe in yourself, you also should understand that your justly rewards for your hard work will come in due time.

Successful people can be viewed as forward thinkers or visionaries who are able to envision what some of us cannot fathom, or otherwise are afraid to believe. They traverse this world seeking opportunities for growth and they require upward mobility in order to sustain their presence in the universe. Also, their reactions are of a proactive nature, in hopes of preventing failure, as opposed to reacting only when failure is upon them. They also anticipate some realistic amount of failure but the effects of the failures are rebuffed by their resilience, determination, and the belief that they are in fact worthy of the success that they have envisioned. They have become what they desire. Once this happens, they are able to attract more easily those elements that make them successful, and they are willing to perform the work necessary to be perceived as successful even before they truly are. Success can be seen as a set of positive actions that lead to a positive result, an

image that speaks to the very things that they require to maintain that success, and the wherewithal to know that periodic failures SHOULD NOT equate to total failure but reveal fantastic opportunities for reflection and learning so that the failures either can be eliminated or dealt with. Success indeed is an attractive energy that tends to only fare well with other similar energies. Otherwise, it is perceived as intimidating or standoffish, but that is only because positive forward thinkers tend to deflect the negative energy of anything that goes against their aspirations. That deflection then is seen as a reflection of inadequacies to the people that bear the negative energy.

If I can encourage you to do anything at all, it is to dream the biggest of dreams and challenge yourself to push the limits of your imagination. There is no penalty to pay or any cross to bear by simply dreaming. Those same big dreams eventually may turn to goals. Goals are simply dreams with a plan of action that provides a clear path for success. When growing up in the projects, I rarely found myself dreaming of anything beyond that wrought iron territory. My biggest dream was to become a rich entertainer so that I could move my entire family out of the projects and off welfare and food stamps, as well as helping those who also were in need. But, I didn't BELIEVE in the dream because I had no idea that it could be more than just a dream, and I lived in a "what if" kind of world. Dealing with that and other adversities conditioned me to believe that I only was worthy of what was immediately available – and that wasn't much at all. Eventually, I would learn the hard way that when all of the painful and negative situations subsided, I still was left with only one person to deal with, and that is me. Even when the good times and great fortune subsided, I still was left with only myself. So, the common denominator in your success and your failures is you.

If you've spent the majority of your life being your worst critic and analyst, then now is the time for you to become your biggest cheerleader. Learn to acknowledge yourself for a job well done without always requiring acknowledgement from others. Even the smallest of your achievements deserve recognition. By giving yourself recognition, you will transform yourself into a motivational machine that will work primarily in

your favor. So, even in those moments when no one else acknowledges your positive contributions, at least you can fall back on yourself for encouragement. They will begin to take notice of your positive contributions as soon as you are able to celebrate them and project them outwardly into the world. You then will behave in a way that welcomes success. In addition, you will learn to not be intimidated by information and you will begin to speak highly of yourself. Worthwhile opportunities will present themselves only when you act in a deserving manner. For everything you feel that you can't do, just ask yourself "why can't I?" Either you'll find that you had the ability to do it all along or that you have work to do in certain areas of your life so that you will be able to do it at some point.

Now comes the part where I leave the work up to you. I suggest to everyone I meet that they have some means of recording their thoughts and aspirations. I usually use my computer or my phone's voice recorder, but you can use a tape recorder or pen and paper. The importance of this process is to understand exactly what it is that you aspire to achieve. Most times, the thoughts that remain only in our heads are never truly validated because we allow no room for judgment even if it comes from ourselves. I want you to take fifteen minutes out of your day just to focus on your dreams and aspirations. Turn off the television and the radio, and turn off your cell phone. Get a cup of your favorite coffee, tea, wine, or whatever makes you feel at ease. You owe it to yourself to be as self-aware as you possibly can be for this process. Now that you are comfortable, I want you to go to a clean page in your notebook or journal and begin to write as many aspirations as you can. Don't worry about how realistic they are at this point. Just write. Allow yourself the privilege to be as bold and eager as possible. This is your life we are talking about, so treat your dreams with the utmost respect. I want you to learn to not be afraid to think boldly and to imagine yourself at the pinnacle of success. Does this mean that you will achieve all of your dreams? Absolutely not, but as your list of dreams and aspirations increases, so will your probability of belief in yourself. Why have only three dreams when you can have twenty-three? Broadening your scope also increases your probability of success and tells the world that you now expect nothing less than excellence from yourself. Remember, success is not only found in the end

result. It also can be found in the best attempt to reach the end result. So, even if you fail at completing the goal, you STILL can be successful in knowing that you gave it your best shot, and nothing works better at raising your self-esteem and self-worth than simply trying. You will graduate from TRYING to DOING. Everything you set your mind to do no longer will bear the question of “can I do it?” Your only question will be “how will I do it?” This list becomes your benchmark as to what you feel you are capable of achieving and what you feel that you deserve out of this life that you have been blessed to live.

Think outside the box and dare yourself to stand out in a crowd, and learn to translate your confidence both consciously and subconsciously. Lift your shoulders and walk with a posture that tells the world that you finally have arrived and speak with affirmation and confidence. You will set the tone of your future interactions as soon as you enter a room or when your mouth opens to speak of your desires. Also, you will be treated according to how you treat yourself, so if the treatment given to you by others does not sit well with you, then you have every right to address it and make your requirements known. This is by no means rendering you unapproachable. Rather, you are setting clear expectations to which you can hold yourself and others accountable. In addition, you must learn to be okay with what you don't know but be ready to do what is necessary to gain the knowledge you need to advance to new heights. Also, it is necessary to feel comfortable to expand your comfort zone. Take risks that will expand your circle of possibilities and always remember the people and resources that helped you get to where you are. They complete your support system and you may call on them at times when you need additional affirmation.

Finally, I'd like to mention the importance of self-affirmation. Affirmation is defined as a declaration of something as truth, so it's only right that you take ownership in claiming success as a right and not a privilege. A positive affirmation allows you to will or speak something positive into existence. It truly is mind over matter, but more importantly it is about defining the belief that you have within yourself. Oftentimes, we are guilty of counteracting our ambitions with self-doubt, and usually the self-doubt becomes the dominating energy.

Success begins within your spirit and it is a personal agreement that you make within yourself to execute all possibilities that may lead to your success. Without it, you will not be able to enjoy the success that is inherently yours because you will doubt that you deserve it, and begin to question the motives or intentions surrounding the success. Understand that you were born with an inherent right to achieve greatness, but we sometimes succumb to the result of our circumstances and believe that those results should dictate the path that our lives must take. The following shows how you can combat your feelings of self-doubt by applying statements of self affirmation:

Negative statement:

***"I can't do this"***

Positive question:

***"Why can't I do this?"***

Negative statement:

***"I feel incomplete"***

Positive statement:

***"I am a complete person at this moment in time"***

Negative statement:

***"I shouldn't try"***

Positive statement:

***"I have everything to gain by trying"***

In parting, I would like to reiterate that success is by no means segregated to particular groups of people and is not determined by your predisposition to situations thus far. You have the power to write the ending to your story by understanding and embracing your past while allowing the strength that has allowed you to persevere to serve as the same strength that takes you ten steps closer to the destiny over which you have complete control. Love yourself enough to want the best for yourself; treat others as you would like to be treated; and be open to providing the same motivation that has been offered to you as you continue your journey unto greatness. Lastly, remember that you are what you THINK you deserve.