

Chapter 2

Working on Workaholism

Introduction

One of the great fallacies surrounding success is the belief that *hard work* and *more work* are the keys to success. There are three reasons why this belief is wrong.

The first reason working harder does not lead to success is that working *harder* and working *more* represent a violation of one of the basic laws of behavior:

If you do more of the same,
you'll get more of the same.

It's a natural reaction to work harder. After all, work is what we know. I put in eight hours, get a certain amount of work done, and I get paid a certain sum. So the natural calculation is: If I want more work done or more money, then it makes sense to put in more hours.

It's easy to fall into an extra hour here and an extra hour there. But gradually, over time, you find yourself working

ten and twelve hours a day, then Saturdays and Sundays. Eventually you're just working all the time. But you're not making headway. Work seems to create work.

You're trapped and you feel like you're drowning.

And the main cause is that you went down the road of working more in order to get more done.

The second reason working harder does not lead to success is that putting in more hours is the lowest technical solution to any problem.

If you think about it, in a world without technology, your labor is all you have. But we do live in a world of technology. And we need to think about using technology to help us rather than just using more labor.

Using a unit of labor as a measurement of progress is very natural. Two easy examples are horsepower and manpower. Horsepower was originally based on the amount of pulling that could be accomplished by one horse. Of course today it's just a name given to a unit of *work done over time*.

A one horsepower motor can lift 33,000 pounds one foot in one minute. My generator has a one horsepower engine. But I don't need a horse. Technology has put that horsepower into a nice, convenient little package.

If I want a 300 horsepower engine, do I buy 300 horses? No. Technology has figured out a way to get the power from a piece of machinery.

But manpower is a different thing. When we calculate the jobs we have and the time they take, we can determine that our backlog is X person-hours. If I have 400 hours of backlog,

I can use 400 people working one hour each, or ten people working forty hours each.

Or I can work eighty hours a week and be done in five weeks.

Most of us don't even do that calculation. We just see a huge amount of work and we start working more and more. Most of us don't look to see how technology can improve this. We make no effort to find another process. We just work more or hire more people.

The third reason working harder does not lead to success is that working harder only improves progress for about four hours. Then everything begins to go downhill.

If you ever studied all night in college, you know there's a "point of diminishing returns." For most people, the best we can hope for is one eight hour day plus four more hours. After that, you're tired, irritable, your brain is stuck and you can't out-think the problem.

Every hour, every minute you spend on the problem is less productive. But some ancient instinct in our heads tells us that we're almost there. It makes us believe that progress is just around the corner.

If you do this once, you can recover quickly. But doing this two days in a row simply reduces productivity for the entire second day. And it gets worse on the third and fourth and fifth days.

In the meantime, you used to have a life. Boyfriend, girlfriend, spouse, cousin, friend, neighbor, dog. They're not getting the attention they deserve. And whether you like it or not, they're building a life that doesn't include you. Or

it includes you a few hours a week. Then they're off doing their own thing.

I can't believe how many people have put off having a life until . . . sometime in the future. They don't really have a plan. Today they have to be successful. Why? Uh . . . because . . .

They don't know where they're going, but they're working really hard to get there.

Two common milestones in life demonstrate this point. The first is retirement. People work hard all their lives, neglecting their families and even their own self as an individual. Then they retire and have no hobbies. Worse, their kids are gone and their spouses don't know how to spend more than three hours with them in the house.

The second example involves people who realize, in their forties, that they want a family. I saw a poster once of a woman looking very distressed. She was saying "Oh no. I forgot to get married."

This does happen to people. Work is such a central part of their lives that they really don't have anything else. No hobbies, no activities, no social life. After all, when you work ten to twelve hours a day, you're going to come home exhausted. You'll go to sleep and then get up and do it all again.

Days, weeks, months, and years fly by. Working, working, working.

The bottom line is that too much work means no balance in your life.

Too many people are working too hard – for nothing. They have no personal life, no goals, no plan. So they're burning themselves out and they don't even know why.

I'm not opposed to hard work. If you have goals and a plan, then I will support your hard work to achieve those goals. But if you don't know what you want, where you want to go, or how you want to get there, then that's what you should work on. Just a little effort on setting goals can focus your work in spectacular ways and bring meaning and fulfillment into your life.

This chapter covers a variety of ways to look at the work/life balance. Here we begin the important work of figuring out who you are and who you want to be, so you can determine the balance that works for you.

The Role of Inspiration

I think one of the most important contributors to your success is the ability to see qualities in other people that make you feel good and make you want to do better, work hard, and have the courage to try new things.

When I hear about a blind person climbing a mountain, I am inspired. When I hear about a young person doing something spectacular, I am inspired. When I hear about an old person who takes on great new challenges, I am inspired.

Most of us will find success by working hard every day, being persistent, and growing successful over time. But pointing to inspiring people and allowing ourselves to be impressed is very important. It teaches us that great things

are possible. And great things are possible from normal people. That's good news, because most of us are normal!

And where do you find inspiration? That's the best part: it's everywhere! There are stories in the newspapers, magazines,

Do you allow
yourself to be
inspired? Or are
you too cynical
for that?

and in all kinds of books. Even television occasionally moves away from "The Stupidest Contest We Could Think Of" and has inspiring stories.

The key is, are you open to being inspired? Being open to inspiration is an attitude you

take with you when you start your day. You have it when you stumble across a story, and you're able to receive the inspiration. If you carry cynicism and sarcasm throughout your day, then no feat will ever inspire you.

I recommend that you look for books with inspiring themes. These are often small collections of stories. When you have a minute or two, read a page or two. This habit will permanently improve your attitude. After all, if you start your day looking at the goodness and the greatness in the world, your predisposition will be toward the positive side of life. And that makes all the difference.

I have a little book entitled *There's Always Time for Greatness: Who Did What When From Ages 1-100*. A lot of it is simply "who did what," but there are some inspiring gems as well. Like Mozart giving concerts across Europe at age six, or Yehudi Menuhin playing violin solos with the San Francisco Symphony at age seven.

When we consider the outstanding feats of the young, it is humbling. There is a level of greatness I don't possess (and you can't go back to age seven). But impressive achievements should make us feel good about the human capacity to do great things.

I personally don't know how any human being can run a marathon. To me, that's impressive when anybody does it at any age. But I know it's *possible* and I know I could do it if I set my mind to it. I read that Dimitrion Yordanidis ran a marathon in Athens (in 7 hours, 33 minutes) at age 98! I cannot run a marathon today. And even if I start practicing, I won't be able to run one tomorrow. But sometime in the next fifty years? That I can do!

Sometimes, when we "grow up" we forget to dream. Maybe we get too busy. Maybe reality has too many pressing demands on us. Maybe we have to wait until the next raise, or the kids move out, or after the house is paid off. All of those excuses amount to one thing: Fear. Fear is a false barrier you put in front of yourself so you don't have to feel bad about not dreaming.

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Inspiration can help you overcome fear (and drudgery, and boredom). Inspiration can bring you a life-giving force that allows you to dream. I think too many people stumble through life with a crippling view of what can be done. The truth is, anything can be done! First you have to be open to being inspired. Then come dreams and schemes. Eventually, actions have to follow because dreamers become

dissatisfied with the here and now. Once you start considering *the possible*, you will want to move toward it – You will want to make it happen. It’s a natural and extremely powerful series of events.

Begin today. Pick up one of the *Chicken Soup for the Soul* books. Or anything similar. Don’t be so cynical. Goodness is everywhere when you take the time to look. So is greatness. And potential. And success. Begin by allowing yourself to be inspired.

Your Self vs. Yourselfs

One reason psychologists and sociologists will always have plenty of work is that human beings are very complicated things.

We sometimes hear the admonition “Express Yourself.” We ask children to paint and write and engage in other activities in order to help them express themselves. And we hope, in expressing themselves, the children will become themselves.

As we learn and grow, we try different things to see what we like. In some sense, we “try on” different personalities.

You Are Who You
Say You Are.
So, Who Do You
Say You Are?

The teen years are the most obvious example of this. In a perfect world, we would find the one single personality we like the best and keep it. Over time the personality we choose becomes who we “really” are. I’m going to refer to this as your *default personality*.

But we never lose our free will, so we can always change who we are at any time. We just have to be aware that such changes can be very difficult.

When we find ourselves grown up and responsible, we also find ourselves operating in a variety of different settings. And with this we develop different personalities. For example, you might have the following personalities at some time or another:

Self

Spouse

Parent

Child (adult child)

Sibling

Professional

Community Member

and more.

Within some of these you might have additional personality sub-types. See Chapter Ten.

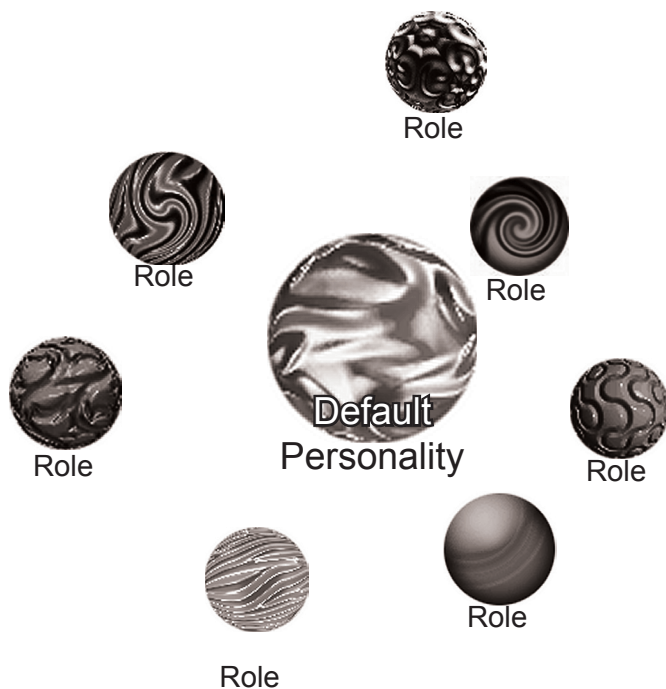
So far so good. This theory of personality roles is certainly nothing new or original. Literature from the earliest times until today addresses this subject. In fact, the literary technique of “putting on a mask” to play a different role is a mainstay of literature in all societies. Perhaps the most widely known examples are the play-within-a-play story lines of Shakespeare.

Personalities and Stress

Going through your day, week, and life balancing different personalities can be very stressful.

The greatest stress comes from situations in which the role you play is very different from the default personality you develop for yourself. Your default personality is the most comfortable one for you. So, the roles you play that are closest to your default personality are also the most comfortable for you.

In this diagram I show the default personality as “You” and the roles you play in relation to it. Some roles are closer, some further away.



For example, we often hear about the actor or politician who is really shy: Such a person puts on an outgoing personality when needed, but has a default personality that is much more shy.

You can see that this could be quite stressful.

There are three methods for addressing the problem of “space” between your default personality and the roles you play.

First, you can move the roles you play closer to your default personality.

Second, you can move your default personality closer to your roles.

Third, you can develop ways to accept the roles you play and find ways to accept the “space.” This is the least satisfying route as the natural tension will always exist and you will always be working to reduce the stress.

Perhaps the lowest stress combination exists when the “you” at work and the “you” at home and all the other you’s are all very similar. Thus you don’t have the stress of putting on a mask and putting on a show.

But most of us have a great deal invested in our personalities. Bringing those personalities together and making them consistent takes a great deal of work. This is hard work, really, because it means we have to make changes to our default personality as well as all the other roles we play.

You Are Who You Say You Are.
So, Who Do You Say You Are?

This is where personal goal-setting and quiet time come in. Personal goal-setting starts with the basic question of who you want to be. When you look down the road five or ten years, how would you like to see yourself? Don't focus on how to get there! That comes later. Start by simply creating a vision of what you want to be.

Quiet time is the most powerful tool you have for reaching your goals. The benefits are two-fold. First, by sitting and giving yourself time to think about what you want, you begin to draw pictures of your future self. You make an outline and begin filling in the details. Second, the process of quietly thinking about where you want to go will result in moving in that direction. Even if you never create an elaborate step-by-step plan, having a vision of your future self will move you in that direction.

You will be a different person five years from now. Time will march on. Change will come whether you like it or not. The economy will ebb and flow. People will change, work will change, social settings will change.

It is up to you to choose: Will you simply float along for the next five years, with your default personality defined as a series of reactions to what's going on around you? Or will you choose who you will become and use the change all around you to move in that direction?

I hope you'll choose the second option. And begin today by spending a little quiet time working on it. See the meditation below.

“Spiritual living is a fulfillment from moment to moment, in which the outer person is in a state of

living rapport with the inner being and becomes an extension thereof.”

– N. Sri Ram

The Myth of Multi-Tasking

One of the big buzz words of the last ten years is “Multi-Tasking.” I’m sure you’ve heard people say they’re multi-tasking. Or perhaps you’ve prided yourself on being a multi-tasker. I’ve even seen people ask for this quality in formal job descriptions.

But there is no multi-tasking. People cannot multi-task.

We get this term from the world of computers. Despite the fact that we computer people have used this term for almost two decades, computers are just now being designed so they can do more than one task at a time. So, you see, even computers are not really multi-tasking.

A computer with one processor can only do one thing at a time. Computers have the wonderful facility of being very fast and being able to change tasks very quickly. So, when it looks like you are word processing and browsing the internet and editing a picture all at the same time, the computer is not really multi-tasking.

Computers operate by time slicing. Time slicing consists of giving a few milliseconds to one task, then a few to the next, then a few to the next. Because computers can change tasks so quickly, they appear to be doing two things at once. But in reality there is no multi-tasking.

You cannot multi-task either.

Sometimes we are engaged in several actions at the same time, but we cannot actually do them all at the same time. And, as humans are slow to change from one task to another, it is clearly visible that we have to stop doing one thing and start doing another.

No matter how quickly you switch tasks, you can never give your attention to two activities at the same time. You can *time-slice*. But your time slicing has limited effectiveness.

If you try to multi-task you will divide your focus and the quality of your thinking will diminish.

The most important point for you to remember when you try to time-slice is that it reduces your overall effectiveness. We fool ourselves into believing that we are being more productive (or that other people are more productive) when we

multi-task. In reality, you have split your attention between several tasks and therefore reduced your ability to focus on each task.

The more you focus on the task at hand, the more effective you will be. If you cloud your mind by trying to think about two or three things simultaneously, you will be less effective at each of them.

When writing a letter, for example, you should focus all of your attention on the letter. You will write faster, write more clearly, address the topic more effectively, and be done

sooner than if you force your mind to switch back and forth between the letter and something else.

Sometimes we engage in a task but find it difficult. Writing is a good example. When the words don't come, we engage in something else. This is obviously the wrong thing to do. The words won't come until you give them your attention and focus on the writing. When you engage in something else, you make the writing less focused and less effective. The same is true for every other activity.

There are some activities that are particularly well suited for time slicing. Other activities can be organized around effective time slicing. Cooking is a great example of time slicing. You might put a roast in the oven and then, while it cooks, start preparing the vegetables. People who are very well organized and good at changing their focus can become great cooks and prepare seven courses with perfect timing.

I can barbeque hot dogs.

You can become efficient at time slicing. But never divide your focus.

You must develop the habit of discerning your most important task and focusing on that task until it is complete (or at a logical stopping point such as completing a draft that needs review). Then decide on your next most important task and focus all of your attention on that task until it is complete.

We have gone so far down the road of believing in multi-tasking that most of us have never developed the habit of focusing our attention on one thing at a time. Your job may require you to time-slice, but you must not think of it in those terms. Do not fool yourself into believing that you can

do two things at once. The best you can do is to perform a poor job on two or three projects.

If you try to multi-task you will divide your focus and the quality of your thinking will diminish.

Begin today. Develop the habit of focusing all your attention on one thing at a time. You'll be amazed at how efficient you will become.

When you're excellent at focusing on one thing at a time, then you can begin training yourself to time-slice effectively that is, switching from one task to another. But once you switch, you must give all of your focus to the new task. If you try to think about two things at once or do two things at once, you will do neither of them well.

You can become efficient at time slicing. But never divide your focus.

So-called Multi-Tasking is the root of many errors, poor workmanship, and stress. Do not ask yourself to do two things at once. And don't ask others to do it either.

Overcoming Workaholism

Have you ever heard the statement that "Americans are lazy"? That statement is patently absurd. Americans work their tails off. We work long hours. Sometimes two jobs. We hustle and bustle and squeeze in work during lunch.

The problem is, we're poorly focused. We're busy with busy work. We need to stop sometimes,

Focus every action on the goals,
set Priorities,
and make time to Relax
Focus
Exercise
Take time for family
Take time for a lunch break
Go home at 5 or 6
Less busy work and more balance.
Balance life and work.

Psychologists might disagree, but I've always thought that the human mind is like a file drawer that wants to be organized. We access pieces of our brain all day information we have and old memories in order to build new thoughts.

All day long we take files out of the drawer. Problems and "new things" that come up have to be put into the drawer, along with all that stuff we took out.

"The Secret
of Success is
Consistency of
Purpose."
– Benjamin Disraeli

Rest, relaxation, contemplative thought: These are the tools we use to organize the drawer.

We lead lives filled with deadlines and too much work, and chaos, and bills, and we're always on the go-go-go. We don't stop, look around, and change directions. We just go where the work and the kids and the world take us.

Our "schedules" are full of things, full of details. Most of those things have been put on our schedule by someone else, or by necessity. So we're busy-busy-busy with the everyday chores and we don't focus on the longer-term goals. Every once in awhile we need to poke our heads up above the cubicle maze and see whether we're getting closer to where we want to be.

We all know that slowing down a little and doing it right will save work in the long run.

Many of us are trapped in the maze because we're on the "easy road to success." The easy road to success is a lie we tell ourselves. I don't know why.

The Indispensable You

We see clearly in others what we do not see in ourselves. For example, my wife always knows when I need to go to the doctor, but never thinks she needs to go. "Oh that punctured lung? It's just a rib out of place. There's nothing the doctor can do anyway."

This is especially true with workaholism. My pile of work *will never get done* and must have my attention. Someone else's pile of work *will never get done* and he should realize that.

I used to think the work couldn't get done without me. I think that's the biggest pitfall for most of us.

We take on a job and discover that there's too much work for a 40-hour week. The boss seems to work 50 or 60 or 70 hours. So we work through lunch and come in early and stay late. Then we go in on the weekend. We work more and more and more.

We fool ourselves four ways with this behavior:

1. We tell ourselves this is short-term. Once we get the work caught up, we'll go back to 40 hours.
2. We tell ourselves that we're indispensable. No one else can do this. Oh, sure, you can train people, but they won't be as diligent and you don't have the time. Some knowledge you just can't pass on.
3. We tell ourselves (or maybe we've been told by others) that there's a big reward at the end of the year (or end of the project). So we're working for the bonus. But then what? Aren't you going to want the next bonus too?
4. We tell ourselves that we're doing this for the family. This is for the long-term benefit of the spouse and kids. But spouse and kids have to feel alive too.

We fool ourselves because we want to fool ourselves.

We're intoxicated by work. I believe men are more susceptible to this than women. But anyone who is raised to measure success in terms of "work," and who defines himself by what he does "for a living" is a potential workaholic.

And our culture reinforces this perspective. At a party you meet someone. The first question is “What do you do?” If you answer “I’m a father of two and I collect fountain pens” there will be a long silence. “Okaaaaaay” they’ll say, “and what do you do for a living?” Try this at your next party. It’s fun.

It’s as if we can’t discuss the non-work “you” until we get the work conversation out of the way.

After a long process of distilling my life and focusing my energies on where I want to go, I have developed the habit of defining for myself three goals every morning. I write down the following three things every day:

- What’s the most important thing I want to do today for myself personally?
- What’s the most important thing I want to do today for my family?
- What’s the most important thing I want to do today for my work?

(Note: Sometimes I add a fourth category – community. The first three categories are the most important, and the most universal. We all need to take care of ourselves, our families, and our work. On the next tier of important things to take care of we find “community.” This includes your neighborhood, your church, business communities, etc.

Sometimes I will refer to three categories. That will always be the three primary categories listed above. When I mention four categories, that will include community as well.)

More details later.

The point here is that I have defined the three pieces of my life that make up almost all of who I am. Work is extremely important. It is silly to think otherwise. But work has its place and must fit comfortably in the big plan with Personal Self and Family Self.

Every workaholic will eventually have an experience that shatters the imaginary world we've built. We don't see it coming because we've fooled ourselves.

The event that slaps you in the face with reality might be dramatic or simple. You might get laid off. Or passed over for a promotion in favor of a clock-watcher who never comes in on the weekends. You might take off a week for vacation and discover that the business was fine without you.

For me the eye-opener was a disagreement over a bonus. I had completely fooled myself into believing that my hard work, extra hours, and neglecting my family would be justly rewarded. I took on extra work and made major contributions to the company in several areas. I traveled all over the U.S. for a year, negotiated a major contract, set up a new office in another state, oversaw the newest product development for the company, and much more.

I worked myself to the point of exhaustion and hit homeruns all year.

And when it came time to review my annual performance I got 80% of my potential bonus for the year. I was devastated. As a former teacher I view 80% as a B-minus. I know my performance wasn't perfect and I'd hung up the phone on a company lawyer once but certainly I deserved something in the "A" range for all my successes.

In an instant my eyes were opened. Before I'd blinked twice my life had changed. For the price of a few hundred dollars the company could have bought a repeat performance for the next year. But it wasn't worth it to them.

Before I spoke a word, I knew that I would put in 40-hour weeks from that point forward. I knew I would leave my desk at lunch. I knew I would use up my vacation time. I knew I would find another job.

What I didn't know at the time is that my boss had already decided to leave the company. She wanted to keep expenses down in order to maximize her bonus. She didn't care about the future profitability of the company. And she didn't care about my personal loyalty to her.

I had fooled myself into working like a madman in search of a reward that was only a pittance.

I guess I was lucky to learn this lesson over a bonus rather than over a firing. My experience changed my attitude toward work forever. Not that I became a clock-watcher, but now I try to have realistic expectations about how valuable I am to "the company."

When I took my next job, I had a very open and honest discussion about what they expected from me. They outlined a week that looked like 40-50 hours. I agreed to that. And because we had this discussion before I started, I never felt any pressure to work longer hours.

Sometimes our lives evolve and we don't realize what's going on until years later. I am now a computer consultant. I still work 40-50 hour weeks. I joke with my clients that I work half days and I get to pick the 12 hours. I now have

lots of bosses: my clients. And I have lots of work because there are clear understandings between my clients and me.

They agree to pay a specific price for specific work. I offer up so many hours at a certain rate. No one expects to get a bunch of hours for free. If I work hours for free, it's my choice. No bonuses, and I know that.

Because expectations over hours and pay were a major issue for me awhile back, it is natural that I would evolve to create a job in which this relationship is very clear.

I still have to fight my workaholic tendencies. But the issues of pay and hours are now very low-stress for me.

Slow Down: Get More Done

One of my great weaknesses is that I want to jump into a job, get it done, and move on. Sort of a “surgical strike” to solving computer problems. This is a weakness because it can lead to neglecting the people side of the business. It also means I have a tendency to be focused on the next job instead of the present job.

As part of my business ethic, I am very attentive to clients' computer needs. Rather than just fix the problem at hand, I take a minute and apply software updates and make sure “automatic” maintenance is running.

But I don't always take time to say “Hello. How are you?” and make the personal contact.

Having employees has helped me on this score. As I train them, I put a lot of emphasis on focusing on the present job

rather than worrying about the next job. I've developed a formula for a customer visit – the KPEnterprises way of performing an office visit.

The goal is to provide a consistent, positive experience for the customer. And for me it means I end up preaching about the one thing I need to focus on. Take time – a few minutes – and chat with the customer. This builds a personal relationship, it keeps the atmosphere relaxed, and it makes the job enjoyable.

I tell prospective employees that one of the benefits to working for me is that you get to work with nice people. I cultivate clients who are enjoyable to be around. But, truth be told, 99% of the population are nice people if you stop and take a minute to talk with them.

Taking your time also means relaxing when you have to do all those little things we often consider “necessary” distractions from our “real” job. This includes filing papers, balancing the checkbook, driving between appointments, reading reports, employee evaluations – any little thing you tend to rush through.

Take your time. Relax. Do it right. Focus on the current job. When you've finished you can move on to the next job.

Our society and our work culture tend to emphasize working fast – often faster than it really takes to get the job done. Sometimes we find ourselves with too few people and too much work. The go-go-go mentality results in sloppy work, incomplete work, and no time to focus on quality.

I once worked at a place like this. The manager sometimes joked “We never have time to do it right but we always have

time to do it over.” We all know (if we take time to think about it) that slowing down a little and doing it right will save work in the long run. Relaxing a bit can also save a lot of stress.

A great example of this is in the car. Did you ever notice one of those people who passes you at 20 miles over the speed limit and you catch up with him at the next light? Then he takes off fast and zooms ahead, but you catch up with him at the next light. After a few miles this gets to be pretty funny. One of you is more stressed than the other.

And even if Mr. Stress gets ahead of you by a light, he may only save three minutes in his cross-town travel!

Slow down. Relax. Focus on the task at hand. Do it right. You’ll produce a higher quality product and you won’t have to do it over.

Take your time and you have more time.

Take Advice!

Take my advice: Take other people’s advice.

The bookshelves at the library are filled with books on success. Whether you want to find seven secrets of success, think and grow rich, stop sweating the little things, or learn to put first things first: There’s a world of great advice out there.

In addition, you know lots of successful people. Think about it and look around. In your work, through your neighbors, and at the local stores you visit, the world is full of people who are working hard and doing well.

As you talk to these people – and read these books – you’ll find an abundance of great advice.

Take it.

As humans, we seem always to be seeking advice. But for some reason we resist taking the advice we seek! The first time I read *The Greatest Secret in the World*, I was struck with Og Mandino’s attitude. He starts out by saying that most people who start the book won’t finish it and most people won’t take the advice and do the exercises. Almost no one will take his advice.

And he’s right. He’s also correct that those who do take his advice will be more successful than those who don’t. So why not take his advice?

Anytime that you
decide to focus and
spend a year of
your life becoming
successful, you will
be successful.

What’s up with us, as humans, that we can’t take advice we know we should take?

I can’t summarize all the good advice in the world, but I can give some examples.

If you read ten pages a day of some book on success, that’s 3650 pages a year. That’s a

lot of books. I hope this is the absolute minimum you are willing to commit to your own success and happiness. It’s equivalent to at least ten books a year.

[Stop: You’ve just been given advice. Will you do it?]

And in these ten books you are very likely to come across each of the following pieces of advice in at least six of the books:

Exercise at least three or four times a week.

Take time regularly to focus on your goals.

Write down your goals.

Read books on anything and apply it to your success.

Do something to reduce stress regularly (quiet time, meditation, relaxation exercise, etc.)

Write down your values and your “mission statement.”

Develop a process for planning your day, your week, your month, your year.

Do something every day to focus on success
– even for a few minutes.

You will read all kinds of variations on these themes. You will see them again and again and again.

You will be told many times that daily relaxation exercises and focusing on success are the keys to happiness, balance, and wealth. There should be no doubt in your mind that the road to your success is a variation on these themes.

Will

You

Do

It?

Most people accept intellectually that they need to do these things. But for some reason only a few people ever take this advice.

I don't know why. Perhaps we've all worked so hard to get where we are that we don't have the energy to "start over" with a program that requires work and attention and focus.

At a minimum, please keep up the reading. If you read the advice enough times, perhaps you'll try one thing. And then another.

The great news is that it's never too late. Anytime that you decide to focus and spend a year of your life becoming successful, you will be successful.

So please do at least one thing for yourself: get in the habit of reading books on success. Someday when you have time to actually become successful you can take the rest of the advice.

Summary and Conclusions

Let's be honest: workaholics run the world.

They also have more than their share of heart attacks, strokes, cancer, and a variety of other ailments. That's because they also have more than their share of stress.

Workaholics also spend a lot of time and energy in the very unproductive hours after they've already put in a ten hour day.

On one hand, they get credit for working 14 hours a day. On the other hand, many of these hours are worked at 50%, or 40%, or 20% effectiveness. They spin their wheels faster and faster but don't get very far.

If you're in this situation, you will eventually come to realize that it only leads to more fruitless hard work. You can learn that from experience. Or you can learn it from taking someone's advice.

You get to decide.

Just beware. If you think the rules don't apply to you, or that you can work harder and faster and never burn out, you have a much harder lesson to learn than those who learn from taking advice.

In the next chapter we'll start the hard work that really matters.

To Ponder

“One’s action ought to come out of an achieved stillness: not to be a mere rushing on.”

D.H. Lawrence

“Success that brings only stress and chases away relationships is not really success at all.”

Karl W. Palachuk

“What does it matter how much we do if what we’re doing isn’t what matters most?”

Stephen R. Covey