

# BALANCING THINKING AND DOING

The idea of the first principle is that you need to devote time to Thinking about what you want your future to look like and then get busy taking action – Doing – to make it happen. Can you stumble into success and happiness? I suppose so. Even a blind squirrel finds an occasional nut. But balancing Thinking and Doing makes success and happiness far more attainable. Balancing the two is important as too much of one with too little of the other isn't effective. It's like riding a bike; if you spend all of your time thinking and never start pedaling, you'll never move. On the other hand, if you pedal hard without taking the time to think where you are going, there's no telling where you might end up. You can successfully balance Thinking and Doing by operating what I call the "Success Cycle," a six-step process of constant improvement. Step 6 leads back to step one, as you refine your vision based on what you learned from your actions.

4 Honor Scholars Recognition Dinner

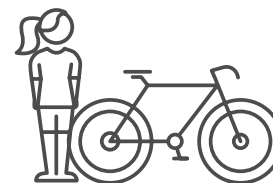


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You've likely been thinking about what subjects you want to study in college, which is good. But there is no subject worth thinking longer and harder about than the subject of your future. What is your personal definition of success? What kind of life do you want to lead and what do you want to achieve? What work will provide the most personal fulfillment? These are hard, but very important, questions. You may be thinking, "Cut me some slack, I'm a senior in high school. I don't have the answers to these questions." If that's the case, that's okay. The good news is that it is easy to start making progress toward answering those questions. How? Think about what you've done in school, in activities, at your summer job, at camp, in volunteer work. Document what you liked and didn't like about each experience, and why. Did you like working outside or enjoy going to an office, working alone or with a group? Did you enjoy presenting to a group and leading projects or did you prefer being a silent contributor? Think about things that you'd like to try. Commit to going outside your comfort zone. Say yes to new experiences and see what you learn about yourself. Volunteer. Join clubs. Travel if you can. Talk to people. Informational interviews are an easy way to gain insights about a career path. Learn. Take notes.

Be sure to define success in terms that work for you, not in terms of what others want. Don't become a lawyer because Mom is. Become a lawyer because you enjoy intellectual challenges, love debating your friends on issues, and enjoyed the internship you had at a law office. Don't become a nurse because Dad is a nurse, but because you like helping others and because you see good job security

in that field and that's important to you. I urge you to think about the importance of financial security to your future happiness. It's true that money can't buy you happiness, but not having enough money can make you miserable. I thought about this when I was younger and made the choice to get married later in life because I wanted to achieve financial security first.



TOO MUCH THINKING



BALANCE OF THINKING AND DOING



TOO MUCH DOING

Remember that you aren't locked into one path. Nothing is worse than working hard to achieve a goal and then realizing it isn't what you want. Don't be afraid to make a change. I loved playing football when I was in high school. For a time, I was sure I wanted to play in college, so I worked hard at that goal. But I had injuries along the way and looked honestly at my prospects. I realized that I was not destined to be a professional football player. As much as I loved the game, I knew I needed to focus on my life after sports, so I did not pursue sports in college. This was a very difficult decision for me. I redirected the free time and excess energy that resulted from this decision into starting a business with my stepfather as a college sophomore. Walking away from something I loved gave me the opportunity to find something I loved even more.

*Perhaps the most important advice that I have for you tonight is to suggest to you that you devote significant time to thinking about, and documenting, how you define personal success – and then evolve that definition as you proactively seek out new experiences.*

Thinking is hard work, but it's worth doing. Think about where you want to be and make a plan so that you can start heading in that direction. The sooner you start thinking about it, the sooner you will arrive at personal success and happiness. Start today – do not do tomorrow what can be done today.

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what can be done today.*

# 2

## STAY POSITIVE

The second principle is to Stay Positive. Train yourself to see problems as opportunities to embrace rather than dwell on what you cannot change. Bad things happen along every journey. How you react to those setbacks will define you. Don't feel sorry for yourself. Focus on what you can control, and always look for opportunities that may present themselves within any situation. When I was a junior in high school, my father died unexpectedly of a heart attack while cross country skiing with my mother. I learned the hard way that life is not always fair and that bad things happen to good people. But I also learned that I was capable of overcoming a great deal. Being forced to take on more responsibility within my family taught me valuable lessons. These lessons gave me the confidence, and competence, to start a business a few years later.

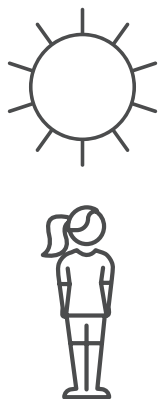
The loss of my father also made me realize that you should take the time to tell the people you love how you feel. If you don't, you may never get another chance to do so. I drive my 18-year-old daughter, Charlotte, crazy because I give her a big hug and tell her that I love her every morning and evening when I see her. She's right when she tells me that my behavior is annoying, but, I'm quite sure that she knows how I feel about her – and that's important to me.

Your attitude has a big impact on the experience and the outcome. You may find you need to take a required course that isn't immediately to your liking. You can take the class and be miserable or challenge yourself to find something in it to enjoy. It is your choice; you control your attitude. I say choose to be positive, it's much more productive and fun! One of the best quotes on the power of a positive attitude comes from **Winston Churchill**, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom during World War II, whose optimism saved a nation – and helped return peace to the world:

“ *A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity.  
An optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty.* ”

Optimism is contagious. When you stay positive, you attract like-minded people who can join forces with you to make great things happen. Stay clear of negative people. Let them find other negative people to be miserable with. **Churchill** had another great quote on this subject;

“ I am an optimist. It does not seem too much use to be anything else. ”



*Stay clear of negative people. Let them find other negative people to be miserable with.*

# 3 BE YOUR WORD

Principle three is to Be Your Word. In life, many opportunities will come your way as a direct result of your reputation. Your actions determine your reputation; how people see you, what they expect from you, and what they think of you. Cultivate your reputation by Being Your Word. If people feel you are honest and that they can trust you to do what you say you will do, you will find that opportunities will come your way.

Building a good reputation starts with being consistent in the little things. You told your mother you would vacuum the car today. You said you would make your niece's dance recital this weekend. You promised to give your friend help with her resume this week. The time comes to do what you said you would do

and you are tired. Or there are other things you would rather do. Maybe you can make an excuse or just not follow through. But if you allow yourself to slip up on these little things, over time, you will slip up on bigger things. And your reputation and relationships will suffer. **Albert Einstein** once said;

“ *Whoever is careless with the truth in small matters cannot be trusted with important matters.* ”

Show people that what you say matters. Be Your Word. And remember, while reputations are built over years, they can be destroyed by a single inappropriate action. So, always Be Your Word.



# 4 HELP OTHERS

As you go forward, you will have a growing number of opportunities to exercise the fourth principle: Help Others. It took me years to fully understand just how impactful this simple principle can be. Initially I approached this from the perspective of business partnering. I identified companies that shared common goals or common enemies with EBSCO and developed mutually beneficial partnerships. It was very effective for the business and I've built many strong personal relationships in the process. Over the years, I've also worked with numerous managers to help them accomplish their business goals. When I started out, my focus was primarily on accomplishing goals that benefitted the business, but over time I realized that a better approach was to balance the goals of the business with the manager's personal career goals. The result has been better for both the

company and the employee. I've come to value these work relationships for much more than just the benefit that they bring to the business. There is something deeply satisfying about helping others succeed. So, now I look for ways to help others, regardless of whether helping them has any benefit to me or to EBSCO. Our family has established a non-profit that provides assistance to those in need and we've supported numerous organizations that help others. I've found that you can gain more fulfillment from helping others than from commercial or material accomplishments. I hope that you all learn this sooner than I did.

I encourage you to be there for your friends, classmates, and co-workers. Ask how you can help them. Learn about their goals and dreams and make the effort to come up with creative ways to try to help. Be willing to take the risk of sharing your goals and dreams with others, and don't be afraid to ask for their help. Believe in karma. Know that doing the right thing and treating people well will pay future dividends in intangible and tangible ways. We've all heard of the Golden Rule: treat people as you would like to be treated. You should know that it has a corollary: others will treat you as you treat them. So, treat people well and you'll find that you'll be treated well.



# 5 BE DRIVEN

The fifth principle is to Be Driven. My personal experience of hiring and promoting hundreds of people has convinced me that the most successful people are those with drive. I see drive as more important than intelligence, education or experience.

How do I define drive? Drive is the combination of a commitment to thoughtful goal setting, determination, persistence, and the will to succeed. Most great accomplishments are achieved by ordinary people with an extraordinary will to succeed.

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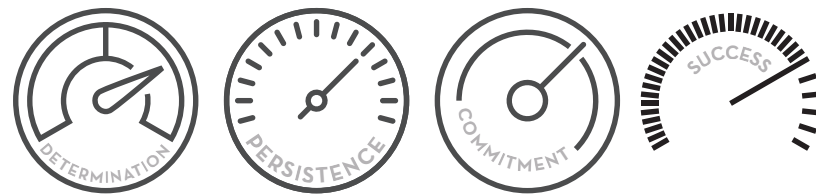


**Carol Dweck** is a researcher who has studied the reasons children do and don't succeed when they face obstacles, setbacks and failures. The key is what she calls "mindset" – what the kids tell themselves about their talents and abilities. She says:

“ In a fixed mindset, students believe their basic abilities, their intelligence, their talents, are just fixed traits. They have a certain amount and that's that, and then their goal becomes to look smart all the time and never look dumb. In a growth mindset, students understand that their talents and abilities can be developed through effort, good teaching and persistence. They don't necessarily think everyone's the same or anyone can be Einstein, but they believe everyone can get smarter if they work at it. ”

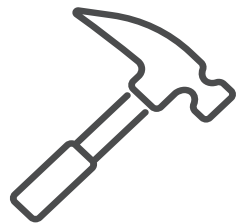
Choose to have a growth mindset and be driven to improve yourself. Many of you have likely seen the play or listened to songs from the musical **Alexander Hamilton**. It is great to see the renewed attention on one of our nation's Founding Fathers. Hamilton once wrote:

“ Men give me credit for genius. All the genius I have lies in this: When I have a subject in hand, I study it profoundly. Day and night, it is before me. I explore it in all its bearings. My mind becomes pervaded with it. Then the effort which I make the people are pleased to call the fruit of genius. It is the fruit of labor and thought. ”



Drive is like a muscle. Exercise it and it will strengthen over time. The best push-ups you will ever do are the ones where you push yourself up after a failure. As you are shaking the dust off, ask yourself what you learned, and then get back in the game. Don't let your failures define you – let them teach you. Always be leaning forward, making unrelenting progress toward your goal, all the while being on the lookout for opportunities to 'make your own luck' by putting yourself in the position to be in the right place at the right time. Of course, luck plays a part in everyone's success, but being driven plays a greater role. Our 3rd President, **Thomas Jefferson**, wrote;

“ I'm a great believer in luck, and I find that the harder I work the more I have of it. ”



**Paul Harvey**, radio broadcaster from the 1950s to 1990s, put it a different way, which I've always liked:

“ Luck is a word used to describe the success of people you don't like. ”

I'll never forget when an old classmate came up to me at my 20th high school reunion and said something along the lines of "wow, your business has really taken off, you're really lucky that you're in the information business as this is where it's at now." While I was delivering a polite response, I was thinking to myself; this guy has no clue that I worked 80+ hour weeks for the last two decades and positioned the company to embrace the internet when many of our competitors failed to do so and went out of business. I've certainly been lucky in my career and life – and all of you can be to – if you work at 'making your own luck'.



## MINIMIZE REGRETS

I've talked about Balancing Thinking and Doing as you create a vision for your life and refine it as you learn from your experiences. I've talked about Staying Positive and Being Your Word as you take action to realize your potential. I've talked about Helping Others along the way and realizing that Being Driven and learning from setbacks are more important than being smart. Principle six is to Minimize Regrets. How? It's simple -- by doing your best.

As I said when I started, the more you put into something, the more you get out of it. So, why not put forth your best to get the most out of your life? Live by the motto of "Do a job, big or small, do it right or don't do it at all." Knowing that you made your best effort, no matter what the outcome, provides real satisfaction.

*Do a job, big or small, do it right  
or don't do it at all.*

Save yourself from the pain and life-long regret of wondering what would have happened if only you had tried harder and done your best. Wasted potential is one of the worst things in life. It can be avoided.

Do you know the Latin phrase “carpe diem”? It means ‘seize the day’. If you are on the fence about something, lean toward doing it. Experience life and learn from it. Enjoy the ride. Get to know what you like to do and then do more of it. The feelings of accomplishment and contentment that come from doing your best at something you love cannot be beaten. Let me conclude with my own quote:

*The good memories you will hold throughout your life are of the things that you did and the chances you took, not of the risks averted or the times you played it safe.*

The fact that you are here tonight as Honor Scholars is a great sign that you are learning how to give your best. Keep going! Make of your life a long, wonderful journey. I wish each of you the best as you go forward to define what success means for you, enjoy the work of striving to attain it, and then experience the deep satisfaction of achieving it.





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