

City University of New York (CUNY)

CUNY Academic Works

Theses

Lehman College

2020

Surprises! Time-Tested & Easy-to-follow Tips to Take the Mystery Out of Success for Middle and High School Readers

Morose Leonard
morose.leonard@lc.cuny.edu

[How does access to this work benefit you? Let us know!](#)

More information about this work at: https://academicworks.cuny.edu/le_etds/3

Discover additional works at: <https://academicworks.cuny.edu>

This work is made publicly available by the City University of New York (CUNY).
Contact: AcademicWorks@cuny.edu

Context

Surprises! encapsulates my education at Lehman College. During my three years of studies, I have developed a greater appreciation for science (both natural and social), and I understand science's fundamental philosophy, which at its core denotes humanity's effort to demystify the workings of the universe, of which we are a part. If we allow it, science can dispel our misconceptions and prejudices about ourselves and our place in the universe.

Through *Surprises!*, I have sought to apply that understanding to help promote our human aspirations without disrupting the delicate balance of life as we know it. For better or worse, the world of human ideas shapes the natural world. So, we must strive as a species to better steward our thoughts. In writing *Surprises!*, I hope to motivate myself and others to adopt the disciplined life of the philosopher, through which all sciences arose.

Although *Surprises!* addresses middle grade readers, it can also benefit adults. Using the perspectives of natural and social sciences, particularly psychology, physics, history, and practical philosophy, the book argues that success (however we define it), necessitates self-improvement, which is best achieved through mindful, goal-oriented steps. Hence, *Surprises!* illustrates the kind of intellectual tinkering that human beings have been doing with ideas since the advent of philosophy itself.

In the end, like all scientific endeavors, those tips will undoubtedly be improved upon, but for now, they can empower our youth to actualize their dreams.

Table of Contents

	Page
Book Proposal	3
The Book	
Introduction	23
Chapter One	37
Chapter Two	48
Chapter Three	64
Citations	75
Sample Lessons	78
Final Words	
Acknowledgement	82

Book Proposal

Surprises!
Time-Tested & Easy-to-follow Tips
to Take the Mystery Out of Success
for Middle and High School Readers
by Morose Leonard

Why do scientists study the wonders of the universe? Well, a scientist's interest in the unexpected (nature's peculiarities) enables all of us to live more successful lives. That's because surprises act like a roadmap, revealing what you don't know while guiding you toward your goal.

The step-by-step tips discussed in *Surprises!* harness this fundamental power of the unexpected to show you a clear path toward your goals. When taken together, they form the acronym—wait for it—SURPRISES!

Follow these steps to long-lasting success:

S – Shrink Your Dreams

U – Unpack Your Plans

R – Reach Out to Pros

P – Prioritize Your Time

R – Revise Your Plan

I – Improve Your Identity

S – Sustain Your Talent

E – Evaluate your Growth

S – String your Successes

When you apply these practical steps to your general routine, you will find success incredibly reachable. You can absolutely do it!

Are you ready? Let's get started!

What a Surprise!

Introduction: “Success is steady progress toward one’s personal goals.” Jim Rohn

Success grows from the efforts of previous accomplishments. You can easily see how previous success can promote new ones. For example, would it surprise you if the kid who was the fastest runner in high school ends up winning an Olympic medal four years later? Of course, not. However, you can be the slowest kid in high school and win an Olympic medal four years later, and this kind of success would surprise you, wouldn’t it?

The Random House Webster’s College Dictionary defines surprise as “a feeling of sudden wonder or astonishment, especially at something unexpected.” In the case of the unlikely kid who ends up winning an Olympic medal—what a surprise! Yet, from Abraham Lincoln¹ to Naomi Osaka², history shows us that far too often these are the people who summit the great mountain of success.

Used wisely, these success stories can motivate you to achieve your own goals, and no challenge will seem too large or too hard for you to overcome. With *Surprises!* you have a roadmap to your goals, and you can drive yourself forward, veering away from failure towards amazing success.

¹ For a quick biography of Lincoln, see whitehouse.gov

² Naomi Osaka Wikipedia

Ride the Momentum

Take a moment to imagine your favorite car, the one you'd give anything to drive as soon as you turn eighteen. See it in your mind. See its cool curves; feel its raw power; hear its mean muffler.

Did you notice the tires?

No matter what car you imagined for yourself, no matter how powerful its engine, no matter how stylish its look, your car is a dud without four good tires. That's why just one tire for a Bugatti Chiron costs on average \$4,000! To put it in perspective, that's more than your parents might be paying a month for you to have a roof over your head.

The SURPRISE tips stem from four proven principles of self-empowerment: wisdom, courage, self-mastery, and fairness. Like four tires in a supercar, these principles ground you. They give you the road-gripping momentum you need to power you toward your dream.

In other words, my dream is to help you turn your life into the greatest muscle car ever built—one equipped with the best tires ever created: wisdom, courage, self-mastery, and fairness. With these principles as your tires, and the SURPRISE tips as your car, you'll be able to drive yourself toward your fabulous dreams.

Before we go any further, let's make sure we're on the same page. In this book, when I talk about *wisdom*, I mean your ability to choose what supports your goal, out of the options before you. You're wise, therefore, if your actions support your goals, even when you're not in the mood. As you grow in wisdom, you develop *self-mastery*, which means that you can will yourself to achieve the goals you set for yourself. Self-mastery then promotes *courage*, because you learn to face your reality knowing that you can overcome any challenge that you face. Thus, you shape your reality into real experiences of success. And that, my friend, is *fairness*, reaping what you sow.

Now that we're clear about what you can achieve with this book, where do you go from here?

Well, first, you shrink your big dream.

Step 1 of *Surprises!* – Shrink Your Dream

Chapter 1: The Goal of a Dream - “When it becomes obvious that the goals cannot be reached, don’t adjust the goals, adjust the action steps.” Confucius

Priya is a pint-size princess with a giant dream. She can already see it: Priya Johnson-- CEO of a BIG company. Like all great dreams, Priya’s is proud and possible; it glitters in her eyes every time she struts in front of the class. It also adorns her feet. You see, Priya imbues herself with her idol’s success by wearing a brand-new pair of Michael Jordan sneakers every two weeks. They cost her somewhere in the neighborhood of \$175. That’s over \$4,000 in one year. By the time she graduates high school, that’s a used car. “I babysit on weekends, Mr. Leonard. I make good money,” she interjects, as though she had read my thoughts.

Like you and me, Priya lives in the best of times. Today, 90% of young girls around the world go to school³. So, if there’s ever a time to dream big, it is now. However, to achieve your big dreams, you need to *shrink your dreams* into goals you can accomplish each day.

³ Factfulness.

Chapter 2: How to Shrink Your Dream - “Never mistake activity for achievement.” John Wooden

Charlotte is bright light and laughter. She has always wanted to be a doctor and follow in her older sister’s footsteps. To channel her boundless energy, Charlotte joins the swim team and the cheerleading squad. She also serves as the treasurer for her freshman class. All of those activities have one goal—to improve her chances of attending NYU’s School of Medicine. NYU would get her one step closer to her big dream of becoming a doctor.

Like you, me, and Priya, Charlotte lives in the best of times. She, too, joins the millions of young girls worldwide enjoying greater educational opportunities. But, by not confusing daily activities for long-term achievement, Charlotte *shrinks her big dream* into daily successes.

Checklist for How to Shrink Your Dream:

S – Shrink your dream.

- Do I have a big dream? A big dream meets 3 criteria: 1) Opportunity to work toward it! 2) Opportunity to evaluate your efforts. 3) Opportunity to revise your process.
- Did I succeed today in taking a step closer to my big dream?

The principles that help me shrink my giant dream

(Wisdom ✓, self-mastery ✓, courage ✓, and fairness ✓)

- **FAQ about how to shrink my dream.**

Step 2 of *SUrprises!* – Unveil Your Plan

Chapter 3: The Point of a Plan - “The discipline you learn and character you build from setting and achieving a goal can be more valuable than the achievement of the goal itself.” Bo Bennett

In this chapter you meet Gerard, a wiry boy who plays the flute and dreams of performing in front of millions at the Barclays Center. Kids tease Gerard, calling him “flute-man,” but he just brushes it off. Watching his parents manage the Haitian restaurant that they own, Gerard knows that success requires planning.

Every afternoon after school, Gerard helps out in the restaurant while also doing his schoolwork. He plans to use his understanding of dedication to achieve his own dream. Since Gerard’s mind is always on music, he takes every opportunity to practice his instrument or to delve into music in general. He jumps at the chance to play the “Star Spangled Banner” at the back to school assembly in front of all the teachers and administrators. When Gerard’s gym teacher, Mrs. K, explains to him the benefits of a “workout plan,” Gerard *unveils his own plans* and shifts his drive for music into second gear.

Chapter 4: How to Unveil Your Plan – “Failed plans should not be interpreted as a failed vision. Visions don’t change, they are only refined . . . Be stubborn about the vision, but flexible with your plan.” John C. Maxwell

When you meet Hector, you see a rugged boy who packs invincibility into a 5’11” frame of cool charisma. Hector doesn’t shy away from challenges, but everyone, including his teachers, loves him. After all, he is the all-sports star athlete. He’s Ronaldinho (soccer), Kyrie (basketball), and Saquon Barkley (football) all wrapped into one human body. The gleaming lights of fame dance upon Hector. If he’s willing to *unveil his plans*, his future will indeed glow.

Checklist for How to Unveil Your Plans.

S – Shrink your dream.

- Do I have a big dream?
- Did I succeed at something today that takes me one step closer to my big dream?

U – Unpack your plan.

- What’s my plan?
- Who can help me come up with a plan?
- Can my plan inform what I do every day?

Which Principle do I need to strengthen?

(Wisdom ✓, self-mastery ✓, courage ✓, and fairness ✓)

- **FAQs about how to unveil your plans.**

Step 3 of *SURprises!* – Reach Out to Pros

Chapter 5: The Pros and Cons of Pros - “I look at where I’m at today and realize that most of my success is owed to the mentors that was [sic] in my life.” Kendrick Lamar

Elsie is not sure what she’s more self-conscious about: that her mom is Ukrainian, or that she’s a college professor; that her dad is Italian, or that he’s a marketing director. Elsie is 12-years old and has no clue what she wants to do with her life. Some days she fancies herself an actress; other times, she’s a rugged hockey player. One thing is sure, she doesn’t care about any of the possible careers her parents suggest to her—lawyer, doctor, engineer, or actuary. When Elsie happens to *reach out to a pro*—a cruise ship captain, she learns something fascinating about the future.

Chapter 6: How to Reach Out to Pros – “I have worked for a lot of really great leaders and mentors that I felt provided me . . . opportunities.” Mary Barra

Edson is a daydreaming class clown. Funny and likable, Edson is a product of foster care, and has learned to “roll with the punches.” To him, school is something you just got to do, so he does it without giving it much thought. Edson’s grades point in no sure direction, zigzagging wildly between excellence and mediocrity. If you ask Edson, he’ll tell you that he’ll be a comedian one day—a rapper-comedian even. So, how exactly can Edson *reach out to a pro*?

Checklist for how to reach out to an expert.

S – Shrink your dream.

- What’s my big dream?
- Did I succeed today in taking one step closer to my big dream?

U – Unpack your plans.

- Do I have a plan for the next 24 hours (tomorrow)?
- Is my plan aligned with my big dream?

R – Reach out to pros

- Who do I know who might have more specific knowledge about my big dream?
- How can they help me identify my non-negotiable needs? How can they help me develop better instincts?

Which Principle do I need to strengthen?

(Wisdom ✓, self-mastery ✓, courage ✓, and fairness ✓)

- **FAQ about how to reach out to pros.**

Step 4 of *SURPrises!* – Prioritize Your Time

Chapter 7: The Direction of Time “When fishermen cannot go to the sea, they repair nets.” – Nabil Sabio

Ramon is movie-star-striking, proud, and tall. His grandma has always supported his dream of becoming a ballet dancer, and this year, in Mrs. Tirro’s Modern Dance class, Ramon is the only boy. But Ramon is determined to be the best. Since ninth grade, Mrs. Tirro has been his mentor, helping him *prioritize his time*. By now, Ramon’s routine is established: His daily habits follow the same pattern—he makes time to stretch and practice. He makes sure he eats healthy meals, then makes time for a good night’s sleep. All else revolves around this routine—dance, dinner, dreams.

Chapter 8: How to Prioritize Your Time – “Nobody’s life is ever all balanced. It’s a conscious decision to choose your priorities every day.” Elisabeth Hasselbeck

Carol hopes to become an Olympian. Since the age of ten, she’s taken up boxing as a way to get in shape. But now, Carol loves the sport--“the sweet science” and plans to use her skills in the ring to buy her mom a house one day. Boxing will help her build the life of her dreams, so no matter what it takes, she will be an Olympian. With her trainer’s help, Carol *prioritizes her time* to keep her eyes on the prize.

Checklist for how to prioritize your time.

S – Shrink your dream

- Did I achieve my goal today to take me one step closer to my big dream?

U – Unpack your Plan

- What do I need to do tomorrow?

- How do I make sure I get it done?

R - Reach out to experts.

- Have I reached out to people who know more about my dream than I do?

P – Prioritize your time.

- How am I developing the habit of prioritizing my actions?
- Do my actions reflect my priorities?
- What’s my plan to ensure that my priorities become habits?

Which Principle do I need to strengthen?

(Wisdom ✓, self-mastery ✓, courage ✓, and fairness ✓)

- **FAQs about how to prioritize your time.**

Step 5 of SURPRises! – Revise Your Plan

Chapter 9: The Justice of Adjustments – “Pitchers make adjustments, and it’s up to the hitters to readjust and sort of tweak what they know.” Joe Torre

Shaniqua is a bipedal thesaurus sporting horn-rimmed glasses. Her whole life, she’s been told she is a good writer, and has grown confident that one day she will write bestselling novels. This year, however, in Mrs. Green’s Creative Writing class, Shaniqua got a B- on her first assignment. The short story was Shaniqua’s favorite kind of writing—and it was about her preferred holiday, Halloween, and she got a B-? No way! For the first time in forever, Shaniqua got a grade she felt was unfair. Now, what does she do? There is no way she will *revise her plans* to become a bestselling author. So, what does she do?

Chapter 10: How to Revise Your Plan – “The beauty of social awareness is that a few simple adjustments to what you can say can vastly improve your relationships with other people.”
Travis Bradberry

Manuel came to the United States when he was eight. He hails from the Dominican Republic, and his parents speak little English. Manuel wants to be a doctor because back home doctors are respected and live well. But Manuel struggles in school, and English proves super difficult for him. Sometimes, Manuel feels like giving up, but he knows the many sacrifices his parents made to give him a better life. So, Manuel keeps trying. He does his best. As Manuel navigates the humongous high school and wrestles with a foreign tongue, he keeps repeating to himself: “I will keep trying.” What happens when Manuel learns to *revise his plans*?

Checklist for revising a plan.

S – Shrink your dream.

- What is my big dream?
- Does it guide what I do today?

U – Unpack your plan

- How’s my plan guiding what I do tomorrow?

R - Reach out to pros

- Have I reached out to professionals in the field?

P - Prioritize your time.

- Have I prioritized my time according to my plan?

R - Revise your plans.

- Do I need to revise my plans? Why?

- What evidence do I have for needing to adjust my plan?
- How do I readjust my plans?

Which Principle do I need to strengthen?

(Wisdom ✓, self-mastery ✓, courage ✓, and fairness ✓)

- **FAQs about how to readjust a plan.**

Step 6 of SURPRISES! – Improve Your Identity

Chapter 11: The Power of Identity – “You are the average of all the people who surround you.” David Burkus

Since the age of three, Mary Luz has been raised by her Filipino grandparents. The many arguments she’s had with her “old fashioned” grandparents have convinced her that she should become a lawyer when she grows up. Now, fifteen, Mary Luz has developed a knack for proving herself right. She relishes getting her way with her grandparents by using her words rather than through open rebellion. When Mary Luz takes Mr. Barrett’s elective, Intro to Philosophy, she decides to *improve her Identity*. She joins Mr. Barrett’s debate club and realizes that Mr. Barrett is a white, grown-up version of herself.

Chapter 12: How to Improve Your Identity – “Most good relationships are built on mutual trust and respect.” Mona Sutphen

Greg’s golden voice qualifies him as a bona fide star. That, along with his confidence, makes it clear that Greg’s future success is guaranteed. Greg is also street-savvy, so much so that he can sell you your name. Both of Greg’s parents work two jobs, so he spends most of his time hanging out with his friends. Soon enough, Greg fancies himself an entrepreneur and a music producer.

But what happens when Greg neglects to *improve his identity*?

Checklist for how to improve your identity.

S – Shrink your dream.

- What's my big dream?
- Does it influence something I do today?

U – Unpack your plan.

- Do I have a game plan for tomorrow?

R - Reach out to pros.

- Have I reached out to professionals who can mentor me?

P - Prioritize your time.

- Does my use of time reflect my priorities?

R - Revise your plan.

- Do I need to revise my plans? Why?

I - Improve your identity.

- Am I improving my identity?
- What evidence do I have?
- How can I increase my time with or around professionals in order to improve myself?
 - **Which Principle do I need to strengthen?**

(Wisdom ✓, self-mastery ✓, courage ✓, and fairness ✓)

- **FAQs about how to improve your identity.**

Chapter 13: The Source of Talent – “A winner is someone who recognizes his God-given talents, works his tail off to develop them into skills, and uses these skills to accomplish his goals.” Larry Bird

Erika knows that she’s pretty and banks on it. She’s also smart but prefers not to rely on her brain too much. Since ninth grade, Erika has gotten by with her smile, and she’s confident that people will go out of their way to make her life easy. Erika is quite happy being a solid B student. She knows that if she puts her mind to it, she can be an A student. When Erika’s Dad falls gravely ill, however, she senses that something was off in her life. For the first time in her life, Erika’s confidence in an easy future took a sobering blow. For the first time, she feels the need to *sustain her talents* with practical skills.

Chapter 14: How to Sustain Your Talent – “Talent is cheaper than table salt. What separates the talented individual from the successful one is a lot of hard work.” Stephen King.

Shawn is the child of a single father. His father never finished high school and is a custodian at Shawn’s school. Shawn is determined to turn his seething embarrassment and shame into his vision of success. He vows to be a great lawyer one day—no matter what. Shawn has always been good at public speaking, and ever since he’s joined the debate club at his school, he realizes that doors keep opening for him. So, he *sustains his talent* with skills and rises up the ranks, all to achieve his big dream.

Checklist for how to sustain your talent with skills.

S – Shrink your dream.

- What’s my big dream?
- Does it translate into daily successes?

U – Unpack your plan.

- What's my game plan for tomorrow?

R – Reach out to pros.

- Have I reached out to professionals who can help me?
- How do I use their advice?

P – Prioritize your time.

- Have I prioritized my time based on my plan?

R- Revise your plans.

- Am I revising my plans in the face of new challenges?

I – Improve your Identity

- How do I improve my identity so that I can grow as a person?

S – Sustain your talent

- Have I identified skills I need to work on to sustain my talent?
- How will those skills sustain my talent?
- How will I go about acquiring those skills?

Which Principle do I need to strengthen?

(Wisdom ✓, self-mastery ✓, courage ✓, and fairness ✓)

- **FAQs about how to sustain your talent.**

Step 8 of *SURPRISES!* – Evaluate Your Progress

Chapter 15: The Path of Progress: “If you’re walking down the right path and you’re willing to keep walking, eventually you’ll make progress.” – Barack Obama

Ariel is “Superman” in a boy’s body. At 6’2, 210 lbs., Ariel can easily be mistaken for a gym teacher. However, his boyish face always gives him away. When Ariel meets Shana, a body

builder who transferred from a private school, he noticed the value of *evaluating your progress*.

What Shana lacks in size, she makes up for in grit, and during gym class, she often outworks

Ariel because she is disciplined and focused. Before long, Ariel realizes that if he is to become a professional football player, he must learn to evaluate his progress like Shana does.

Chapter 16: How to Evaluate Your Progress - “Life gives you plenty of time to do whatever you want to do if you stay in the present moment.” Deepak Chopra

Shana wants to be a professional bodybuilder. Inspired by strong women like Yeon Woo Jhi,

Sophie Avebrink, and Dana Linn Bailey, Shana is determined to be just as strong as those

women or even stronger. Because of her goal, Shana *evaluates her progress weekly and monthly*.

Today, Shana has reached a tremendous milestone; at long last, at just 5’6, 120lbs., Shana squatted 300lbs. She already set her eyes on her new milestone. Nothing can stop her now.

Checklist for how to evaluate your progress.

S - Shrink your dream.

- Did I shrink my big dream into success today?

U – Unpack your plans.

- Does my plan inform what I do tomorrow?

R - Reach out to pros.

- Have I reached out to mentors and considered their advice?

P - Prioritize your time.

- Have I prioritized my time to achieve my dream?

R - Revise your plan.

- Am I revising my plan in the face of challenges?

I - Improve your identity.

- Have I improved my identity in order to achieve my goal?

S - Sustain your talent

- Am I sustaining my talents with beneficial skills?

E - Evaluate your Progress

- Am I evaluating my progress in relation to my goal?
- How can I evaluate my progress?
- Which part of the SURPRISE process do I need to revisit?

Which Principle do I need to strengthen?

(Wisdom ✓, self-mastery ✓, courage ✓, and fairness ✓)

- **FAQs about how to evaluate your progress.**

Step 9 of SURPRISES! You Did It!

Chapter 17: How to Surprise Yourself Again: “Never tell people how to do things. Tell them what to do and they will surprise you with their ingenuity.” – George S. Patton

The final S in *Surprises!* is for String. String your successes together until you reach your big dream. Success is as simple as that. The tips work because when you follow them you improve yourself. you strengthen your abilities and journey closer to your big dream. Now that you know the steps that lead to lasting success, all you have to do is fill up your tank and go for the ride.

Chapter 18: Final Words - “Surprise is the greatest gift which life can grant us.” – Boris Pasternak

As promised, I have shown you that success is not as dramatic or mysterious as it may first appear. With four tested, high-performance principles: wisdom, self-mastery, courage, and

fairness, you can turn your life into an amazing muscle car zooming down the road of great achievements.

As we defined them earlier:

- **Wisdom** helps you make helpful decisions based on the choices available to you.
- **Courage** helps you act on what must be done.
- **Fairness** (you might know it as karma) helps you receive the exact benefits of your efforts.
- **Self-mastery** helps you build yourself into a solid, unflappable person.

All that's left for you to do now is to rev your engine, and—flash!

Introduction

Introduction

“Success is steady progress toward one’s personal goals.” Jim Rohn

I saw a picture of Vincent on the news, and I couldn’t believe my eyes. Even though all his former teachers and I had seen it coming, I was surprised by how sudden and surreal it seemed that the boy who once sat in my English class had just announced his candidacy for US Congress.

Then there was Tricia, whom I had brunch with last month. Tricia is a former student who was starting her first year at Harvard Law School that coming fall. We ate sweet potato fries and reminisced about her years at Valley. “Wow,” she said, dunking her fries in her yogurt & maple dipping sauce. “Can you believe it? Doug’s a dentist now!”

Doug was Tricia’s peer-mentor at Valley, and he recently graduated from Rutgers School of Dental Medicine. As I processed these former students’ journeys, I ate my fries smiling. This was indeed the season for reaping. Each of them had made steady progress toward their dreams, and no matter what lies ahead now, they have learned this simple truth about success: success is the period at the end of a sentence you write about your life. With each sentence, you write your inspiring story.

I have written *Surprises!* because I spent 17 years studying successful people, watching them in action, especially in the classroom, and researching the science behind individual achievements. When you follow the tips in this book you will discover that success is surprisingly practical. You’ll find that the tips in *Surprises!* work like a GPS. So, to achieve your dream, you need your two important coordinates: your starting point and, of course, your big

dream. As obvious as this might seem, you'd be amazed how many kids spend their lives having no idea where they are or where they wish to go.

Where are you on your personal journey to success?

- 1) Have you ever wished you did well at school?
 - a. Yes
 - b. Not sure
 - c. No

- 2) Have you ever wished you had friends you could trust?
 - a. Yes
 - b. Not sure
 - c. No

- 3) Have you ever wished you were happy with yourself?
 - a. Yes
 - b. Not sure
 - c. No

Here are Your Starting Point Coordinates

- For each A you select, give yourself 3 points.
- For each B you select, give yourself 2 points.
- For each C you select, give yourself 1 point.

Add the total of your score and write it here. _____

What does your score mean? Also, how can *Surprises!* help you set your destination?

- If you score between **7 to 9 points**, then *Surprises!* will help you make steady progress towards your dream.
- If you score between **4 to 6 points**, then this book will help you set and reach great goals.
- If you score **3 points**, this book will show you how accomplished you can choose to be.

No matter your score, the tips in *Surprises!* will drive you toward great accomplishments. And now that you know where you stand, let's find out where you wish to go and follow the tips that will take you there.

Are you ready?

Let's go for a ride!

“Good luck is when opportunity meets preparation, while bad luck is when lack of preparation meets reality.” Eliyahu Goldratt

The Girl Who Made the Thrilling Shot

You have certainly experienced the excitement of achieving a hard-earned goal. Unless you have a physical disability, I'm willing to bet that you know how to tie your shoes. Guess what! Once upon a time, that was a mighty achievement for all of us.

You have felt the thrill of saying I DID IT! But, just in case you forgot, or in the rare case that you have never experienced that thrilling feeling, take a moment to picture the following scenario in slow motion.

A girl—let's name her Jane—heaves a basketball over a brick wall and, as the ball sails in the air, Jane holds her breath. The ball plunges thirty feet onto a parking lot below, bounces off the pavement, rebounds, then sails toward a basketball hoop a few yards from where Jane stands. The ball glides into the basket making that satisfying sound of athletic success—swish! Pleased with herself, Jane smiles.

She did it!

Some might chalk Jane's shot to mere luck, but I know better. Likewise, by the time you finish with this book, you will be able to use the tips in the book to create and make your own amazing shot. You will know how to make your good luck shot, just like Jane, just like Vincent and Tricia and Doug did. Luck, after all, is a matter of preparation.

Preparation builds confidence, which is the key to unlock the doors of success. You might be surprised to learn that being really good at something does not mean you're good at turning it into lasting success. Without the ability to prepare yourself for opportunities, you might feel that life is simply unfair. But, like George Eliot once said, you have to take advantage [of opportunities] to get advantage in the world⁴. Thankfully, this book gives you tips on how to take advantage of opportunities. Whether you're at school or with your friends, you'll be able to make amazing shots.

Confucius once said that “success depends upon previous preparation, and without such preparation there is sure to be failure.” When you consider Vincent, who is now running for Congress, Tricia who is now starting Harvard Law School, Doug who is now a dentist, you can see wisdom in Confucius's words.

You're no different from those kids, and while they all have succeeded, they did not all score a 9 on the life quiz you took earlier. And just in case you might think it's just luck, you will meet other kids in *Surprises!*—kids like Priya, Charlotte, Gerard, Hector, Elsie, Edson, Ramon, Carol, Shaniqua, Manuel, Mary Luz, Greg, Erika, Shawn, Ariel, and Shana—who will show you how the tips you will learn here will guide you toward your big dreams.

Let's go make some friends.

⁴ The actual quote is: “It's them that take advantage that get advantage i' this world.” The Harper book of Quotations, 1993. Pp3.

Where Are We Heading?

Would you take a shot that seems impossible to make? For example, would you fling a ping pong ball over a wall, watch it ricochet against the top of a backboard, and expect it to float through space into a wastebasket propped on the moon?

Impossible? It all depends.

If you have advanced knowledge in physics and calculus, and have a team of engineers with knowledge of propulsion and access to nanotechnology; if you have the backing of appropriate authorities, if all those people with different specialties and skills work on that shot, that shot might be incredibly difficult, but not impossible. So, What's my point? The world you live in is prepared to make your dream come true, but are you prepared to dream?

Being prepared to achieve your dream requires that you broaden what you think is possible. If you scored a 3 on your life quiz earlier, this lesson applies especially for you.

It's no surprise that success requires preparation, but you might be surprised by how simple the steps are to prepare yourself for success. No matter what you think success is, you just need to know your starting point. For your end goal—well, sometimes, the people you meet along the way can point you in the right direction.

Lesson: Preparation makes the impossible possible.

A 2300-Year-Old Wolf Named Gumption

When you study successful people, you find that there's a moment when they decide that they will be good enough at something to succeed at it. That starting point—often it's a gradual realization--soon encourages those people to live a purposeful life. Like they're on a mission.

Vincent's starting point was when he decided that he would get out of Valley where his grandmother worked as a lunch monitor. Tricia's was when she realized that her academic identity can be strong enough to get her into an Ivy league school. Doug didn't know exactly what he wanted to be, but he did find science—specifically, biology—interesting. So, he went for it.

Then come the people who help you along the way (yes, successful people need support writing their success stories). Between your starting point and your dream, there are helpers, lots of them who, if you let them, can guide you toward your dreams. Likewise, if you let them, there are those who will distract you too.

Here's what I mean by if you let them. Long time ago, there was an old Cherokee sitting by a fire and sharing life lessons with his grandson. The old Cherokee tells the boy that inside every person are two hungry wolves. One wolf is good, and the other is bad, and so are locked in a vicious battle with each other.

Intrigued, the boy asks the old Cherokee, "Which wolf will win the battle?" The old man lifts his gaze from the dancing fire and looks at the boy. "The one you feed."

If you nourish your dream, you will succeed. Nobody but you must decide which wolf you feed. That means you'll have to decide whose help you'll seek, whose advice to take. You'll have to decide which mood to feed, which feeling to feed. In other words, for you to achieve

success, you must be able to recognize your two wolves, who I will name Gumption and Indolence.

You need courage, confidence and mutual trust to feed any wild wolf, including the ones within you. But if you can learn from Vincent, Tricia, Doug, and all the kids *Surprises!* I've worked with over the years, you will recognize Gumption and know how to feed it.

The story of the old Cherokee illustrates the four principles that I mentioned earlier: *Wisdom*, *courage*, *self-mastery*, and *fairness*. Here's how. You need **wisdom** to make the right choice out of the options presented to you: Gumption or Indolence. You need **courage** to act on that choice (feed a wild wolf). You also need **self-mastery** because it's one thing to feed a wild wolf just once, but it's quite another to do it consistently, especially when you don't want to do it. Lastly, the fittest—best prepared wolf usually wins. That's natural justice. **Fairness**.

For more than 2,300 years, those four principles have empowered people—emperors, engineers, doctors, politicians, entrepreneurs, teachers, and soldiers to achieve success. These four principles act like the four wheels of a supercar, providing great traction and control as you drive yourself toward your goals. No matter the road you take or the weather condition, you are in control.

I will explain the power of each principle later, but for now understand that they are a surefire way to accomplish your dream. Whether or not you know exactly where you want to go, you'll head in the general direction of success. Along the way, you'll meet people who can help you see how you can shoot for the moon.

Buckle up, kid.

A Map of Your Road to Success

To an engineer, a surprise represents a roadmap, revealing what she doesn't know while guiding her toward a goal. In a sense, *Surprises!* is your roadmap, giving you control over your life. By developing your skills and confidence, you will gather around you the team you need to help you build your muscle car to power yourself through the road to success.

Before long, you will be a pro at focusing on what you can control (like the steering wheel, the car's maintenance, your speed, etc.), and maneuver around what is beyond your control (like the road conditions, the weather, crazy drivers, road kills, broken trees, etc.) But remember, no matter how powerful the engine, without four proper tires, no great car will do you any good.

Did you know that just one tire for a Bugatti costs on average, \$4,000? That's how important the tires of a 3-million-dollar supercar are to its owner—the price of twenty pairs of Air Jordan 9 Retros. Of course, this book is not about tires, or supercars. *Surprises!* is about how to feed Gumption, the wolf inside you that leads to success.

Your Gumption grows as you follow each letter in Surprise, and like the navigation system in a car, the letters take you from start to finish. Thus, your first step toward success is:

S - Shrink Your dream.

No matter how big your dream may be, you must shrink it into a 24-hour period. Within that time frame, you must do something that takes you one step closer to your great dream. Even if you don't have a clear big dream, each day is still an opportunity to set a goal for yourself that can prepare you for greater success tomorrow. For example, Vincent wanted to get out of Valley, so each day, he applied himself as best as he could to make that dream come true. Even without a

big dream, you must learn to be successful today simply because you wish to be successful tomorrow.

Once you shrink your big dream into a day, you can now proceed to step two.

U – Unveil Your Plan.

Just because you plan to do something doesn't mean that when the time comes you will remember to do it. Why do you think celebrities and successful people pay assistants to help them keep track of what must be done each day? Likewise, you must set daily reminders for yourself to act on your plan, and you should involve those close to you so they can hold you accountable as well. This step has two benefits: 1) It helps you develop the habit of scheduling important things so that you'll remember them and 2) it helps you make friends with people who also want to achieve success.

R – Reach Out to Pros.

Like in the case of the ping pong moon shot, you won't always know how to achieve your big dreams. So, sometimes you will have to reach out to professionals who have already achieved similar dreams. Professionals such as coaches, teachers, mentors, actors, etc. are people earning a living in the fields you might be interested in or are curious about. Today, thanks to social media, you have great opportunities to learn from people you might otherwise not have direct access to. You must take advantage of those opportunities by learning as much as you can from them.

P – Prioritize Your Action.

If you answered (b. or c.) for any of the three questions on your life quiz, this strategy concerns you especially. Some people call this step “time management”, but it’s best to think of it as “priority management⁵”. Priority management means that at any given time during the day your dream (not your feelings, not your mood, not friends, not distractions, not frustrations)—your dream determines your action. Many kids with big dreams don’t match their action with their dreams. Too often, they feed Indolence and say to themselves, “I’ll feed Surprise later.” Remember, it’s completely up to you what you do with your time. But, unless you choose to benefit from each day, no matter what you do, each day will come and go to the benefit of other people. But, once you can prioritize your actions based on your dreams, you can proceed to step five.

R – Revise Your Plans.

As you know, life is full of surprises. The road conditions aren’t always optimal. The weather is not always sunny. So, you need to know how to revise your plans according to what life puts on your path. As you grow in wisdom, courage, and self-mastery, you will find that your dreams become clearer, which means revise your plans. For example, Doug initially wanted to be a doctor. However, as he continued on his road to success, he learned about dentistry and revised his plans. He still became a doctor, but now he’s a doctor for teeth. In this book, I’ll teach you how to use wisdom, self-mastery, courage, and fairness, to revise your plans.

⁵ John C. Maxwell coined the term

I – Improve your Identity.

Some social scientists have argued that we are the average of *all* the people we surround ourselves with.⁶ That means that you are the average of your friends, your parents, your siblings, your teachers, the folks you follow on social media, the ones who follow you, the people in history who inspire you—all of them. Imagine that! That means that on your road to your dream, you will meet many people who will play a significant part in your success. Those people will help you improve your identity. It's called fairness—one of the four principles that promote success. If you improve your identity—strengthening your talents, your skills, your relationships, then society rewards that success. You have managed to cross the bridge connecting your life with your family and your life with your coaches, teachers and mentors; you have improved your identity.

S – Sustain Your Talent.

Talent alone doesn't guarantee success. That's why all the greats sustain their talent with skills. For example, Tricia sustained her talent with skills, including social ones, and now she's attending Harvard Law School. In fact, education represents one of the best training grounds for success you can imagine. School doesn't just provide you with opportunities to sustain your mental talents, it helps you sustain your athletic talents too. It also provides you with years of opportunity to improve your character, your willpower, and your drive. In the long run, those opportunities take you further than talent alone. After all, on your road to success, you will meet

⁶ Read David Burke's "You are Not the Average of the Five People You Surround Yourself With."

kids who are just as talented as you (and sometimes more talented than you). But if you sustain your talent with goal-oriented skills, you will succeed.

E – Evaluate Your Progress.

Our basketball player, Jane, evaluated her progress until she made *her* thrilling shot. Sadly, kids (and adults) often give up on their dreams because they don't evaluate their progress. More often than not, they feed Indolence rather than Surprise and wonder why they give up where others push forward. Not you! If you follow the tips in this book, you will find this final step rewarding because you will see progress. When you shoot your shot, and it sails over the backboard, the *Surprises!* tips will tell you to revise your plans. When your next attempt ricochets off the top of the backboard, you'll grow confident that your adjustments take you one step closer to your dream shot. And then you hear it—Swish! The thrill of success!

YOU DID IT!

The Final “S” stands String. String your successes until you achieve your dream. To do that, you simply repeat the Surprises tip.

On Your Mark!

No matter how good a racecar driver you are, your success depends on a number of factors: your preparation, your team, your car, and the four tires that support everything. The steps in this book cover all the bases.

Get Set!

The choice is yours. You're in the driving seat. Whatever you dream of achieving—whether you're sure of it or whether it's just a feeling, this book will equip you with all you need to master both the car and the driver at the wheel.

Ready for the greatest ride of your life?

Rev your engine!

Go!

Chapter 1

Step 1 of *Surprises!* – Shrink Your Dream.

Chapter 1 – The Power of a Dream

“When it becomes obvious that the goals cannot be reached, don’t adjust the goals, adjust the action steps.” Confucius

What would you do with \$153?

If you work or earn an allowance, calculate how long you would need to work to earn \$153. For the sake of comparison, ask your parents how many hours they would need to work to make \$153. If they ask you why, tell them you’re doing research. If they ask you what kind of research you’re doing, tell them you’re researching what it will cost you to shrink your dream.

What does it cost to shrink a dream?

Ten years ago, I had a student in my class I’ll name Priya. She was a pint-size princess with enough spunk to fire up a room. Everyone liked Priya, and she knew just how to make a grand entrance in class.

Priya’s dream was to one day be the CEO of her own company. She wanted to be a famous entrepreneur like her idol, Michael Jordan. I admired Priya’s big dream, especially because people in Priya’s community hunger for this kind of success story. Priya’s daring dream compelled me to do whatever I could to point her in the right direction.

It didn’t take me long to notice a pattern in Priya’s routines. Every two weeks, she’d march into class late wearing a brand-new pair of Jordan kicks. Everyone would admire them, and thus, Priya accentuated her grand entrance. Pleased with the excitement her new kicks caused, she’d take her seat, and class would resume.

Because of her size, Priya wore little boys' sneakers, which cost her about \$150 on average. Every two weeks, the class would buzz in anticipation of her grand entrance. Kids would predict the color of the new kicks, or their style; some would argue, but they would have comments and compliments handy for when the princess made her airy entry.

When I asked Priya why she only wore Jordans, she told me that's the kind of success she will enjoy one day. To her, \$150 is just about the cost of a brand-new pair of Jordan shoes. With a portion of the babysitting money she makes by-weekly, she treats herself with her idol's shoes to the delight of her friends.

But how much money is Priya investing into her desire to become a CEO? How much does that dream cost?

Does Time Have Anything to Do with It?

Recently, I came across an explanation of "time" that taught me the value of a day—I only wish I had read the quote ten years ago when Priya was my student. The statement is by a physicist named Carlos Rovelli, and he said that time "is like holding a snowflake in your hands: gradually, as you study it, it melts between your fingers and vanishes⁷."

Being a physicist, Rovelli studies (among other phenomena in the universe) time. He explains that the world you and I see is really "a collection of events,⁸" which basically means a bunch of things happening. For example, Priya's grand entrance every two weeks is actually a collection of events that appears to us as time. Let me explain.

Best case scenario:

⁷ Carlos Rovelli, *The Order of Time*, 3.

⁸ Carlos Rovelli, *The Order of Time*, 98.

Wearing a brand-new pair of Jordan sneakers means that Priya worked that week. It means that she paid. It also means that she went shopping. The collection of these events, which we simply call “time,” produced a brand-new pair of Jordan sneakers on Priya’s feet. For about \$150, Priya shrank her dream of wearing new Jordan sneakers into specific, daily actions. If Priya’s big dream is to waltz into class every two-weeks with brand-new Jordan kicks, then she is a shining success. She put in the work, she took the time, and her efforts are rewarded.

But what about her other dream?

How Do You Shrink Your CEO Dream?

What collection of events has led Priya to achieving *that* goal? We see biweekly proof of her success all too clearly when it comes to Jordan sneakers. However, where is the proof of her CEO dream? Did she also shrink *that* dream into daily events? Unless she does, she will end up investing zilch—no time or money—on *that* goal.

Social scientists have argued that if you want to achieve a long-term dream, you must have “time perspective”,⁹ which can help you make better, wiser decisions. Time perspective means you understand time in such a way that you organize your day around your dream. If you act like you have all the time in the world, you don’t see time like a snowflake melting on your fingertip. You don’t see the collection of events you spend to get the thing you want.

Do you see now the value of \$150? Don’t worry if you’re still not sure. You’re coming along.

⁹ Eskritt, “Does Future-Oriented Thinking Predict Adolescent Decision making?”164.

Akiva, The Ninth Grade CEO

Recent research into how kids' brains develop reveals that kids have more power over their brain than previously imagined. Through conscious behavior and habits, your brain will recognize patterns which, in turn, help you influence your future¹⁰. In other words, routine and habits are shortcuts¹¹ your brain takes to make your life easier. So, if you train your brain to create success-oriented shortcuts, you give yourself the best chance to succeed in the future.

Shrinking your big dreams into daily actions is one sure way to make your dream come true in the future. Before each day melts away on your fingertips, you do something that gets you one step closer to your dream. Soon, success-oriented behavior is hardwired into your brain and becomes a habit. Day-by-day, you pile up success, and soon you've built a majestic mountain of achievements. Michael Jordan himself said it in 1994 explaining that he had "always set short-term goals. As I look back" he continued, "each one of the steps or successes led to the next one."

Dr. Hans Rosling, a professor of international health, wrote *Factfulness* in which he explains that our action depends on our assumptions about the world. Too often, he argued, what we assume about the world is based not just on outdated information, but also on the fact that our brains is wired to focus mainly on extremes¹². In Priya's case, she acted on a "now or never" assumption of the world. Watching her go, you did not see anything in particular that drove her action, except buying Michael Jordan's sneakers. Nothing else about her would remind you of the man

¹⁰ *Teens and Decision Making: What Brain Science Reveals*

¹¹ Tom Cabot, *The Infographic Guide to Science*, 232.

¹² *Factfulness: Ten Reasons We're Wrong About the World—and Why Things are Better Than You Think*, 13-14.

she wishes to emulate. Her “today and someday” perspective of time was way off. She didn't realize that what you wish to accomplish “someday” depends on what you do “today”.

To save energy, our brain always wants to go on autopilot, so it uses shortcuts to turn almost any routine into a habit¹³. As a result, you become a creature “of habits, automatically repeating past behavior with little regard to current goals.”¹⁴ So, Priya spent money on new Jordan kicks without realizing that her long-term goal needed her to do things differently. Well, that’s where Akiva, my ninth grader CEO enters this story.

During the time that Priya was my student, I also taught at a yeshiva in the afternoon, and there I got to see a ninth grade CEO in action. Akiva was a shrewd ninth grader who borrowed \$1,000 from his dad so he could buy a fancy high-volume coffee maker. Just like Priya, Akiva saw school as an opportunity to achieve a goal, but unlike Priya, Akiva didn’t have a job. So, he borrowed the money from his dad.

Akiva’s plan was simple: he intended to sell coffee to everyone in school—the rabbis, us teachers, the students—and make enough money to pay his father back. The profit, he would reinvest into his business. Before the school year ended, Akiva not only had enough money to pay his dad back and had money to reinvest into his business. When I asked him what he wanted to do in the future, he wasn’t sure. “I’m Yirtzeh HaShem, something in business,” he said.

Like Michael Jordan, everyone at the Yeshiva--the rabbis, the secular teachers, the students--was amazed by Akiva’s unmistakable gumption. The moment you meet him, you know what he’s all about. You see his single-minded goal and his passion.

¹³ Charles Duhigg, *The Power of Habit: Why We do What We do in Life and Business*, 17, 18.

¹⁴ Charles Duhigg, *The Power of Habit: Why We do What We do in Life and Business* 187.

I hope you see why Akiva has a better understanding of the relationship between “today and someday.” Every day, he shrinks his dream and shapes his collection of events into tangible success. Every day, his brain created patterns similar to a businessperson, which causes him to act like he meant business. He took inventory of his coffee supplies; he set the price of his cup of coffee; he sold coffee Monday to Friday.

Lesson: A CEO’s brain sees much further than just two weeks.

Who’s Improving their CEO Identity? (More on that in Chapter 11)

Priya invested enough time to turn her efforts into a brand-new pair of Michael Jordan sneakers. And she regularly succeeded. Akiva invested enough time to turn his efforts into a business. He too regularly succeeded. Soon, their brains went on autopilot, establishing fixed patterns of behavior that caused them to act naturally toward their goal. The only difference between Priya and the ninth grader is the dream that each of them shrank into a day. The reason for that difference is “time perspective.”

Back to the \$153 Question. It was all about time perspective. If your parents could afford to put \$153 aside for you every day from the day you are born to the day you turn eighteen years old, you would be an 18-year-old millionaire. Without interest, that money would have grown to \$1,005,210 exactly.

On your eighteenth birthday, you’d have your first million, but you’d still have nowhere near enough money to buy a Bugatti.

Reflection:

I remember learning how to ride a motorcycle when I was in my twenties. I took the motorcycle course, practiced on my friend's 400CC lime-green Yamaha, then took the test and passed it. Whatever the reason, I never rode a bike since. It's been close to twenty years since I got my license, so, I'm pretty sure that my knowledge and skills have now eroded. If I ever wish to ride a motorcycle again, I will need to relearn everything again.

Where do you go from here? Well, that's your \$153 question. Your answer will depend on your understanding of time perspective. You can choose to file what you've learned in this chapter for when a better opportunity presents itself, or you can apply it now. That is completely in your control.

If you choose to use this knowledge now, complete the following activities designed to help you shrink your dream into daily actions.

What's your big dream?

- 1) If you had to choose, which of the two kids, Priya or Akiva, gave themselves the best chance at becoming a wealthy CEO? _____
- 2) Explain three collections of events that convinced you that that kid has given himself or herself the best opportunity to achieve their dream?

Event 1:

Event 2:

Event 3:

What about you?

- 1) What is one future goal you have, something you would like to accomplish that will take more than two weeks to achieve? (If nothing comes to mind, remember that school is a good nursery for big dreams. So, you can set a goal for something you can achieve during school)

2) How can you shrink that dream into something you can do today?

FAQs

Q. How do I know if I have a good dream?

A. A good dream gives you 2 opportunities: 1) Opportunity to improve your identity 2) Opportunity to evaluate your efforts toward that dream by shrinking it into a day.

Q. Is it ok to change your dream?

A. The bigger your dream, the more goal setting for that dream becomes a balancing act. You'll need to balance your skills and talent with time and opportunities needed to achieve your dream. Sometimes you adjust your dream not because you lack the skills to accomplish it, but because you didn't take the opportunities that would have taken you there.

Q. What missed opportunities can cause us to miss our dream?

A. When you shrink your goal, you give yourself opportunities, and, most importantly, you prepare yourself for the ones that are unexpected. But, unless you do something every day that contributes to your goal, you're leaving a lot of good luck on the table. As time keeps melting away, regardless of how you feel.

Q. So, is Confucius wrong then when he says, "Don't adjust the goal" (Opening Quote of the chapter)?

A. If you use the four principles in this book to set your goals, you won't need to adjust them. However, sometimes, we have big dreams but end up biting more than we can chew. In that sense, we might have to adjust our goals.

Chapter 2

Chapter 2 – How Exactly Do You Shrink a Dream?

“Never mistake activity for achievement.” John Wooden

“I almost dropped the baby!” Charlotte said in disbelief, and I couldn’t help smiling with admiration and pride. It was the three of us, Charlotte, her swimming coach, Michelle, and me, and we were having brunch at Panera, our usual spot. That day felt special; it was bright and unusually mild for February, and Charlotte was in town. She was completing her first year of medical school at Hofstra University and was regaling us with stories about her life as a medical student.

Looking at her you can tell she had not lost her swimmer’s physique. Her long arms and legs, her broad shoulders fuller now, but still strong. Her face is still lively, her eyes, still curious and caring. She had not changed much since she was in my English 12 AP class so many years ago. Michelle and I cannot conceal our confidence in her future. Like a proud parent, I was grateful that life was kind to me and to the baby which Charlotte, as she delivered it, almost dropped.

Today, Charlotte is fulfilling one of her big dreams, and I am relatively confident that her tomorrow will be as bright as today. In many ways, shrinking your big dream means you have time perspective. You see it like it really is, a baby being born—delicate and powerless, dependent on the sure hands of a caregiver to catch it when it pops out of the womb.

Even so, many more caring people will need to nurture it for it to survive. Without time perspective, you dream your big dream as if it’s fully grown and will take care of itself. “When I grow up,” you say to yourself “I’ll be...” But you and your dream are both young. One of you will need to grow up first.

How did Charlotte Shrink Her Dreams?

In high school, Charlotte was light and laughter. She was the spirit of a classroom, always finding ways to make her school experience fun. She was captain of the swimming team, which meant practicing at the nearby college from 5:00am to 6:30am every day. Then, she'd get to school at 7:20am for my first period class that started at 7:42am.

Charlotte's dream was to attend NYU School of Medicine and become a doctor. Her older sister had graduated from Cornell with a degree in Biological Engineering, and Charlotte wanted to follow in her sister's footsteps. Ever indefatigable, after a shoulder injury derailed her future in swimming, Charlotte joined the cheerleading team to balance her school life with sports. During her high school years, Charlotte was also class treasurer and president of Key Club. Do you see the CEO brain working? Do you see the patterns of the entrepreneur mind emerging?

What's on Your Agenda Today?

Research shows that kids who have self-control have a greater chance to succeed in life¹⁵. Unknowingly, Charlotte developed that kind of self-mastery by using her school agenda. Her success was simple, she does today what her agenda says must be done to achieve her big dream. That habit continues even today, so much so that we all had to make sure our schedules were clear for us to have brunch.

The logic behind your agenda is simple: if it's important, then you fit it into your calendar for the appropriate day and time determined by its importance. Once you write it down,

¹⁵ Barbara C. Wallace. "Journal of Infant, Child, and Adolescent Psychotherapy, vol. 15, no 3, 2016, pp. 155-170.

you get it done. Isn't that the simplest definition of success—to accomplish something important that you set out in advance to accomplish?

Knowing that time melts on your fingertip¹⁶ means that the name of the game is opportunity. You have to take any opportunity you have to maximize what you get done in one day. That's what makes successful people successful—they accomplish in 24 hours what others might need 48 hours to finish. *And* they do it just as well as the others, if not better. Charlotte learned to make her school agenda work for her dream.

Your big dream demands at least one time slot in your agenda every day. To use the baby metaphor again, your dream needs a scheduled time to be fed, burped, changed. You need to schedule time to take it to the doctors for checkups, for it to get its shots; you need to put money aside for it for its future. Each of these activities has its own level of priority. Your school agenda is a great tool, therefore, to help you distinguish activities from achievements. It helps you live with a purpose. It drives you in the direction of your dream. (That's why successful people hire assistants to manage their busy agenda.)

How Do You Travel Back in Time?

Epictetus, an ancient philosopher, once said, "Getting distracted by trifles is the easiest thing in the world." He advised his students not to allow "diversion and amusement . . . to override your true purpose¹⁷." If you think about it, by saying "when I grow up," you've set aside a time in your head when you expect to achieve your dream. But time perspective helps you see that time much clearer because your brain continuously sets patterns of success for you.

¹⁶ See Chapter 2

¹⁷ Manual for Living: A Little Book of Wisdom, 21.

Charlotte's "when I grow up" time is now set at 1:30pm, on the 18th of May 2028, when she will graduate medical school. Four years ago, it was the summer she graduated college. Four years before that, it was the summer she graduated from Valley. In many ways, those days are no different than today, as the three of us sit together enjoying oatmeal cookies and hot chocolate at Panera Bread.

You have the power to challenge your brain and develop the skills you need to achieve your big dream¹⁸. By shrinking your future into today—into a 24-hour period—you can develop the time perspective to see your future clearly. Your growing dream feeds on the efforts you put forth today. In that sense, today is HUGE! Big enough to fit your biggest dreams in.

So, take out the fluff—the distractions, the drama, the moodiness, the laziness and care for your baby every day. You have 24 hours to make sure it is well cared for so it can live to see tomorrow.

Charlotte's CEO Dream

You can see parallels between Charlotte's and the 9th Grader's mindset. They both act like they're on a mission because they are. They did not have all the answers—who does? But by shrinking their big dream into manageable daily actions, they gave themselves the best opportunity to succeed.

Charlotte kept improving her good grades and kept creating opportunities for herself to enjoy school. She knew that to attend NYU medical school and become a doctor meant she had

¹⁸ Jay N. Giedd. "The Amazing Teen Brain," pp. 37.

to look like that person when colleges looked at her resume. She had to look like someone who would do everything in her power not to drop the baby she was assigned to deliver. And she did.

Lesson: To shrink your big dream effectively, you must write down a set time every day when you will do something specific for your dream.

Why a CEO Learns His Times Tables?

Some experts say that success is as predictable as 10,000 hours of self-improvement. They show that many successful people are not necessarily or the fastest or strongest. Instead, they invest about 10,000 hours developing master-level skills¹⁹ that strengthen their dreams. When scientists do the math, they find that many who achieved greatness did so when they reached about 10,000 hours of dedicated work.

Although time invested into your dream is not the only requirement (we'll discuss the others later), it is certainly a factor. So, what does that mean for you?

One way to think of it is that your dream needs about 10,000 hours to grow from a baby into a strong powerful reality. It means that your big dream will be as ready as possible 10,000 hours from now.

Let's say, for example, that you're 15-years-old and your dream is to play professional basketball when you grow up. In that case, if you improve your game for 5 hours a day, 5 days a week, you'll develop pro-level talent in 8 years, when you're 23-years-old. If your goal is to get drafted at 19, then you'd need to work on your game an average of 7 hours a day, every day. Either way, you would have hit 10,000 hours of self-improvement.

¹⁹ Malcolm Gladwell. *Outliers*, 39.

The same principle was true for Charlotte. She spent her 10,000 hours in school, from eighth grade to high school graduation. It means that through school, you, Charlotte, and every kid in the country have a built-in 10,000 hours window of opportunity to improve yourself for the sake of your dream. You can use those hours to enjoy random “activities”, or you can use them to enjoy purposeful “achievements.” The wolf you feed is completely in your control.

10,000 Hours of Purposeful Achievements

Until her shoulder injury, Charlotte was the swim team captain for three straight years. As such, she devoted those years to swim practices from 5:00 am to 6:30am. Even so, all four years in High School, Charlotte served as president of Key Club, which meant doing volunteer work in her community. As a senior, she served as class treasurer and joined the cheerleading squad. She did all this while maintaining a 92 GPA, graduating 10th in a class of 290 seniors.

Charlotte’s “business” was her education, so she made it her business to spend her 10,000 hours improving your school-related skills. Knowing that in four years she would have to “try out” for NYU’s School of Medicine, she spent her years in high school working on her academic game. In the end, she was *drafted* by Hofstra—they gave her more money to invest in her dream.

Lesson: A CEO’s time perspective is about 10,000 hours from today.

Activities vs. Achievement! Which Wolf will Win?

To make the best of your 10,000 hours in school (from elementary school and beyond) you need to develop a habit of achievement. To do that, you must work on yourself, especially on your self-efficacy. Psychologists define self-efficacy as “your belief in your ability to accomplish

specific tasks.²⁰” As you accomplish specific tasks, you build “self-confidence”, which means your belief in yourself grows because of prior results. In the end, your “self-esteem,” meaning your belief in your overall value as a human being, improves²¹ paving the way for future success.

The tips in *Surprises!* help you develop self-efficacy. They enable you to accomplish specific tasks to prepare you for your big dream. It means that you are now in the achievement game! You don’t *do* activities just to do them; you *set* your CEO times tables and then dedicate 10,000 hours to self-improve toward your dream. Every day, 24 hours is subtracted from those 10,000 hours no matter what.

Which Kid Are You?

If you’re reading this book, it means you’re interested in achieving success, not just in school but in everything you choose to do. So, reading this book is part of your 10,000 hours. However, *Surprises!* is not about reading, it’s about experiencing goal-setting successes that lead to your big dreams.

So, let’s look at the kids we’ve met so far and what they did.

First, we met Priya. She was very successful at buying her idol’s sneakers. She developed self-efficacy by making sure she held onto her job. She grew in self-confidence each time she got a new pair of Jordan sneakers. Her self-esteem feeds on the comments and compliments generated by her kicks. Her big dream is to become the CEO of her own company and be as

²⁰ Eric Ravenscraft. “Practical Ways to Improve Your Confidence and Why You Should.” The New York Times, June 3, 2019. Accessed June 6, 2019.

²¹ Ibid

powerful as her idol, Michael Jordan. However, it's not clear how she's invested her 10,000 hours toward that dream²².

Wisdom

Let's see how Priya scores on the first of the four principles of success in this book: wisdom. According to the Oxford Online Dictionary, wisdom is defined as good judgment. In other words, wisdom is your ability to choose a good choice from the not-so-good ones.

Your wisdom score is like a credit score. Just like banks are more willing to lend money to people with a high credit score (because it means you're more responsible with your own money) if you have a high wisdom score, people will be more willing to invest their time in you because it means you're responsible with your own time.

Lesson: Take some of those 10,000 hours to work on your wisdom score.

Priya's Wisdom Score.

- Took advantage of her 10,000 hours in school to work on her dream to become a CEO. (Yes) (No ✓)
- Took advantage of her 10,000 hours to grow her income toward her dream to become a CEO. (Yes) (No ✓)

So, is Priya's Wisdom Score (High) or (Low)? _____

Akiva's Wisdom Score:

- Took advantage of his 10,000 hours in school to improve his skills as a businessman.
- (Yes ✓) (No)

²² (When Priya graduated high school, her GPA was in the low 70s. I last saw her working as a cashier at Lowe's. She had taken a year off from a community college, but she promised me she'll go back to school soon.)

- Took advantage of his 10,000 hours to grow his earnings for his dream of becoming a businessman. (Yes ✓) (No)

The Ninth Grader's Wisdom Score: (High) or (Low) _____

Charlotte's Wisdom Score:

- Took advantage of her 10,000 hours in school to work on her dream of becoming a doctor. (Yes ✓) (No)
- Took advantage of her 10,000 hours in school to improve her earnings for her dream of becoming a doctor. (Yes ✓) (No)

Her Wisdom Score: (High) or (Low) _____

How Do You Build Your Wisdom Score?

If you behave like Priya, your wisdom score may be low. But if you can learn from Akiva or Charlotte, you'll be amazed at how quickly your wisdom score will improve. Fortunately, improving your wisdom score is part of your 10,000 hours.

In *Factfulness*, Dr. Rosling explains what he dubs the “destiny instinct²³”, which sometimes causes us to have a wrong assessment of ourselves. The destiny instinct affects people who assume that they have the “stuff” within them that guarantees their future success. They believe that they are born to be great (or mediocre) no matter what we do. People who think that way score low on their wisdom scale because they don't understand the power of time perspective.

²³ Factfulness: *Ten Reasons We're Wrong About the World—and Why Things are Better Than You Think*, 167.

Did you know that time ticks slower at your feet than it does near your head? That it passes faster on top of a mountain than at sea level²⁴. It's a fact of physics, and physicists have measured the difference, but of course, our brain can't understand or believe it because we don't really *feel* the difference.

Even more mind-boggling is the fact that time passes more slowly for a person who is moving than for one who is staying still²⁵. Scientists had to consider these time-quirks to make sure our GPS work and can take us safely from point A to point B²⁶. Why do these facts about time matter to your success?

Just like it feels like time ticks the same for everyone, everywhere, it might *feel to you* like you have all the time in the world to get things done. But you'd be sadly mistaken. To take advantage of this quirky thing we call time, you need to act; you need to get moving toward your dream. You need to ground your big dream into 24-hour successes, and you'll surprise yourself how much success you can experience in a day.

By shrinking your dream and working on it every day, you give more time for it to grow strong. Soon, your wisdom scale goes so high that others will be willing to help you achieve your dream.

To-Do List:

- 1) Prioritize your day. Organize it based on what needs to get done first, second, third, etc.

²⁴ Carlo Rovelli. *The Order of Time*, 9-13.

²⁵ *Ibid*, 38-39

²⁶ Robert M. Hazen and James Trefil. *Science Matters: Achieving Scientific Literacy*. Pp. 211.

- 2) Select the first goal and set a time to complete it. Then do the same with the other achievements of the day.

Analysis:

How has Priya achieved success?

Record the qualities that Priya has that have contributed to her success.

How could Priya improve her wisdom score?

Why should Priya improve her wisdom score?

How has Charlotte achieved success?

Record the qualities that Charlotte has that have contributed to her success.

How could Charlotte improve her wisdom score?

Why should Charlotte improve her wisdom score?

So, what's your wisdom score?

How have you achieved success? (Is your success similar to Priya's, the 9th grader's, or Charlotte's?)

Record the qualities you have that have contributed to your success.

How could you improve your wisdom score?

Why should you improve your wisdom score?

Reflection

3) Explain one quality from one of the three kids that you would like to develop in yourself.

4) How do you think that quality will help you?

FAQs

Q. What if I still don't have a clear dream?

A. It's ok if you still don't have a big dream. Consider your choices. Since most kids your age will spend close to 8,000 hours in school (from 8th to 12th grades), it is wise to maximize those hours for overall self-improvement (academic, emotional, and physical).

Q. Can one of my dreams be about relationships?

A. Yes. A dream can be about improving your relationship with someone. In fact, we cover this in chapter 12 of the book. The key to improving a relationship, though, is about focusing on what you can control. (See chapter 12)

Q. How can I check whether or not I have a high wisdom scale?

A. Your self-efficacy is a strong indication of where you are on the wisdom scale. People with strong self-efficacy have a high wisdom score. Conversely, those with low self-efficacy have a low wisdom score.

Chapter 3

Step 2 of *Surprises!* – Unveil Your Plan.

Chapter 3 – The Promise of a Plan

“The discipline you learn and character you build from setting and achieving a goal can be more valuable than the achievement of the goal itself.” Bo Bennett

Is It Just a Trick?

Do a YouTube search of “Three Card Monte Magic Trick” and voila! —Hundreds of hits revealing how the trick works. You watch as those who have mastered the trick amaze the most skeptical audience. Magic tricks, however, can do more than amaze us. They can teach us a basic truth about all mysteries. Perspective. (Yes! That word, again.)

Every trick has two perspectives: the magician’s, and that of the audience. In other words, there’s the behind-the-scenes look, and the I-can’t-believe-this-just-happened look. As long as everyone is on the I-can’t-believe side of any mystery, it *remains* a mystery. It feels like an impossibility beyond your reach, like those stars whose light have taken millions of years to reach your eyes²⁷. But here’s the trick! As soon as just one person makes it behind the scenes of any mystery, then it becomes a trick that the rest of us can also figure out. Once you make your way behind the scenes, you are surprised by how simple the mystery was all along.

So, what’s the trick of success? Your perspective.

²⁷ Carlo Rovelli. *The Order of Time*, Pg.44

Success with A Shoestring

Can you unlearn how to tie your shoes? To a five-year-old, tying a shoe is a mystery. To you, it's just something you do to avoid looking incompetent in a job interview or to prevent a nasty injury on the basketball court. You do it without having to tuck your tongue in the corner of your mouth to focus and do it right—as a first grader might. You just do it. In other words, once you're made your way behind the scene of this little mystery, the trick is simple.

In 2016, a YouTube tutorial on how to teach kids to tie their shoes generated nearly 6 million views²⁸. That's because, for little kids, unless they have a mental or physical limitation preventing them from developing this skill, being able to tie their shoes is a “developmental milestone.” By the time you reach kindergarten, you should be able to demonstrate that level of independence²⁹.

What message would you be sending to your friends, your coach—anyone for that matter—if at your age you still don't know how to tie your shoes? That's how much success is strung on your shoestrings?

Tying Your Shoes Is an Event

Whatever motivated you to learn to tie your shoes, I am pretty sure it wasn't because you wanted to unravel the mysteries of a knot. Most likely, your parents pressured you to learn it so they wouldn't have to keep tying your shoes for you. Or maybe you wanted to prove to yourself that you're a big kid,³⁰ or maybe your friend or big sister kept saying you couldn't, and you

²⁸ Laren Matthews, “Almost 6 Million People Have Watched This Mom's Shoe Tying Tutorial”. Woman'sDay.com, 2016. Accessed 3/13/2020.

²⁹ Developmental milestone: Self-care (age 5). Babycenter.com. Accessed 3/13/2020.

³⁰ The “Real” Reasons Your Kid Can't Tie Yet! Missjaimeot.com. Accessed 3/13/2020.

decided to prove them wrong. The point is, you likely have forgotten the frustration you felt before you figured out the *trick*.

We all suffer the curse of success, forgetting the challenging journey that got us where we are. Even worse, you might even forget that success is as practical as learning to tie your shoes, a step in the direction of the next stage of your life. So, the kindergarten who figured out the trick of tying a shoe, succeeded.

You must also remember that success starts with desire. Something motivated you to figure it out. It could have been your parents, or your pride, or your desire to be a big kid—something set the spark. Case in point, your desire to succeed motivates you to shrink your big dream into daily achievable goals.

It all starts with desire, even one that is not exactly burning—yet.

Behind the Scene of Desire

Like all people, you have desires. In my case, as a kid, I was raised in one of the poorest countries in the world, so I felt early on the desire to help people improve their lives. To me, success comes in the shape of people I have helped achieve their dreams.

Growing up in Haiti, I learned that people could live happy lives with little wealth, and when, at the age of 15, I moved to New York, I noticed that people with a lot of wealth could live unhappy lives. Over time, I figured out the trick behind desire. You can use it to create wealth, but you can't use wealth to create desire. You've got to get it from within.

Money can't *make* you learn to tie your shoes, struggles can. And that's why we have desires. Desires³¹ gives you two perspectives: where you are, and where you want to be. At any stage in your life, you're in the audience. Your task is to make your way behind the scene to figure out the trick. That is why Napoleon Hill³² said "the starting point of all achievement is desire."

Unless your desire is self-improvement, your pursuit of success will lead to disappointment. You will discover that despite your best efforts, you've fed the wrong wolf.³³

Research in behavioral science explains that kids understand the concept of desire long before they can grasp the concept of belief³⁴. In other words, your brain has evolved to want to achieve big dreams long before it can figure out how to do it. Your brain has evolved to see your better self, long before it can show you how to be that better self.

Of course, to achieve your big dream, you need your belief and your desires to work together. If you're an athlete, you can see why. To best achieve your dreams, you must take advantage of your inner desire to improve yourself. At the same time, you work on the skills so that you grow to believe that it's possible to play your sport at the highest level. If you're not an athlete, school is your practice-ground. The principle is the same.

Physics tells us that the light we see as a star has travelled millions of years to reach your eyes. Similarly, your present success is the glow of perhaps a thousand days. You are here today because of all that you did yesterday.

³¹ Google dictionary defines desire as "a strong feeling of wanting to have something or wishing for something to happen.

³² Napoleon Hill is the author of *Think and Grow Rich*, one of the 10 best-selling self-help books of all time.

³³ See Introduction, pg. 8

³⁴ Liu, David, et al. "Neural Correlates of Belief- and Desire-Reasoning." *Child Development*, vol. 80, no. 4, 2009, pp. 1170.

Part of developing self-mastery depends on understanding what motivates you. For example, some people are driven by what psychologists call “defensive pessimism³⁵”. So, their fear of failure pushes them toward success; they spend a lot of time and effort into a pursuit, for fear that they won’t succeed otherwise. Their motivation is “aversion,”³⁶ because they shy away from failure.

Then you have what psychologists call the “rage to master³⁷” type. In that case, you obsess over one thing and work on it until you become the best of the best. Thus, your motivation is “appetitive” because you feed off it to fuel you toward great achievement. Reminds you of athletes like Michael Jordan or Kobe Bryant, does it?

Which category do the kids you’ve met so far in *Surprises!* fall? What about you? What motivates you?

Your Readiness Is All³⁸!

It’s time to return to the 10,000-hour trick. There’s plenty of evidence that shows that people have achieved great success without coming anywhere near 10,000 hours of self-improvement³⁹. Researchers have also shown that 10,000 hours of practice alone does not guarantee that you will master what you practiced. So, now what?

³⁵ Phillip L. Ackerman, “Nonsense, common sense, and science of expert performance: Talent and individual differences.” *Intelligence*, 2014. Pp. 10.

³⁶ Phillip L. Ackerman, “Nonsense, common sense, and science of expert performance: Talent and individual differences.” *Intelligence*, 2014. Pp. 12.

³⁷ Phillip L. Ackerman, “Nonsense, common sense, and science of expert performance: Talent and individual differences.” *Intelligence*, 2014. Pp. 11.

³⁸ No Fear Shakespeare Hamlet. Act 5, Scene 2, Line 210, pp. 318.

³⁹ Phillip L. Ackerman, “Nonsense, common sense, and science of expert performance: Talent and individual differences.” *Intelligence*, 2014. Pp. 7.

Here's an example of what they mean. Say I decide today that I will be the greatest golfer the world has ever seen. Well, in that case, I have not given myself the best opportunity to achieve that dream. After all, I'm a 44-year-old guy with severe arthritis in his left shoulder and crippling bone spurs in his left ankle (No one could tell me I wasn't going to be the next Michael Jordan).

I'm the rage to master type, so that means that my desire to be the greatest golfer ever would drive me, rain or shine, to put my 10,000 hours of practice in. Best case scenario, I got the best training possible and now, 54-years-old, I still have the likes of Tiger Woods to compete against. By *that* time, Tiger would have had a zillion more hours of greatness under his belt. So much for my big dream!

But if my perspective is right, my goal would be to be the best golfer *I* could ever be. In that case, my 10,000 hours might catapult me to a level where I can compete against professional golfers and be seen by them as an amazing and inspiring golfer.

You have to strike while the iron is hot. Don't let arthritis cripple your fingers before you decide to learn to tie your shoes. Wisdom will tell you that right now is the *best* time to act on your dreams because 10,000 hours from tomorrow, might just not be enough.

When Is Now?

You can't hurt your future self by investing 10,000 hours on you. All you're doing is growing in self-mastery and courage, becoming thus a more successful person. If you see yourself as an athlete, your 10,000 hours is a bridge between your preteen years and your opportunity to turn pro (for some sports that's as early as 17 years of age).

If you are not an athlete, your 10,000 hours bridges together your seventh-grade year with your earliest opportunity to turn pro as a professional in the world, capable of living independent from your family. (That's just after you've earned your bachelor's degree). In both cases, you have about 10,000 hours to get yourself from the perspective of a spectator, to the great mind behind the scenes.

Physicist, Carlo Rovelli wrote a chapter entitled "The End of the Present"⁴⁰, in which he discusses the illusion we call "now." He explains that between the past and the future there is but "the expanded present"⁴¹, a combination of related events linking what happened earlier to what will happen later. When you see your 10,000 hours in that light, you see them like the light of the stars stretching from when you were a child to who you are now, and now, and now.

Like money, those hours come and go. Like money, you use them to make more time, or lose more time. Wisdom means you make more time in 24 hours for you to invest in your dream. That way, your dream has more time for it to grow. That's now.

Prepare Like a Novice

You can plan how you want your life to unfold, but don't waste your time expecting things to go your way. You might as well keep staring at the waves of the ocean and expect them to form your name. For that to ever happen, a lot of science and technology would have to go into it, and I don't even know if the technology exists yet.

⁴⁰ Carlo Rovelli, *The Order of Time*. Pg. 41

⁴¹ Carlo Rovelli, *The Order of Time*. Pg. 44

The trick to a good plan is that it reminds you about the “Law of Unintended Consequences”⁴². The law of unintended consequences tells you that you cannot always predict the consequences of what to do. You might think something will have a big result and upon doing it you find that in fact it produces no result at all. On the other hand, something you think will have no major result, turns out to have devastating consequences.

Lesson: A plan is not a solution. It’s a reminder that things can go south on you. So, you **Prepare Like A Novice**.

I’ll discuss planning in further detail in Chapter 5, but I need to explain the general purpose of planning here. The U.S. Army is, arguably, the most powerful army in the world, and yet they do not approach any challenge without planning. It respects the power of unintended consequences. Win or lose, there’s always unintended consequences. So, army generals come to every challenge like a novice and use as much intelligence as possible to prepare for it.

U.S. Army Colonel, Tom Kolditz once said: “You can lose the ability to execute [your] original plan, but you never lose the responsibility of executing the intent⁴³ [of the plan].” In other words, because of unintended consequences, you might not be able to execute your plan. But you are still responsible for accomplishing your mission. The same is true for you. Every day, you will have to deal with unintended consequences. You must adjust your perspective to achieve your dream.

⁴² Robert M. Hazen & James Trefil. *Science Matters: Achieving Scientific Literacy*. 327-329.

⁴³ Chip and Dan Heath. *Made to Stick: Why Some Ideas Survive and Others Die*. Pp. 26.

Practice the Trick to Success

You've heard people say practice makes perfect, but that adage tells us nothing about what you are *perfecting*. It's quite possible to spend 10,000 hours just being indolent, but how many professional loafers fuel your desire to succeed? As you may have realized by now, the trick to success is mastering self-control. *What* you practice makes a difference.

If you practice sometimes, commit to your dream sometimes, then, best-case scenario, you will succeed sometimes. It doesn't matter that you would prefer to succeed more than *sometimes*. That is what some people call karma, but in this book, I call it fairness. You can only be as good as what you keep doing.

You might remember that fairness is one of the four principles in this book (Wisdom, self-control, and courage are the other three). That means, for your supercar to ride smoothly, all the tires have to be reliable.

So, how you practice makes all the difference.

FAQs

Q. How do I know if I have a good plan?

A. Your plan is proof that you thought about how to get from where you are to where you want to go. It's good if it helps you achieve your goal. Otherwise, you need to investigate and determine why the plan failed and what you can do next time to anticipate the cause of that failure.

Q. What happens if you didn't get to achieve what you had planned to achieve that day?

A. First, you need to find the causes for why you didn't fulfill your plan. If a cause is beyond your control, then you plan for it for next time. If a cause is you, then it means you need to work on self-control. Sometimes, we ignore those things we have complete control over, only to focus on stuff we have some or no control over. That's a complete lack of perspective.

Q. What if I still don't know what I want to do to succeed in the future?

A. Think like an Olympian or like a sports team and focus on the "sport" you're playing. For most kids, your "sport" is education (social, emotional, intellectual, physical, psychological). So, school provides you with plenty of opportunities to excel in at least one of these areas (academics, artistic, athletic, or social).

Q. Is it all right to share my plan with others?

A. It's good to share your plans with people you trust. If they respect your plan, you should embrace and nurture those relationships. If they discourage you, keep them at a respectful distance. Prioritize your "now" around people who support your dreams.

Citations

- Ackerman, L. Phillip. "Nonsense, common sense, and science of expert performance: Talent and individual differences." *Intelligence*, 2014. pp. 7, 10 -12.
- Burke, David. "You are Not the Average of the Five People You Surround Yourself With." *Medium.com*. May 23, 2018. Accessed April 14, 2020.
- Cabot, Tom. *The Infographic Guide to Science*. Firefly Books. New York, 2016. pp. 232.
- "Developmental milestone: Self-care (age 5)". *Babycenter.com*. Accessed 3/13/2020.
- Duhigg, Charles. *The Power of Habit: Why We Do What We Do in Life and Business*. Random House Trade Paperbacks. New York, 2014. pp. 17, 18, 187.
- Eskritt, Michelle, Jesslyn Doucette and Lori Robitaille. "Does Future-Oriented Thinking Predict Adolescent Decision Making?" *The Journal of Genetic Psychology*, 175(2), pp. 164. 2014. ISSN: 0022-1325 print / 1940-0896 online.
- Giedd, N. Jay. "The Amazing Teen Brain." *Scientific American*, vol. 312, no. 6, 2015, pp 37.
- Gladwell, Malcolm. *Outliers: The Story of Success*. Back Bay Books, New York. 2010. pp. 39.
- Hamlet*. No Fear Shakespeare. SparkNotes. LLC, New York. 2003. pp. 318.
- The Harper Book of Quotations* 3rd Ed., Robert I. Fitzhenry, editor. HarperPerennial, New York. 1993.
- Hazen, Robert. M., James Trefil. *Science Matters: Achieving Scientific Literacy*. Anchor books, New York, 2009. pp 327-329.
- Heath, Chip & Dan Heath. *Made to Stick: Why Some Ideas Survive and Others Die*. Random House, New York. 2008. Pp 26
- Laren Matthews, "Almost 6 Million People Have Watched This Mom's Shoe Tying Tutorial". *Woman'sDay.com*, 2016. Accessed 3/13/2020.
- Lebell, Sharon. *Epictetus: A Manual for Living*. Harper One, New York. 1994. pp. 21

Lincoln. Whitehouse.gov. Accessed April 14, 2020.

Liu, David, et al. "Neural Correlates of Belief- and Desire-Reasoning." *Child Development*, vol. 80, no. 4, 2009, pp. 1170.

Ravenscraft, Eric. "Practical Ways to Improve Your Confidence (and Why You Should)". *The New York Times*, June 3, 2019. Accessed June 6, 2019.

"The 'Real' Reasons Your Kid Can't Tie Yet!" *Missjaimeot.com*. Accessed 3/13/2020.

Rosling, Hans. *Factfulness: Ten Reasons We're Wrong About the World—and Why Things Are Better Than You Think*. Flatiron Books, New York. 2018. pp. 13-14, 167.

Rovelli, Carlo. *The Order of Time*, Riverhead Books, New York. 2018. pp 3, 9-13, 41, 44, 98.

"Teens and Decision Making: What Brain science Reveals". Scholastic Inc. _____

Wallace, C. Barbara. "Journal of Infant, Child, and Adolescent Psychotherapy, vol. 15, no 3, 2016, pp. 155-170.

Sample Lessons

Name _____

Date _____

Sample Lesson for Introduction

Standards: RL.11-12.4, RL.11-12.1

- **CCLS:** Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful.
- Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

Learning Target: I can analyze complex text by using text-based evidence to answer questions.

Comprehension questions:

- 1) Explain how the author uses ethos in the first three paragraphs of the introduction.
- 2) Articulate the author's claim in the first two pages of the introduction.
- 3) What evidence does the author use to support his claim?
- 4) Using evidence from pages 3 to 5, explain how preparation promotes success?
- 5) How does the story of the old Cherokee (pages 6-7) help develop the author's argument?
- 6) Explain the effect of the analogy presented on page 7 of the introduction.

Reminisce(v.) to bring an image or idea from the past into the mind.

alumna (n.) a female graduate of former student of a particular school.

Homework: Select a well-known successful person and determine whether their success supports the steps summarized in the introduction of this book.

Name _____

Date _____

Sample Lesson for Chapter 1

Standards: RL.11-12. 4, RL.11-12.1

- **CCLS:** Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful.
- Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

Learning Target: I can analyze complex text by using text-based evidence to answer questions.

Comprehension questions:

- 1) Explain the author’s claim in chapter 1 of the book.
- 2) What evidence does the author use to support his claim?
- 3) Why is Priya unlikely to achieve her stated goal?
- 4) Compare Priya’s use of her time to the ninth grader. Which one uses time most effectively? Why?
- 5) What do scientists mean when they talk about “time perspective”? Why is “time perspective” relevant to your success?
- 6) Explain the effect of the metaphor that Rovelli uses to explain time.

Innate: (adj.) inborn or natural

Defiant: (adj.) full of or showing a willingness to resist or fight.

Homework: Identify a central claim in Chapter 1 and explain how the author develops the claim. What dominant rhetorical strategy does the author use to persuade his reader?

Name _____

Date _____

Sample Lesson for chapter 2

Standards: RL.11-12. 4, RL.11-12.1

- **CCLS:** Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful.
- Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

Learning Target: I can analyze complex text by using text-based evidence to answer questions.

Comprehension questions:

- 1) Explain the main difference between Charlotte and Priya. How might that difference shape their respective futures?
- 2) List the similarities between the two girls. What conclusions can you draw from your comparison?
- 3) According to the evidence presented in the chapter, why do adolescents have the power to challenge their brain?
- 4) How can we resolve the different conclusions drawn by scientists over the 10,000-hour rule?
- 5) Explain the effect of the opening statement in chapter 3. How does it contribute to the overall theme of the chapter?

Indefatigable (adj.): persisting tirelessly

Diversion (n.): distraction, something that provides amusement

Reflection Essay: What have you learned about yourself from reading chapters 1 and 2 of *Surprises!*? How can you apply the tips in the book for your own success?

Final Words

I am indebted to the inspiring professors at Lehman College who have guided and supported me on this intellectual journey. In particular, I would like to thank Professor Alborn for ensuring that my studies at Lehman have yielded substantive fruits. I am also grateful for Professor Sloan who nurtured my curiosity about the natural sciences, so much so that I have changed many aspects of my life in light of my understanding of science.

I am especially thankful for professor Ongley and Professor Carey, whose advice and suggestions have led me to philosophy, specifically Stoicism, which provides the philosophical basis of this book. Last, but certainly not least, I am eternally grateful for Professor Cleland, whose generosity, kindness, intelligence, and love for language have transformed this project from a waddling dream into a solid stand upon which our youth can dream.

Also, I cannot forget my friends in the MALS program. Our cohort started the journey together, and we encouraged and supported one another along the way. They, too, have helped me complete this project. In short, I am deeply grateful for their friendship, and this work bears witness to their love.