

# Eliminating malfunction in success



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**The individuality of success is often undervalued and seldom appreciated, even by ourselves. This appears to be mainly because of peer and societal pressure in a world principally focused on trivial definitions of success and obsession with hollow labels.**

**In reality, for all of us reading this article, having survived being omitted from the obituary columns in today's newspaper is a great success. And perhaps we need to start at this point to begin to take accurate measurement of how successful we currently are. Let us not forget that for some people daily survival is, in itself, success.**

**So an accurate assessment of where we really are now prior to dashing off in our thoughts, to where we might like to be, is a healthy place to commence.**

**A "GRATITUDE LIST" compiled of the enhancements in our lives that truly make us happy may even be a difficult thing for many of us to compile. It is easy for us to let the negatives crowd around us, inappropriately darkening our outlook on life. Consider initially some fundamental areas such as having our physical, mental and emotional needs met and assess how successful we are in these vital areas. Then we are in a position to determine where we are on our individual success scale.**

Comparisons with others are futile and yet are sadly rampant as we try to establish exactly who and where we are. Such associated thoughts are an automatic response in most people. These comparisons can make us vain or bitter and give us a distorted view of the sense of ourselves, so they are best avoided. So too is day-dreaming and the useless “if only” notions many of us are prone to. They simply allow ourselves to beat us up mentally and bring failure rather than success to our minds forefront.

### The Beginning

So how did it all begin for you? And before you jump to any conclusions NO! This is not “blame the parent’s week”. This is about trying to establish what messages you may have picked up as a child that you are still holding on to today, even though they may be well passed their “use by” date. These are the messages largely learned through your sensitivity to the people and places around you as you grew up, adapting to the world. And sadly not all people around you were positive and affirming as they struggle with their own historical issues and they will have had to live with that.

So whatever about them and their issues, how did you respond to what they said and did?

If you were told you were “useless! no good!, you’d never be anything!,” did you believe it?

Did you internalise these messages and use them as a template for to how you saw yourself in relation to others?

Do you still use those messages as your terms of reference today?

**Are those the messages that now keep you from being motivated about your goals and aspirations? Are they your saboteurs? What is it in me that allow my ideas around success to be so compromised?**

**These are some of the most difficult questions people need to answer prior to moving on.**

**Sure the older people around the child had a duty to emotionally encourage and nurture but some may have just plainly been unable to do so and the child suffered a psychologically trapped, helpless being wishing time away until they could fend for themselves. In the meantime they used the best survival techniques and coping skills they could muster to deal with their live as it was. Many compromised because they felt the environment was not safe. Some went very quiet so that they wouldn't upset things any further. Others screamed and roared but instead of being heard they were punished for expressing how they felt. And so began a cycle of internalising appropriate feelings through fear and anxiety around their expression. Frequently then the person as an actor emerges, appearing to be able to handle life. But, even when things are going well, in the wings the prompters are whispering "nah! It won't last", "you've had a luck break but it will end soon", "you doing well is a mistake" and "they'll see through you soon"**

**These voices become part of everyday living for many people. They appear to be doing well but inside they are anxious and always on a high state of alert. And in the adult this irrational fear of "being found out" has usually being going on for many, many years.**

**Any effort towards success is sabotaged before it even begins because the core beliefs are those like "I'm not worthy". These beliefs have been solidly**

imbedded. Feeling dejected, lost and stuck will render any motivation redundant and these core beliefs will need to be addressed prior to true emotional growth and wholesome success.

“Oh! That’s all right for the likes of him or her but I could never do that!” or “It’ll never be for me” are, sadly, frequently heard statements in the therapeutical environment. These “off-stage” voices result in “the blues”, “a bit down” and “what’s the point?” for many people. Herein emerges vulnerability susceptible to depression and anxiety.

But lack of success need not affect those riddled with negative messages. Excess positive affirmation can provide nasty surprises along the way unless there is a balanced view of the world developed also.

“You are the best child ever!”, “You are better than them all!” may be very comforting to hear and will indeed give a child a sense of confidence as they take their place in the world. But how often have we seen such confidence develop into arrogance and self-centred demanding?

Such attitudes will be readily met with hostile resistance as the message of “who do you think you are?” is fed back from outsiders and begins to sink in. Once again sadness, loss, feeling rejected and the resultant “blues” can sabotage the life path as the adult child learns that the world doesn’t revolve around them and sometimes they are not that special after all.

And so a balanced, objective understanding of the feelings we experienced in our formative years is important so that we may access how we react today. When we reach this understanding it would be best for us to externalise those feelings with a confidant in a safe, comfortable environment where we are heard and emotionally “held”. That is not the exclusive domain of the therapist and could

equally be as effective with a trusted friend. However the experienced therapist will be able to help make sure that the understanding is balanced. This balance is necessary because many tend to overestimate their contribution to negativity more appropriately apportioned to others. And should a person feel that their “stuff” or “baggage” is such that they may be “opening a can of worms” then the assistance of a suitable therapist is of the utmost importance. A therapeutic alliance in a safe, supporting environment will assist healing and help guide increased awareness and effective coping skills.

It also needs to be said here that it is not necessarily to confront those people from our past who may have hurt us so that we might achieve healing. Mostly the healing experienced is comprised of three core ingredients:

1. *Accurately assessing the reality of what was, feelings-wise.*

This means looking at our history and seeing how we really felt as part of that story. It ought not to involve endless hours of reminiscing and agonising. We will already have lived the experiences but may not have dealt with them in the healthiest of manners, or may have denied them altogether. But if they are disabling our movement forward then they are best explored and dealt with. Writing a short life story is a good way to get the thoughts pecculating. Other effective methods of emotional expression to be considered may be further writing, artwork, mime, noise or dance. Write a short story around the key events. Paint your feelings. Act out what it felt like. Dance it. Not crazy ideas but tools to help trapped emotions find expression and release. Such an exercise is best done in a sober, relaxed mind frame.

**2. Externalising this assessment verbally and sharing any other method of expression.**

This will need to be done in a safe space where the listener's / observer's role would be to empathise and have the ability to emotionally "hold" the expression from a distance. Someone who is mature, trusted and loyal is required. Emotions can be volatile during this process and you will need the confidence in that person to let your guard down and show them how you really feel. Sharing with them any other methods of expression you have employed will be difficult and you may feel vulnerable but the resultant healing is worth it.

**3. Having the assessment heard in an unconditional, safe manner.**

I have referred to the "listener" in this process and they have a vital role to play. Sadly, for many, previous expression of true feelings led to them being dismissed or ignored. Many too will have refrained from expression through fear and uncertainty. So the effect of being heard in a safe, unconditional manner has a powerful healing effect, affirming a person's right to express and be heard. That is a fundamental right of a democracy and yet so many have been denied it at a base level. It is best not to have physical contact during this stage even though the impulsive urge may be to hug and reassure the person in pain. As already mentioned, emotions can be volatile during this process and the listener needs to be strong. They will need to unconditionally witness the externalisation and validate the hurt person's right to express it.

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The combination of these three factors summarise the requirements for healing from past hurts and unpleasant experiences. This project can take some time so patience is required. A good self-help book relevant to your issues will also help. Having done this exercise we are ready to progress on a life path of our own choosing. Understanding where our personal sabotaging and undermining originated makes it easier for us to counteract incorrect internalised beliefs about ourselves and replace them with positive affirmations. Having really externalised those hurts, perhaps for the first time, we find it much easier to turn the tables on them and to undermine and sabotage our historical saboteurs. Time is the other important ingredient in this healing process. Once this exercise is well progressed the healing from past experiences and hurts has begun in earnest. The foundation is more solid and any moves to enhance the person have a far greater chance of success than before.

**[Back to the Gratitude List.](#)**

If people have let us down in the past, betrayed us or hurt us then our attitude is likely to be clouded as we interact with those around us. Not that we are expected to be perfect in our relationships with others but it would be healthy to, at least, have some relationships that work. Again this is a very individual preference and needs to be respected as such but withdrawal from external contact and societal interaction can endorse negative core beliefs and lead to a stagnation bordering on depression. We need contact with other people and if we don't have it we need to establish it and include those people in our gratitude list. Hermit like existence in society and even within the workplace or family works against motivation.

If you are on your own or feel isolated even in a crowd, one of the first things that ought to be done each morning is to make some form of live social contact with another human being. Even if this means just going for a walk until you meet someone you say hello to. On achievement of this you connect with the world in an authentic sense and are better set up to begin your day. That is how important live social contact is.

Then make a decision that from now on you are going to externalise your feelings and ensure, in an assertive manner, that they are heard. That will be the beginning of breaking the cycle which has constantly left us wondering “why I even bother as it NEVER works out anyway!”

Having recognised the unnecessary negative messages we are now in a position to cultivate fresh, more truly reflective beliefs about ourselves. **These could include messages like “I am a worthy person”, “I like myself” and “I deserve to be heard”.**

The chances are that “I forgive myself, unconditionally” would also be appropriate for most people. Consider the amount of times we were told by others and repeated internally by ourselves all those learned negative messages. Replacing them with positive ones will enable us to see how much sense it makes to repeat positive affirmations thousands and thousands of times to ensure the erasure of those incorrectly embedded negative messages.

You may well have to adopt a “fake it till you make it” attitude as those negative messages will have rooted themselves with the voracity of ivy around a neglected building. You will experience deep resistance to positive messages if the template

is set for negative ones. And those internal saboteurs and underminers will finally be confronted for the frauds they are. Constant vigilance ought to be the order of the day because internal saboteurs are cunning, opportunistic psychological parasites who will lie in wait until they spot a chink of vulnerability. They will then, like former brutal dictators, scream and roar to be reinstated using all manner of perceived justifications, emotional blackmail and, of course, their best buddy, fear, to do so.

The ongoing help of a supporting confidant or self help arrangement and measures such as “thought stopping” referred to in a previous issue will need to be deployed.

Now the guidelines and map for personal success can be drafted with the awareness of the various pot-holes and cull de sacs along the way one is prone to encounter based on personal experience and knowledge. There are ample suggestions on how to develop this map from some of the other fine contributors to this magazine.

Now consider the concept of the three “Cs”.

*Connect with the direction of the plan,*

*Commission its implementation in reality*

*Consistency in its implementation.*

- **Connect with the direction of the plan**

Every business, society, charitable organising should have a mission statement and a purpose to validate their existence and encourage motivation. So what is your purpose? This is not a goal, rather a direction, a guideline. Today it could

mean doing something you don't particularly like doing but it may be a means towards some goal you have in mind. Today your purpose could be to fulfil this part of the plan to the best of your ability, as a means towards an end.

Remember that the days turn into weeks, the weeks months and the months, years. So what you do today is part of the overall plan for you and is a vital part of your life jig-saw. Being aware the purpose of the day is an excellent way of connecting with your plan and nullifies the saboteurs.

- Commission its implementation in reality.

Frequently one of the key stumbling blocks to success is entering into the ring with fear and letting it trounce you. Prudence and due vigilance are of course a given but allowing fear to allay your progress may well be a slipping back into the "old" default ways of doing things. People around you may well resist any change as it rattles them out of their comfort zones and even may question their role. This is the time when it would be wise to have a safe space to retreat to as you refuel for the journey. A buddy, close confidant or therapist can give you the support to maintain a steady course and that is the key to successful implementation.

- Consistency in direction and progress.

Begin to make notes of progress and achievements on a daily basis. Just a few lines of a journal recording feelings and events that all form part of the journey will do. And don't ignore the difficulties, they are very much part of success but it is advisable to add at least one positive angle as there will always be one.

**Record how you have replaced those negative saboteurs with positive messages and note the victories of the day.**

**In a relatively short period of time you will have done an indebt stock-take of your life, offloaded some old and redundant survival techniques and set a positive outlook. That is a tremendous amount of work, fairly logical to speak about but not easy to do. While involved in the process make sure you look after your needs and de-stress as much as possible. It will be worth it as a new era of freedom from past issues will be experienced. There will be an enhanced ability to handle life on your own terms. And the best bonuses of all;**

- **The saboteurs and undermines will be given their marching orders and their power over you will be totally diminished.**

**(Learn the words of “I will survive” and sing out loud at them if they dare try to return)**

- **The success you decide you need will be uncomplicated and it’s composition more authentic and healthy. And what’s more it will be very achievable!**

**(SMILE! You’re a winner already)**

**Have a peaceful holiday season and an emotionally bountiful, successful 2007.**

**Gerry Hickey.**

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