

How do you define success?

If you Google "success", you'll come up with some 400,000,000 hits. Google "success quotations" and you'll find 11,400. "Success in life", and you'll have 1,100,000 options from which to choose.

Folks love success quotes. So, here's a few and perhaps you might be curious about what they have in common:

- "A man is a success if he gets up in the morning and gets to bed at night, and in between he does what he wants to do." *Bob Dylan*
- "Try not to become a man of success, but rather to become a man of value. He is considered successful in our day who gets more out of life than he puts in. But a man of value will give more than he receives." *Albert Einstein*
- "Just as the tumultuous chaos of a thunderstorm brings a nurturing rain that allows life to flourish, so too in human affairs times of advancement are preceded by times of disorder. Success comes to those who can weather the storm." *I Ching No. 3*
- "The successful man is the average man, focused." *Anonymous*
- "Getting what you go after is success; but liking it while you are getting it is happiness." *Anonymous*

So, what do they have in common?

What these quotes have in common is that they're all someone else's quotes, someone else's notion of success.

What I often find in my work are many who walk around with someone else's neat, cool, pithy success definition swimming around in their mind, but have never personalized it - so it's a "nice idea" but at 9:00 Monday morning they're mired in their own mis-alignment, confusion, self-doubt and mis-direction as they're attempting to gain "success" by mimicking another's dream or another's (idea of) success.

For me, the most important tool for success is reflection, deep reflection which many cannot or will not undertake. Thus, they live a life of indecision and dis-harmony as there's little to no alignment between what they say, feel, think and do.

On the other hand, many of these folks define success as "results". But getting results without learning something about one's self often leads to an incomplete and often "un-success-ful" life in the short or long term. Do-ing alone (i.e., results) without be-ing is not a solid formula for success. Perhaps the "successful" Bernie Ebbers of Enron and others who ended up in ignominy and infamy and testaments to this.

Many folks accomplish results ("success?") but without personal growth - and often wonder why they don't feel better, alive, fulfilled - often admitting they don't experience good health, energy and enthusiasm for life, fulfilling relationships, creative freedom, emotional and psychological stability, a sense of well-being, and peace of mind, albeit they say they are "successful".

For me, the idea many have of success, can be quickly obliterated just as if they had written the word "success" in the sand on the beach - ephemeral - wiped out in a moment by a wave (of uncertainly, a hurricane, health issue, job loss, divorce, accident, old age, bank failure, etc.). Or, can it? It depends.

For some folks success can be gone in an instant; for others, not so, regardless of the circumstances. True success is perhaps discerning the difference.

So, I guess there's "success" and there's "success". Are the rich successful? The starving artist? The

person in the corner office on the 52nd floor? The person in the mail room in the basement? You? Me?

Being successful requires a conscious exploration of what success means to you – creating your own quote. Until and unless you take the time to define success for yourself, there's a good chance someone else is defining success for you. Is that OK?.

So, if you lack your own success quotation, perhaps today is the ideal time to begin to create one.

So, some questions for self-reflection are:

- Do you consider yourself successful? If so, using what criteria?
- Are you ever jealous or envious of others' success?
- Do you ever feel empty, unhappy, or unfulfilled even though you are a success? If so, why do you think that's so?
- How do you define "rich"?
- Is your self-worth defined by your net worth?
- How much of your life is spent doing what you think you "should do" as opposed to doing what you "want to do"?
- Do you find meaning, fulfillment and happiness in your life at work, at home, at play and in relationship?
- Do you plan your vacations with more care, attention and detail than you plan your life?
- Do you ever fear success?
- Do you have true and real fun in your life? If not, why not?
- Do you learn from your mistakes? What have you learned?
- How did you come to be a success? How will you become a success?

"Even the most daring and accomplished people have undergone tremendous difficulty. In fact, the more successful they became, the more they attributed their success to the lessons learned during their most difficult times. Adversity is our teacher. When we view adversity as a guide towards greater inner growth, we will then learn to accept the wisdom our soul came into this life to learn." -- Barbara Rose

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