

Editorial

A Small Step to Giant Leaps in Life

“That’s one small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind,” is the famous statement of Neil Armstrong after setting his foot on the moon, in 1969. Life-changing step need not be always extraordinary and astounding. It is often small steps that bring about phenomenal changes in our lives. Bookshelves are often crowded with self-help books that propose countless techniques towards advancement in life. These practitioner-led self-help manuals often suggest a lot of fancies that leads people to set impossible goals for themselves and feel hopeless and let down when they fail to reach them.

Vinayasadhana too is a journal fully committed to open new vistas of psycho-spiritual advancement. Yet, it all depends on the reader whether the articles published in it are transformational or of no value. What differentiates people is not often their ‘thinking’ but their ‘doing’. Knowing all the techniques, strategies and mental linguistics on the planet is no assurance to success in life. Information, knowledge, and insight usually have very little to do with change if they are not translated into action. People often know why they are stuck, what they should do differently, how they should think and feel, but it is not the same thing as actually being able to change. We need to ‘act’ our way to transformation. Change comes from doing. That is why the theory of personal development is worthless until it becomes a practical reality. Concepts and ideas should be converted into behaviours for transformation to take place. Some people are theoretical geniuses

but practical fools. They talk a lot but do very little. In case we find ourselves not achieving what we would have liked to, we need to ask ourselves, 'What keeps me from getting what I want?' It is our attitude that holds us back or propels us forward in our life's journey. The stumbling block that obstructs us from reaching our goal could be our involuntary beliefs. A deeply held unconscious belief of unworthiness, fear of unwanted consequences, and so on can prevent a person from reaching the goal that s/he consciously strives for. Miracles need not be expected until and unless the client deals with his/her deeply held unconscious beliefs. Nonetheless, taking a small step - learning a new skill that enables us to create a new mindset - could enable us to take giant leaps in life.

Sure Steps to Failure

Before we explore the small step that can assist us to take giant leaps in life; let us examine certain familiar steps that people take knowingly or unknowingly, which lead to imminent failure. *Mixing with losers* is a guaranteed step that leads to failure in life. A loser friend will always be there to discourage you and to frighten you whenever, wherever and whatever you intend to do. Losers are cocksure that it won't work and after some time, you too will be convinced that they are right and will join the losers' club since established losers take pride in recruiting new members and are very comfortable in their shoes. They hate change. Another typical trait of a person born to fail is the *lack of precision regarding his/her goal*. Only on the basis of a well defined goal one can lay down precise plans to realize it. Chasing after everything will not take us anywhere since our time and resources are limited. Therefore we should have priorities to focus on. Rhonda Byrne's 2006 self-help book 'The Secret' (and its movie version) became an instant success and remained on the top of the bestseller list for quite some time. The tenet of the book is that focused positive thinking can have life-changing results such as increased wealth, health, and happiness. However, reading or watching 'The Secret' and performing 'attraction' by sitting down on the floor 'manifesting' for hours and hours will not activate the 'Law of Attraction' (LOA). LOA runs on the concept of 'believing'. When we believe that we can achieve our goal, we will start taking tangible actions to realize it. If people presume LOA as some sort of miracle remedy they are in for a big surprise for failure. Moreover, one

should have a definite purpose for pursuing a goal. Without a compelling reason, nobody could garner enough energy, motivation and encouragement to overcome obstacles. Most people fail to achieve their goals because they fail to see the worth of accomplishments. Another natural step to failure is *forgetfulness or ingratitude towards benefactors*. Claiming and attributing all credits to oneself is detrimental to one's success and advancement in life. Successful people will be humble and relentless learners. *Paying attention to wrong advice* is another precise step towards failure. Those advices may stick to our mind and lead us to make deplorable interpretations of life situations. *Getting stuck with short term plans* is another crucial step towards faltering in life. *Not knowing what is more important in life* has also led some so-called 'successful people' to miserable failure in life. This happens when means towards success in life get confused with the goals of life. The benchmark of success in life is experiencing happiness and not possessing much.

Destructive Habits of Incompetent People

There are certain disparaging habits common among losers. First of all *they are prone to viewing, saying, and doing things negatively*: They see only problems where others find opportunities. They complain and find fault with everything and everybody associated with them. They are discontented with everything they have and even curse themselves. They think that everybody is against them. They see the problems but never the solutions. They exaggerate every little bit of difficulty to the point of tragedy. They get discouraged easily and never learn anything from their mistakes and failures. They never want to move forward because they are always afraid to come out of their comfort zones. *They act before they think*: They are impulsive and instinct driven. They do not think about the consequences. If they see something exciting, instantly they go for it without a second thought. When they come across something better they regret and curse for not being able to take advantage of the new situation. They are spendthrifts and waste their money until nothing is left. They are after the pleasures of the present rather than working in view of the future prospects. *They talk much more than they listen*: They want to be the centre of attraction. So they prefer to talk rather than listen presuming that it would make them heroes, even to the point of lying. Oftentimes

they are not aware that what they are saying is not sensible anymore. When other people advise them, they close their ears because they are too proud to admit their mistakes. In their mind they are always correct. They reject suggestions because that will make them feel inferior. Another tendency we notice among losers is that *they quit easily*: Inept people give up everything at the first signs of failure. They are excited to start an endeavour, but soon lose interest, especially when they encounter difficulties. Incompetent people do not have the patience and persistence to hold on until their dreams are realized. Another crucial personality trait of losers is that *they try to bring others down to their level*: They envy successful individuals. Instead of working hard to be like them, the slothful spread rumours and would try every dirty trick to bring them down. They are too proud to ask advice. Another trademark of losers is that *they do not value their time*: They do not have any order, discipline or schedule to follow. *Taking the easy way out* is yet another of their destructive habits. They prefer to avoid hardships and sacrifices at any cost.

Constructive Habits of Highly Successful People

Akin to the losers the winners too have their typical and unique habits. The most significant of them is their willingness to *take charge of their life*. Worrying about what other people think of us puts them in charge of our life and would lead us to dependency. Being considerate of others is of course a virtue, but, unless we are discerning, we may find ourselves caught up in a job we hate, or living in a relationship which makes us miserable. It is the lack of self-awareness and confidence that make people fear rejection. Desire to be liked and admired is natural, but, at what cost should be determined. Our decisions should be supported by the right reason. 'Other people' slavery can kill our creativity, originality, uniqueness and dreams. *Daring to be different* is another characteristic feature of champions. We all know that successful people do things differently than the rest of the population (whatever area they have great success in - be it financially, romantically, professionally, ...). However, ordinary people prefer to be normal, since it is socially acceptable. But this slavish conformity with the social standards can force a person to remain mediocre. Life of such people can become monotonous, boring and barren. Only by refusing to be a slave to other people's yardsticks

and by striving to explore one's own possibilities and differences people can realize their full potentials in life. *Learning from the past and planning for the future* is another distinctive character of winners. Regrets can hold us back. Failures and mistakes are in fact great teachers. An awesome attitude of *better late than never (it is never too late)* is deeply embedded in successful people. Willingness to correct mistakes even late is a sure shot to success and a sign of strong personality. It is never too late if we have the courage and the passion to follow our dream. *Courage to take risk* is another prominent quality of a successful person. The more security we crave for the fewer will be the opportunities and chances before us. Freedom is the first casualty of security. Through eliminating the risks we limit our chances and eliminate the surprises. Champions maintain a positive mental attitude about themselves. *I am certain to win* is their mind-set. Our minds drive us to achieve exactly what we believe we are capable of achieving. By mastering the art of controlled thinking we can guide our destinies towards success. Holding positive chats with oneself, surrounding oneself with positive people, and by thinking, 'I'm going to succeed' and 'I'm a winner' are all constructive habits obvious among successful people.

The Right Mindset for Success

The way we evaluate ourselves, the way we feel, our emotions, the way we deal with stressful situations are all controlled by our mindset. It decides the way we think, interpret, react, cope, expect, process, interact and communicate. We create our own experiences, both good and bad. It is on the basis of our beliefs that we manage our fears or, perhaps, do not manage them. Our beliefs are behind our procrastination and avoidance of the big decisions. The stress we experience in our life is often self-created. It depends on the way we see the world and us in it. The labels we give decide our attitude and reaction towards them. The way we look for approval and acceptance and the meaning we attribute to certain experiences can either give away our power or take it back. It is possible to continue on with the same unproductive and destructive patterns, habits and behaviours and beat ourselves up or make ourselves happy by exchanging the mental maps we depend on. It is possible that we may be engaged in the same pointless conversations about the same issues with the same

people producing the same less-than-desirable results over and over and then curiously wonder why nothing changes.

The Power of Positive Thinking

Dr. Norman Vincent Peale through his classic guide to self-esteem and success, *The Power of Positive Thinking*, invited the world to unleash the untapped energy within. Our brains seem hard-wired to remember singular tragedy over resounding success stories. It is hard to convince anyone that the past few decades are worthy of praise. We are made to believe that the world is getting worse day by day. However, the truth is that now we are experiencing humanity's finest years, in spite of the scandals, terrorism, wars, corruptions, pollutions, financial crises, recession, global warming and natural calamities like, tsunamis, contagious diseases, tornadoes, earthquakes, and volcano eruptions. There was no time in the past when people lived better, longer, more peaceful, and more prosperous lives than now. The relentless GDP climb evident even in the third world countries is a clear indication to this fact. The continued expansion of the global middle class is conspicuous all around the world. The population classified as "undernourished" fell from 34 percent in 1970 to 17 percent in 2008, even at the height of a global spike in food prices. Agricultural productivity, too, continues to climb: From 2000 to 2008, cereal yields increased at nearly twice the rate of population growth in the developing world. We are also winning the global battle against infectious disease. Pandemics are becoming rare thanks to the spread of vaccinations. Even the HIV/AIDS epidemic is lower than their 1990 peak. The average life expectancy has improved considerably during the past few decades. Even in the African countries the literacy rate climbed from below one-fifth to above a quarter from 2000 to 2007 alone. And progress in education has been particularly rapid for women, a sign of growing gender equity. The worldwide proportion of women parliamentarians, for instance, increased from 11 percent in 1997 to 19 percent in 2009. The death toll due to armed conflicts has continued to fall since the end of the Cold War. Worldwide, combat casualties fell 40 percent from 2000 to 2008. Military expenditures as a percentage of global GDP are about half of their 1990 level. A range of technological advancements suggest the advent of better quality life in the future.

However, it is quite evident that bad news 'sells'. Most people are addicted to doom and gloom news. It is hard to avoid, since it is fed to us every single day by the media. The bad news permeates our subconscious mind and makes us to 'see' limitation instead of possibility. Doomsayers are persons of little faith. They do not believe in the great human potential to reach out to the unknown and invent new possibilities. We will never run out of resources, because we always invent new ones. Ever since our earliest ancestors' days as hunter-gatherers, when we roamed from place to place every time we exhausted our immediate food supply, we have always been 'running out' of resources. Yet every time we reach the limits on one resource, we use our human ingenuity to invent a new and better one. By refusing to swallow bad news sheepishly we can break free of this addiction to negatives. Pessimism is poison. It all depends on where we would like to focus our attention.

Want to Change? Do It!

We all want to change at some level. We all want to become a better version of ourselves through learning, growing, evolving and adapting. That is why we explore personal development stuff. What is the single quickest way to create internal shift? To change the way we think, feel, interpret, react, cope, expect, process, interact and communicate? The answer is: experience new things. Do things differently in order to be different. Repetition breeds boredom and monotony. Mechanization squeezes life out of actions. When we do things we have never done before, there is an instant and automatic internal shift. Expectations, emotions, attitudes and beliefs (about what is possible for us) change. The internal shift is simply a by-product of a new experience. Of doing something we have never done before. Actions will enable us to gain confidence. A successfully carried out action will raise our standards and expectations. We will turn out to be less fearful and more excited about our future possibilities. Our physical (external) experience has created internal (psychological) shift.

Here is a man, hitherto insecure, fearful person, On the spur of the moment somehow he manages to jump into a river and saves a drowning child, in an instant; his default setting is changed forever. He does something that he never thought was possible

(for him) and with a single brave, selfless action, many of his self-limiting beliefs are smashed. He is empowered. The world is the same but he is different. Therefore, his world is different.

Here is a girl, a self-proclaimed dummy, who enrolls in university, does the work, develops the study-skills, learns the academic language, passes the exams and gains the degree. She is forever changed. The ability was always there but the confidence was not. Her self-limiting thinking and self-sabotaging behaviours become a thing of the past - as a by-product of doing something she had never done.

A guy with the woe-is-me attitude visits a hospice of terminally ill people. He instantly realises that his horrible life is actually not that bad. And that his lifestyle is actually one of privilege, not disadvantage. He identifies that his self-pitying, negative attitude has always been his problem. Without even looking for it, his experience at the sanatorium teaches him to acknowledge, value and appreciate what he has (which is plenty). Nothing changes but everything about him changes.

A girl sets up her own business. She does not think about it, plan for it or talk about it anymore. No, she actually does it. In the first twelve months of owning her own business, she learns and grows more than she has in the last twelve years. The experience changes her.

Rationale behind the Way of Action

It is people lacking self-confidence who keep on reading, studying, and planning. The truth is that we learn most from our experience. Our true knowledge that is capable of bringing about an internal shift is gained not from books but from experience. An experiential learner will always look for something new - something that s/he has never done. It does not need to be a major event. It could be anything like trying yoga, talking to a stranger, going for a jog, learning an instrument, doing some volunteer work, asking someone out for coffee, etc. You can induce change into your life intentionally by daring to do what your head/heart demands you to do (starting a new hobby, joining an organisation, learning a skill, initiating a project or meeting new people). Buy experiences not goods. Go to a concert, movie, unusual place or strange restaurant: anything that provides an opportunity to do things with others or tell people about it afterwards. The best way

of getting someone to like you is not to do them a favour, but rather to get them to do you a small favour. When you start doing things you will realize that sky is the limit. Possibilities are endless and everywhere...oftentimes right under our own noses. Think! What can you do today, better and more profitably than yesterday? All it takes is one simple idea to transform a life of mediocrity into one of greatness.

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