

Your Success Puzzle

By Gary Burleson

Going to Jail

While completing my certification process as an instructor of the Napoleon Hill Science of Success, I have been teaching the “Keys to Success” in the Morgan County State Prison in Wartburg, Tennessee, in association with The FOCUS Prison Ministry and The Napoleon Hill Foundation. I have taught the class for three years for a total of five times. It has been very rewarding to me, and, also to the men who have gone through the class. This is totally a volunteer venture with no financial compensation.

At first it seemed awkward to be talking to men who may be imprisoned for another five to ten years or more about their Definite Major Purpose in life, taking possession of their minds, living the rewards of a life set on a course and purpose, overcoming the odds of failure and defeat, and learning, growing, and experiencing the life of a person in charge and successful. All these guys want when they are released is to be reunited with their families, find a job, and survive without resorting to crime again.

I had a gentleman come up to me after he completed the course to say how, at first, he was despondent and depressed about his life and future; but when he read the chapter on positive mental attitude his outlook on life changed. Wayne Dyer says, “When you begin to look at things differently, then the things you look at begin to change.” This is what happened. He began to associate with other people in the class who had similar feelings of hope and desire for a better future. He replaced the negative self-defeating thoughts with positive affirming thoughts. Now he has the keys to unlock the doors of opportunity, hope, and a bright future.

One day, as I stood in the middle of this 54 man class, (they were seated in a horseshoe shape and I would walk in the middle of it) talking to them face to face. These were minimum security risk men, and I never felt threatened or fearful. Most of them were very friendly and truly grateful that I came to teach them and were very receptive to the information. On this one occasion, an inspired thought came to me as I was talking. An image of a puzzle and the puzzle box. The words just came out of my mouth, “Life is like a puzzle, you may have all the pieces, but if you don’t have a clear picture of what is on the cover of the puzzle box, it will be very difficult, if not impossible, to put the puzzle together.” I went on to explain how important it is to have a vision for their lives, an explicitly clear image of the life they want. The clearer the image the easier it will be to assemble or manifest. Think about it, when you’re putting a puzzle together how often do you look at the picture on the box cover, just about every piece, right? Well, this is how we build a life. We may have the knowledge, i.e., the pieces of the puzzle, but unless we have a clear vision, i.e., an image to work with, we will spend time futilely. At this point is when most people surrender to despair and the negative messages associated with that mindset - like I can’t do this, it’s too hard, I’m not smart enough, it’s too expensive, I’ll never be able to do this, and on-and-on the negative self-talk goes.

Immediately I was astonished at my words and later wrote them down, thinking, this could be a good way to market my services. I created my business with the same name Your Success Puzzle Solved. You can find me at <http://yoursuccesspuzzle.com>

The “I Am Factor”

Another topic I talk about is “The I Am Factor™”. It’s basically an exercise the men do. On a sheet of paper, they write on every line the words “I am.” Then after those two words something positive about themselves, like I am a good father, or I am a hard worker, or I am an honest person. You get the point. Sometimes they find it hard to think of anything positive about themselves, so I give them ideas, and then it’s like “Oh, yeah.” I explain that *whatever follows these two words (I am) will determine the rest of their lives*. The thoughts you think and how you feel about yourself will be evident in the results you are getting. If you are thinking “I could never do that” or “What will people think of me” you are stifling your growth as a creative being, and you are limiting your God given talents and abilities that will move you forward in life. That person is living in the negative flow of the river of life as Napoleon describes it. That person has not taken possession of his mind and is living out the penalties of not doing so. I’ll talk about that more later. So, they had better get a positive image of themselves and live up to it.

Many of us have poor self-esteem and poor self-images. So many of us, even those of us who seemingly have productive and happy lives free of jail and confinement, think negatively of ourselves and allow negative messages to loop over and over in our heads like “I’m not worthy of the good that might happen,” and we discount our value, our talents and our abilities. Most of these guys in jail do have really damaged egos and self-esteem. They have been told all their lives what a failure they are, what a disappointment they are, how stupid they are, that they’ll never amount to anything except being a criminal. These are the messages they’ve heard over and over, and they believe and live them out. But during the course of these negative onslaughts to their precious hearts that God gave them at birth, which have been hurt repeatedly, they have had no other recourse than to protect their hearts by covering them over and over with bandages like an onion covers its core so their precious hearts are protected. Now it has been covered and concealed and unfortunately lost and forgotten. The heart loses its feelings and becomes numb to any further belittlements, insults, and criticisms. They no longer feel except to hate, fight, and hurt others. These are the negative motives and feelings that bring on negative results. They have to learn how to replace those negative thoughts and feelings with positive ones. They must get a positive image of themselves.

Your most valuable possession

I have a glass diamond, it’s four inches in diameter in a clear acrylic case. It’s fascinating and amazing to look at this beautiful stone and wish upon it. I hold it up and tell them that “this diamond is the most rare and valuable gemstone in the world.” It is just like your hearts, it is valuable, precious and rare, unique, a one of a kind. It is in the case for all to see, and then I say words like what they’ve heard all their lives, “you’re worthless,” and I throw some dirt in the case, and I’ll repeat these negative messages

until the gem is covered and can no longer be seen. It is concealed and no longer available to admire. This is what we do to our hearts over time in order to protect them, and now they are soiled, dirty, unclean and must be unearthed. I tell them, It's time to go treasure hunting. That they must discover again how precious they are and valuable they are, how unique, rare, talented and gifted they are. They have to discover their true selves, as they were meant to be. They must become acquainted with their "other selves". All the layers of protection must be peeled away, and we have to give our hearts to God who created them and ask Him to restore them and transform them into the once original pure form they were when we were born. I believe this is where we need to be if we are to find a true and lasting peace, love for ourselves, and live a life of abundance and success. A pure heart is as intricate a piece of the success puzzle as all the others. Also, loving and taking care of one's self both mentally and physically. We have to stop hating ourselves and self-sabotaging because of our "sins."

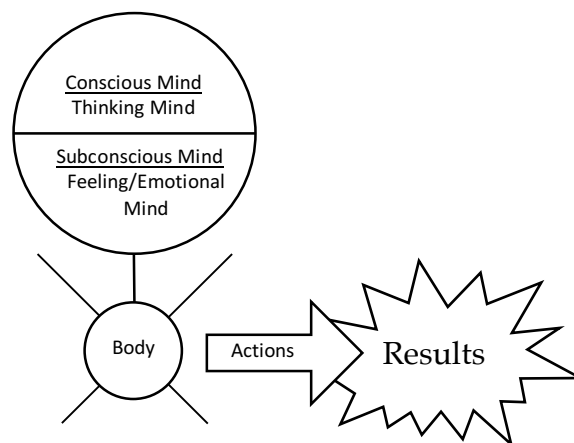
All of these positive messages are hopefully getting through and making an impression on their minds, hearts, and souls. Positive message and autosuggestions are what we need to replace the negative messages that so naturally come to us. We must deliberately inject the positives into our subconscious minds.

What is PMA?

Getting back to positive mental attitude; we all know what positive means. It's the opposite of negative, and we all know what negative is. I've given plenty of examples of negative thus far. But what is mental attitude? We have to break it down into its two components - mental and attitude.

Mental is mind, and what is mind? I'll give you a hint, it's not the grey matter in your head. We all naturally think of that, but our brain is no more a part of mind than our fingers or toes. Let me give you example. Since we think in images it would be easier to describe using an illustration. Our mind is made up of our conscious mind or the thinking mind. It also consists of our subconscious mind or our feeling/emotional mind. Our thoughts and our feelings move our bodies which is also

a part of mind. We move and act as we've been conditioned from birth and manifest results. We show our attitude whether positive or negative based on the results we manifest.



And what is attitude? Attitude is a combination of your thoughts, feelings, and actions. It's easy to see someone's attitude and the nature of their mind by their actions and the manifested results. Our minds and attitudes are one. It would behoove one to have a positive mental attitude if one want to see positive results. So we have to change or transform our minds from the old paradigms (ways of doing things/ thinking) to new

positive, affirming, faith-based paradigms rather than fear-based paradigms. Every time you catch yourself thinking negatively, say to yourself, "NO!" I will not believe that thought, I choose to believe "I can!," "I will," because "I AM..... And what follows that determines how you will live the rest of your life, hence, The I Am Factor™.

Napoleon Hill says in *Think and Grow Rich* in the chapter on the subconscious mind that, "The negatives automatically inject themselves into the thought impulses, which ensures their passage into the subconscious mind. The positives must be injected, through the principle of autosuggestion into the thought impulses which an individual wishes to pass on to his or her subconscious mind."

The same goes for our thoughts. We become what we think about. Napoleon Hill says that our thoughts are the only things we have complete and absolute control over. He says in the epilogue of *Think and Grow Rich*, "We have absolute control over but one thing, and that is our thoughts. This is the most significant and inspiring of all known facts! It reflects the divine nature of humanity. This divine prerogative is the sole means by which you may control your own destiny. If you fail to control your own mind, you may be sure you will control nothing else." And also "Mind control is a result of self-discipline and habit. You either control your mind or it controls you." Then he states, "The most practical of all methods for controlling the mind is the habit of keeping it busy with a definite purpose back by a definite plan."

No one else can control our thoughts, our feelings, or our actions unless we allow it. This is easier said than done, because from birth, our teachers, parents, society, media, etc., have influenced our thoughts and our feelings for right and wrong, for truth and injustice. We learned with our five senses: what we see, hear, smell, taste or touch, and our paradigms were set. But we have intellectual faculties, and we must begin to exercise these for our advantage, these being perception, intuition, will, imagination, reason and memory. Because of the constraints of the length of this chapter, I will have to leave the explanations of these faculties to a rather brief explanation. Perception is how we view our world around us, and how we perceive ourselves; Intuition is our ability to discern circumstances as either beneficial or not; our Will is the ability to focus or refocus from all the distractions; Imagination is our ability to create, or solve. The ability to Reason deductively and inductively is a gift only humans enjoy, and our Memory, we remember everything, we may not remember what we had for breakfast or someone's name we just heard, but we remember all sense impressions made on our minds both positive and negative over the years. We must begin to use these faculties to analyze our thoughts and our feelings as to their validity and whether they are moving us in a positive direction to a positive end or a negative direction to a negative end.

The Rewards

So, here are the rewards of taking possession of our minds; a success consciousness, sound health, both mental and physical, financial independence, a labor of love with which to express yourself, peace of mind, applied faith which makes fear impossible, enduring friendships, longevity and a well-balanced life, immunity from self-limitation, and the wisdom to understand yourself and others. Have you taken possession of your

mind or are you living out the penalties? Here are the penalties of not taking possession of your mind; poverty and misery your entire life, mental and physical ailments, self-limitations which trap you in mediocrity, fear and all of its destructive consequences, hatred of the means by which you support yourself, many enemies and few friends, every brand of worry known to humanity, being a victim of every negative influence you encounter, subjection to the will of others, and a wasted life which does nothing to better the human condition. You may also know someone who is living out the penalties, many of us do. The men I teach in class are perfect examples of those who haven't taken possession of their minds, or think accurately for themselves, which is another piece of the success puzzle - accurate thinking. Our thoughts must not only be positive, but they must also be accurately based on facts and truth, not hear-say or opinions.

Possessing and owning our thoughts is hard work and a constant battle at first. Over time, though, this habit of thinking becomes much easier, and keeping our minds in a positive attitude and rejecting negative thoughts and influences becomes second nature. It's something like working out. You have muscles which become atrophied when not used or exercised. Our mental muscles, so to speak, need exercise also to become strengthened. Once they reach a certain level, it's all about maintaining. Personal development is exercise. Reading is personal development and how we grow, learn and change. It must be a lifelong habit or we will become atrophic. But it's how we enjoy the rewards of taking possession of our minds.

So, what's your motivation? Napoleon Hill lists ten primary motives all of us have that influence our behavior. These are: the desire for material gain, the desire for self-expression and recognition, the desire for freedom of body and mind, the emotion of love, the emotion of fear, the emotion of sex or passion, the desire for life after death, the emotion of hate, the emotion of revenge, and the desire for self-preservation. Most of these, or a combination, affect all of us to one degree or another, and they are connected to our definite purpose in life. Another major piece of the success puzzle is your definite major purpose in life.

Myself, like many of us, drifted into my career. One thing led to another and I did what needed doing to earn income. My father was a home builder, so this gave me the opportunity to work on construction sites. Because of a lack of guidance, I learned the home building trade by default. It wasn't what I really wanted to do, but it was what I learned. After obtaining a general contractor's license, and building houses for four years, I found it extremely stressful and I hated it. It was a result of not taking possession of my mind. I was miserable. Then I got into the custom closet trade. One day I was walking away from a job thinking, "I've earned money with a hammer and a nail for the last 30 years. I don't want to do this for the next 30. I want to earn my income with a microphone and an ink pen." So, I decided then and there to start over and remake myself. Over the next ten years, I worked my job while learning to become a certified Life Success Consultant and a certified instructor by the Napoleon Hill Foundation. I also became a member of Toastmasters, an International Public Speaking and Leadership organization. Having invested countless hours and much money in seminars, workshops, books, and courses to become my "other self." There was a very strong desire to become this.

I love helping people to believe and be aware that their dreams are also attainable and achievable, for “whatever the mind can conceive and believe it can achieve.” I had to maintain a positive mental attitude for a long time - to believe and apply my faith, my money, and my energy - sacrificing at many levels and persevering one day at a time for years. It wasn't easy. It was very difficult and trying, but I “arrived.”

My two most favorite paragraphs in *Think and Grow Rich* are these: “You may have been disappointed, you may have suffered setbacks and defeat during hard economic times, you may have felt the great heart within you crushed until it bled. Take courage, for these experiences have tempered the spiritual metal of which you are made - they are assets of incomparable value.

Remember, too, that all who succeed in life get off to a bad start and pass through many heartbreaking struggles before they “arrive.” The turning point in the lives of those who succeed usually comes at the moment of some crisis, through which they are introduced to their “other selves.” The reason many people fail is mainly because they give up before they “arrive.” They begin to focus on the negative images and messages in their minds they have heard all their lives rather than replacing them with positive affirming messages. This is why it is so important to have in writing your definite major purpose, and to read it out loud twice daily with as much emotion and belief as you can, visualizing, owning and possessing in your mind the desired end result.

If that desire isn't a white-hot fire it will not endure the failures and defeats, the criticisms, and doubts, the side tracks and roadblocks of all kinds. The focusing and refocusing over and over again endlessly in pursuit of that destination will make it a journey seemingly too far to complete. It will seem too complicated, and require too much energy. Success takes the kind of commitment that many aren't willing to endure. It takes discipline and persistence in going the extra mile, it requires teamwork, and a mastermind alliance, enthusiasm and controlled attention. It takes creative vision and a pleasing personality in addition to a positive mental attitude. Everyone must learn from their failures and defeats, by finding the equal and opposite value and lesson in them.

Believe me when I say, it's worth it, and if I can do it, there's no excuse that you can't achieve your dreams and goals as well. Believe.