

The Success Journey

by John C. Maxwell

Excerpts and Reflections by William Gross¹

Some inspirational thoughts to ponder:

- The essence of faith is *risk*. *Kelstead*
- Progress always involves risks. You can't steal second and keep your foot on first.
- What would you do if you knew you could not fail? *Robert Schuller*
- It is only by risking our persons from one hour to another that we live at all. And often enough our faith beforehand in an uncertified result is the *only* thing that makes the result come true. *William James*
- Anything worth doing is worth doing poorly until you learn to do it well. *Zig Ziglar*
- God is looking for those through whom He can do the impossible --- what a pity that we plan only the things that we can do by ourselves. *A.W. Tozer*
- Imagination is more important than knowledge. *Albert Einstein*
- Sorrow looks back, worry looks around, faith looks up.

Many men in their 40's and 50's feel like they are still trying to figure out what they want to be when they grow up. They wait until they lose a job or drop income until they began to search in earnest for who they are, and why they are here. Sound familiar? We all have that itch to scratch. My mother's not-so-sagely advice to me as a child that "life is about 3 square meals and a floor to sweep" has done me a lot of harm. It goes hand in hand with, "don't set your goals too high; you'll only disappoint yourself if you don't reach them," or "be practical," or "keep both feet firmly planted on the ground." I greatly fear that I may have passed on such dream-killers to my children. *Let me set the story straight: we aren't here to survive; we're here to thrive, to prosper, and to be fruitful. That means leaving behind a Godly heritage, a legacy for the next generation.* The form that heritage takes is completely up to you.

Question: why read every day?

Books help to define your dream, your vision, and your path. They provide a number of techniques to elicit what your passions are, what your gifts are, and how not to get distracted from the path of success. One of the books that has helped me is called, "The Success Journey" by John C. Maxwell. In his book, Mr. Maxwell challenges a widely accepted definition of success. Let me share what he offers as his alternative definition:

Most people simply let life happen to them. However, a few, a very few, decide what's going to happen to them in life. To just stay alive is not enough! Just drifting or enduring is not enough. First, you find your dream, your purpose, your goal, and then you grow into that dream and realize your maximum potential. In the process, you touch, in a positive and redemptive way, the lives of other people who then begin to find the power of a dream and the road map to a successful journey in life.

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Success is a *journey*. To be willing to take the journey,

1. Get a picture of where you're going.
2. Get answers to your questions about success.
3. Get information about what success is like.
4. Be willing and able to change and continue growing.

You can't be someone other than who you are, and you shouldn't want to be. You'd only be a bad imitation of someone else --- and you'd defeat becoming the person you were meant to be.

What success is *not*, and why:

1. It's not wealth – it's transient and relative
2. It's not happiness – it's circumstantial, which creates an emotional roller coaster
3. It's not possessions – these are temporary, and vulnerable
4. It's not power – power is only a tool with no value in itself, good or bad – if we set power as our goal, the journey to attain it will corrupt us rather than strengthen us.
5. It's not achievement – “the progressive realization of a worthwhile goal” does not define success if it ignores the *process* that actually gives us the significance we're after - take Michael Jordan returning to basketball despite achieving all the goals and acclaim he'd sought. It's the struggle of the journey, not the achievement of the goal. Consider: if we reach our goal, what's left for us? Another goal? And another? And...

Success is:

- Knowing your purpose in life,
- Growing to reach your maximum potential, and
- Sowing seeds that benefit others.

If you don't try actively to discover your purpose, you're likely to spend your life doing the wrong things. “Everyone has his own specific vocation or mission in life. Everyone must carry out a concrete assignment that demands fulfillment. Therein he cannot be replaced, nor can his life be repeated. Thus everyone's task is as unique as his specific opportunity to implement it.” Victor Frankl.

Knowing Your Purpose

For what am I searching? A strong desire that speaks to my deepest thoughts and feelings and sets my soul on fire.

Why was I created? I have unique gifts, talents, background, and a unique future and opportunities.

Do I believe in my potential? You cannot consistently act in a manner inconsistent with the way you see yourself – do what you can, with what you have, where you are.
Theodore Roosevelt.

Growing to your Potential

The only true measure of success is the ratio between what we might have been and what we have become. *H.G. Wells.*

Our potential is God's gift to us. What we do with it is our gift to God.

There is no man living who isn't capable of doing more than he thinks he can do.
Henry Ford.

We can do *anything*. But we can't do *everything*. Don't let everyone around you decide your agenda in life. Change it!

1. Concentrate on one main goal: *focus!*
2. Concentrate on continual improvement – what you get as the result of your growth is not nearly as important as what you become along the way.
3. Forget the past –

The past is a dead issue, and we can't gain any momentum moving toward tomorrow if we are dragging our past behind us. *Jay Hayford.*

Yesterday ended last night. *Cyrus Curtis.*

Success is to be measured not so much by the position that one has reached in life as by the obstacles which one has overcome by trying to succeed. *Booker T. Washington.*

4. Focus on the future – it's the only place we have to go.

Sowing Seeds that Benefit Others

We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give.

“Success in life has nothing to do with what you gain in life or accomplish for yourself. It's what you do for others.” *Danny Thomas.*

“Success is waking up in the morning, ... and bounding out of bed because there's something out there you love to do, that you believe in, that you're good at – something that's bigger than you are, and you can hardly wait to get at it again today.” *Whit Hobbs.*

We set aside time and money for the things that are most important to us, regardless of our busy schedule or financial condition. Desiring to escape our present circumstances is not the same as pursuing a heart-felt dream.

The Power of a Dream

A dream is a vision deep inside us that speaks to our soul. It's the thing we were born to do. It draws on our talents and gifts. It appeals to our highest ideals. It sparks our feelings of destiny. It is inseparably linked to our purpose in life.

1. It gives us direction - a compass; with direction we can measure progress
2. It increases our potential because it lies beyond our present circumstances. It helps us recognize opportunities, resources, and talents that can be used to pursue the dream.
3. It helps us prioritize everything we do, and to quantify what we're willing to give up to pursue the dream. Does what I am doing contribute to the dream? Concentrate more on those things that do and less on those things that don't. Do NOT try to keep all your options open --- you'll spend more time and energy preserving options than pursuing your dream. It's like spinning plates --- spin the ones that are on line toward your dream and let the others drop. Decision-making is much easier.
4. It adds value to our work. Seeing our actions in the context of the dream gives us an appreciation for the role those actions play.
5. It is the best predictor of our future. It is an invitation to do something. We are no longer spectators or drag-alongs, nor victims of problems, circumstances, and obstacles.

Developing the Dream

1. I *thought* it –
 - a. Believe you're capable of finding it
 - b. Get rid of your pride – it holds you back from trying new things or asking questions
 - c. Be constructively discontented – be a little dissatisfied with where you're at, not complacent
 - d. Escape from habit – make changes, break out of your rut and engage your mind. Habit destroys creative thinking.
 - e. Balance creativity with character – creativity lets you think it out, but character makes you try it out.
2. I *caught* it – move it from your head to your heart. Involve your emotions, your passions.
3. I *sought* it – committed action is what separates daydreaming from dream realizing. Hunger, tenacity, and commitment see the dream through to reality. Motivation is a dream putting on a coat of action.
4. I *got* it – you need dedication, perseverance, self-assuredness (to overcome the doubts and criticisms of others) – “When you win, nothing hurts.” Joe Namath.
5. Others *fought* it – you'll always encounter firefighters (those who want to douse your flame) and fire lighters (those who want to stoke the flames of your success).
 - a. not everyone who dumps on you is your enemy
 - b. not everyone who helps you is your friend
 - c. if somebody dumps on you, keep your mouth shut

6. I *taught* it – any dream worth living is worth sharing. The synergy of shared ideas often takes it to a whole new level. Paint a broad enough picture for them so they can catch your vision.

Have a dream big enough to include others and bring them along. Paint a broad enough picture for them so they can catch your vision:

A horizon to help them see the possibilities.

The *sun* to give them warmth and hope.

Mountains to represent the challenges ahead.

Birds to inspire them to soar like eagles.

Flowers to remind them to enjoy the journey.

A *path* to offer direction and security, to give assurance that you will be leading them the right way.

Yourself, to demonstrate your commitment to the dream and to them.

Them, to show where they fit in and to communicate your belief in them

7. Others *bought* it – if you live your dream, and successfully share it, other will buy into it. People have a desire to follow a leader with a great dream. Real heroes are leaders who help others achieve success, people who take others with them.