

# **The Strangest Secret**

By Earl Nightingale

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## The Strangest Secret

# The Strangest Secret

I would like to tell you about the strangest secret in the world. Not long ago Albert Switzer, the great doctor and Noble Prize winner, was being interviewed in London and a reporter asked him, Doctor what's wrong with men today. The great doctor was silent for a moment and then he said, men simply don't think. And it's about this that I want to talk with you.

We live today in a golden age. This is an era that man has looked forward, dreamed of and worked hard for thousands of years. But since it's here, we pretty well take it for granted. We, in America, are particularly fortunate to live in the richest land that ever existed on the face of the earth. A land of abundant opportunity for everyone, but do you know what happens.

Let's take a hundred men who start even at the age of 25. Do you have any idea of what will happen to those men by the time they're 65? These one hundred men, who all start even at the age of 25, believe they are going to be successful. If you ask any one of these men if he wanted to be a success, he would tell you that he did and you would notice that he was eager towards life, that there was a certain sparkle to his eye and erectness to his courage and life seemed like a pretty interesting adventure to him.

But by the time they're 65, one will be rich. Four will be financially independent. Five will still be working, 54 will be broke.

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Now think a moment, out of the one hundred, only five make the grade. Why do so many fail. What has happened to the sparkle that was there when they were 25? What's become of the dreams, the hopes, the plans and why is there such a large disparity between what these men intended to do and what they actually accomplished.

When we say about 5% achieve success, we have define success and, here's the definition. Success is the progressive realization of a worthy idea. If a man is working towards a predetermined goal and knows where he is going, that man is a success. If he's not doing that, he's a failure. Success is the progressive realization of a worthy idea.

Rollo May, the distinguished psychiatrist, wrote a wonderful book called "Man Search for Himself" and in this book he says the opposite of courage in our society is not cowardice, it is conformity. And there you have the trouble today, it's conformity. People acting like every one else without knowing why, without knowing where they're going.

Now think of it. In America right now there are over 40 million people 65 years of age and over and about 13 million of these 40 million are broke. They're dependent on someone else for life's necessities. Now we learn to read by the time we're seven. We learn to make a living by the time we're 25. Usually by that time, we're not only making a living, we're supporting a family. And yet, by the time we're 65, we haven't learned how to become financially independent in the richest land that has ever been known. Why? We conform and the trouble is that we're acting like the wrong percentage group. The 95% who don't succeed.

Now why do these people conform? Well, they don't know really. These people believe that their lives are shaped by circumstances, by things that happened to them, by exterior forces; they're outer directed people.

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A survey was made one time that covered a lot of men, working men, and these men were asked this question. Why do you work? Why do you get up in the morning? 19 out of 20 had no idea. If you ask them, they'll say everyone goes to work in the morning and that's the reason why they do it because everyone else is doing it.

Now let's get back to our definition of success. Who succeeds? The only man who succeeds is the man who is progressively realizing a worthy idea. He's the man who says, I'm going to become this and then begins to work towards that goal. I'll tell you who the successful people. A success is the school teacher who is teaching school because that's what she wanted to do. The success is the woman who is a wife and mother because she wanted to become a wife and mother and is doing a good job of it. The success is the man who runs the corner gas station, because that's what he wanted to do. The success is the successful salesman who wants to become a top notch salesman and grow and build with his organization. A success is anyone who is doing deliberately a predetermined job because that's what he decided to do deliberately, but only 1 out of 20 does that.

That's why today, there isn't really any competition, unless we make it for ourselves. Instead of competing all we have to do is create. Now for 20 years I looked for the key which would determine what would happen to a human being. Was there a key, I wanted to know, which would make the future a promise that we could foretell to a logic stand? Was there a key a person becoming successful if he only knew about it and knew how to use it?

Well, there is such a key and I've found it. Have you ever wondered why so many men work so hard and earnestly without ever achieving anything in particular and others don't seem to work hard and yet seem to get everything? They have a magic touch. You've heard them say that about someone. Everything he touches to gold and have you ever noticed that a man who becomes successful, tends to continue to be

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successful, and on the other hand have you noticed how a man who is a failure, tends to continue to fail. It's because of goals. Some of us have them, some don't.

People with goals succeed because they know where they're going. Now think of a ship leaving a harbor and think of it with a complete voyage mapped out and planned. The captain and crew know exactly where it's going and how long it will take. It has a definite goal. Nine thousand, nine hundred and ninety-nine times out of ten thousand it will get to what it started out to get.

Now let's take another ship, just like the first, only let's not put a crew on it or a captain of the helm. Let's give it no aiming point. No goal, no destiny. We just start the engine and let it go. I think you'll agree with me that if it gets out of the harbor at all, it will either sink or wind up on some deserted beach a derelict. It can't go any place because it has no destination, no guidance.

It's the same with a human being. Take the salesman for example. There is no other person in the world today with the future of a good salesman. Selling is the world's highest paid profession, if we're good at it and if we know where we're going. Every company needs top notched salesmen and they reward those men. The sky is the limit for them, but how many can you find.

Someone once said, the human race is fixed, not to prevent the strong from winning but to prevent the weak from losing. The American economy today can be likened to a convoy in time of war. The entire economy is slowed down to protect its weakest link, just as the convoy had to go at the speed that would permit its slowest vessel to remain in formation.

That's why it's so easy to make a living today. It takes no particular brains or talent to make a living and support a family today. So we have a plateau of, so called security, if

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that's what a person is looking for. But we do have to decide how high above this plateau we want to aim for.

Now let's get back to the strangest secret in the world--The story that I wanted to tell you today. Why do men with goals succeed in life and men without them fail. Well let me tell you something, which if you really understand it, will alter your life immediately. If you understand completely what I'm going to tell you from this moment on, your life will never be the same again. You will suddenly find that good luck just seems to be attracted to you. The things you want just seem to fall in line and from now you won't have the problems, the worries, the knowing lump of anxiety that, perhaps you have experienced before. Doubt, fear, well they'll be things of the past.

Here's the key to success and the key to failure. We become what we think about. Now let me say that again. We become what we think about. Throughout all history, the great wise men and teachers, philosophers and prophets have agreed with one another on many different things. It is only on this one point that they are on complete and unanimous agreement.

Listen to what Marcus Aurelius, the great Roman Emperor said. He said, "a man's life is what his thoughts make of it." Disraeli said this, "everything comes if a man would only wait. I have brought myself, by long meditation, to the conviction that a human being with a settled purpose, must accomplish it and that nothing can resist a will that will stake even existence for its fulfillment". Ralph Waldo Emerson said this, "a man is what he thinks about all day long." William James said, "the greatest discovery of my generation is that human beings can alter their lives by altering their attitudes of mind" and he also said, "we need only in cold blood act as if the thing in question was real and it will become infallibly real by growing into such a connection with our life, that it will become real. It will become so knit with habit and emotion, that our interest in it will be those which characterize believe."

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He also said this, “if you only care enough for a result, you will almost certainly ascertain it. If you wish to be rich, you will be rich. If you wish to be learned, you will be learned. If you wish to be good, you will be good. Only you must then, really wish these things and wish them exclusively and not wish at the same time, a hundred other compatible things just as strongly.”

In the bible you read, in Mark 9:23, *if thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth*. Dr. Norman Vincent Peale said this; “this is one of the greatest laws in the universe, fervently do I wish I had discovered it as a very young man. It drawn upon me much later in life and I found it to be one of the greatest, if not my greatest discovery, outside of my relationship to God and the great law briefly and simply stated is that if you think in negative terms, you’ll get negative results. If you’ll think in positive terms, you will achieve positive results. That is the simple fact which is that basis of an astonishing law of prosperity and success. In three words, believe and succeed.”

William Shakespeare put it this way; “our doubts are traitors and make us lose the good we oft might win by fearing to attempt.” George Bernard Shaw said, “People are always blaming your circumstances for what they are. I don’t believe in circumstances. The people who get on in this world are the people who get up and look for the circumstances they want and if they can’t find them, make them.”

Well, it’s pretty apparent, isn’t it? And every person who discovered this for a while believed that he was the first one to work it out. We become what we think about.

Now it stands to reason that a person who is thinking about a concrete and worthwhile goal is going to reach it because, that’s what he is thinking about and we become what we think about. Conversely, the man who has no goal, who doesn’t know where he is going and whose thoughts must therefore be thoughts of confusion and anxiety and fear and worry,

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becomes what he thinks about. His life becomes one of frustration, fear, anxiety and worry and if he thinks about nothing, he becomes nothing.

Now how does it work? Why do we become what we think about? Well I'll tell you how it works as far as we know. Now, to do this, I want to tell you about a situation that parallels the human mind. Supposed a farmer had some land and it's good, fertile land. Now the land gives the farmer a choice. He may plant in that land whatever he chooses, the land doesn't care. It's up to the farmer to make the decision. Now remember, we're comparing the human mind with the land. Because the mind, like the land doesn't care what you plant in it. It will return what you plant, but it doesn't care what you plant.

Now let's say that the farmer has two seeds in his hand. One is a seed of corn, the other is night shade, a deadly poison. He digs two little holes in the earth and he plants both seeds; one corn, the other night shade. He covers up the holes, waters and takes care of the land and what will happen.

Invariably, the land will return what is planted. As it is written in the Bible, *as you sow, so shall you reap*. Remember the land doesn't care. It will return poison in just as wonderfully abundance as it will corn. So up comes the two plants; one corn, one poison.

Now the human mind is far more fertile, far more incredible and mysterious than the land, but it works the same way. It doesn't care what we plant -- success, failure. A concrete worthwhile goal or confusion, misunderstanding, fear, anxiety and so on, but what we plant it will return to us.

You see, the human mind is the last great unexplored continent on the earth. It contains riches beyond our wildest dreams. It will return anything we want to plant.

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Now, you might say, but if that's true, why don't people use their minds more? Well I think they've figure out an answer to that too. Our mind comes as standard equipment at birth. It's free and things that are given to us for nothing, we place little value on. Things that we pay money for we value. The paradox is that exactly the reverse is true. Everything that's really worthwhile in life came to us free; our mind, our soul, our body, our hopes, our dreams, our ambitions, our intelligence, our love of family and children and friends. All these priceless possessions are free, but the things that cost us money are actually very cheap and can be replaced at any time.

A good man can be completely wiped out and make another fortune. He can do that several times. Even if our home burns down we can rebuild it. But the things that we got for nothing, we can never replace. The human mind isn't used, merely because we take it for granted. Familiarity breeds content. It can do any kind of job we assign to it, but generally speaking, we use it for little jobs instead of big, important ones. Universities have proved that most of us are operating on about 10% of our abilities.

Decide now; what is it you want? Plant your goal in your mind. It's the most important decision you'll ever make in your entire life. Do you want to be an outstanding salesman, a better worker at your particular job? Do you want to go places in your company, in your community? All you've got to do is plant that seed in your mind. Care for it. Work steadily towards your goal and it will become a reality. It not only will, there's no way that it can not.

You see, that is a law, like the laws of Sir Isaac Newton, the laws of gravity. If you get on top of a building and jump off you'll always go down, you're never go up. And it's the same with all of the other laws of nature. They always work, they're inflexible.

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Think about your goal in a relaxed positive way. Picture yourself in your mind's eye as having already achieved this goal. See yourself doing the things that you will be doing when you've reached your goal.

Ours have been called the Phenobarbital age, the age of ulcers and nervous breakdowns. At a time when medical research has raised us to a new plateau of good health and longevity, far too many of us worry ourselves into an early grave trying to cope with things in our own little, personal ways without learning a few great laws that will take care of everything for us. These things we bring on ourselves to our habitual way of thinking.

Every one of us the sum total of his own thoughts. He is where he is because that is exactly where he really wants to be, whether he'll admit that or not. Each of us must live off the fruits of his thoughts and the future because what you think today and tomorrow, next month or next year, will mold your life and determine your future. You're guided by your mind.

I remember one time I was driving through Arizona and I saw one of those giant earth moving machines roaring along the road at about 35 mph with what looked like 20 tons of dirt in it, a tremendous incredible machine, and there was a little man perched way up on top with the wheel in his hands guiding it. And as I drove along I was struck by the similarity of that machine to the human mind. Just supposed you're sitting at the controls of such a vast source of energy. Are you going to sit back and fold your arms and let it run itself into a ditch, or are you going to keep both hands firmly on the wheel and control and direct this power to a specific, worthwhile purpose. It's up to you. You're in the driver's seat.

You see, the very law that gives us success is a two-edged sword. We must control our thinking. The same rule that can lead a man to a life of success, wealth, happiness and all the things that he has ever dreamed of for himself and for his

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family, that very same law, can lead him into the gutter. It's all in how he uses it; for good or for bad. This is the strangest secret in the world.

Now why do I say it's strange and why do I call it a secret? Actually it isn't a secret at all. It was first promulgated by some of the earliest wise men and it appears again and again throughout the Bible. But very few people, who have learned it, understand it. That's why it's strange and why, for some equally strange reason, it virtually remains a secret. I believe that you could go out and walk down the main street of your town and ask one man after another, what the secret of success is, and you would probably run into one man in a month who could tell you.

Now this information is enormously valuable to us if we really understand it and apply it. It's valuable to us not only for our own lives but the lives of those around us; our family, employees, associates and friends. Life should be an exciting adventure. It should never be a bore. A man should live fully, be alive. He should be glad to get out of bed in the morning. He should be doing a job that he likes to do because he does it well.

One time, I heard Grove Patterson make a speech, the editor and chief of the Toledo Daily Blade, and as he concluded his speech he said something that I've never forgotten. He said something like this, my years in the newspaper business has convinced me of several things. Among them, that people are basically good and that we came from someplace and we're going someplace. So we should make our time here an exciting adventure.

The architect of the universe didn't build a stairway leading nowhere. And the greatest teacher of all, the carpenter from the plains of Galilee, gave us the secret time and time again; *as you believe so shall it be done unto you.*

### Using The Strangest Secret

I've previously explained the strangest secret in the world and how it works. Now I want to explain how you can prove to yourself the enormous returns possible in your own life by putting this secret to a practical test. I want you to make a test that will last 30 days. Now it isn't going to be easy. If you'll give it a good try, it will completely change your life for the better.

Back in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Sir Isaac Newton, the English mathematician and natural philosopher, gave us some natural laws of physics which apply as much to human beings as they do to the movement of bodies in the universe. Now one of these laws is, that for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction, simply stated as it applies to you and me, it means we can achieve nothing without paying the price.

The results of your 30 day experiment will be in direct proportion to the effort you put forth. To be a doctor, you must pay the price of long years of difficult study. To be successful in selling, and remember that each of us succeeds to the extent of his ability to sale; Selling our families on our ideas, selling education in schools, selling our children on the advantages of living the good and honest life, Selling our associates and employees on the importance of being exceptional people; true, of course, to the profession of selling itself.

But to be successful in selling our way to the good life, we must be willing to pay the price. Now what is that price? Well, it's many things. First, it's understanding emotionally as

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well as intelligently that we literally become what we think about, that we must control our thoughts if we are to control our lives. It's understanding fully that as you sow, so shall you reap.

Secondly; it's cutting away all the fetters from the mind and permitting it to soar as it was divinely designed to do. It's the realization that your limitations are self imposed and that the opportunities for you today are enormous beyond belief. It is rising above narrow minded pettiness and prejudice.

Thirdly; to use all your courage to force yourself to think positively on your own problem; to set a definite and clearly defined goal for yourself; to let your marvelous mind think about your goals of more possible angles; to let your imagination speculate freely upon many different possible situation; to refuse to believe there are any circumstances officially strong to defeat you in the accomplishment of your purpose; to act promptly and decisively when your course is clear and to keep constantly aware of the fact that you are, at this moment, standing in the middle of your own acre of diamonds, as Russell Cromwell used to point out.

Fourth; save at least 10 percent of what you earn. It's also remembering that, no matter what you're present job, it has enormous possibilities if you're willing to pay the price.

Now let's just go over the important points in the price that each of us must pay to achieve the wonderful that can be ours. It is, of course, worth any price. One, you will become what you think about. Two, remember the word imagination. Let your mind soar. Three, courage. Concentrate on your goal everyday. Four, save 10 percent of what you earn and action. Ideas are worthless unless we act on them.

Now I'll try to outline the 30 day test I want you to make. Now, keep in mind that you have nothing to lose by making this test and everything that you could possibly want, to gain. There are two things that may be said of everyone; each of us

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wants something and each of us is afraid of something. I want you to write on a card, what it is you want more than anything else. It may be more money. Perhaps you would like to double your income or make a specific amount of money. It may be a beautiful home. It may be success at your job. It may be a particular position in life. It could be a more humorous family. Each of us want something.

Write down on your card, specifically, what it is that you want. Make sure it is a single goal and clearly defined. You need not show it to anyone, but carry it with you so that you can look at it several times a day. Think about it in a cheerful, relaxed, positive way each morning when you get up and immediately you have something to work for, something to get out of bed for, something to live for. Look at it every chance you get during the day and just before going to bed before going to bed at night. As you look at it, remember you must become what you think about and since you're thinking about your goal, you realize that soon it will yours. In fact, it's yours, really, the moment you write it down and begin to think about it.

Look at the abundance all around you as you go about your daily business. You have as much right to this abundance as any other living creature. It's yours for the asking.

Now we come to the difficult part. Difficult, because it means the formation of what is probably a brand new habit and new habits are not easily formed. Once formed however, it will follow you for the rest of your life. Stop thinking about what it is you fear. Each time a fearful or negative thought comes into your consciousness, replace it with a mental picture of your positive and worthwhile goal. There will come times when you will feel like giving up. It's easier for a human being to think negatively than positively, that's why only five percent is successful. You must begin now to place yourself in that group.

For 30 days you must take control of your mind. It will think only about what you permit it to think. Each day, for this 30

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day test, do more than you have to do. In addition to maintaining a cheerful positive outlook, give of yourself more than you've ever done before. Do this knowing that your returns in life must be in direct proportion to what you give. The moment you decide on a goal to work towards, you are immediately a successful person. You are then in that rare and successful category of people who know where they're going. Out of every 100 people, you belong to the top five.

Don't concern yourself too much with how you're going to achieve your goal. Leave that completely to a power greater than yourself. All you have to do is know where you're going. The answers will come to you of their own accord. Remember these words from the Sermon on the Mount and remember them well. Keep them constantly before you this month of your test. *Ask and it shall be given you, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened upon you. Forever one that asketh, receiveth, and he that seeketh, findeth and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened.* It's as marvelous and simple as that.

In fact, it's so simple, that in our similarly complicated world, it's difficult for an adult to understand that all he needs is a purpose and faith. For 30 days, do your best. If you're a salesman go at it as you've never done before, not in hectic fashion but with a calm cheerful assurance that time well spent will give you the abundance in return that you deserve and want. If you're a homemaker, devote your 30 day test to complete giving of yourself, without thinking about receiving anything in return and you'll be amazed at the difference it makes in your life.

No matter what your job, do it as you've never done it before for 30 days and, if you've kept your goal before you everyday, you will wonder and marvel at this new life that you've found.

Dorothea Brand, outstanding editor and writer discovered it for herself and tells about it in her fine book, *Wake up and Live*. Her entire philosophy is reduced to the words "act as

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though it was impossible to fail.” She made her own test with sincerity and faith and her entire life was changed to one of overwhelming success.

Now you make your test for 30 full days. Don't start your test until you've made up your mind to stick with it. You see, by being persistent you're demonstrating faith. Persistence is simply another word for faith. If you didn't have faith, you would never persist. If you should fail during your first 30 days, by that I mean suddenly finding yourself overwhelmed by negative thoughts, you've got to start over again from that point and go 30 more days. Gradually your new habit will form, until you find yourself one of that wonderful minority to whom virtually nothing is impossible.

Don't forget the card. It is vitally important, as you begin this new way of living. On one side of the card, write your goal, whatever it might be. On the other side, write the words we've quoted from the Sermon on the Mount, *ask and it shall be giveth, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened upon you.*

In your spare time. during your test period. read books that will help you. Inspirational books like the Bible, Dorothea Brand's, *Wake up and Live*, *The Magic of Believing* by Claude Bristol, *Think and Grow Rich* by Napoleon Hill and other books that instruct and inspire. Nothing great was ever accomplished without inspiration.

See, that during these critical first 30 days, your own inspiration is kept to the peak. Above all, don't worry. Worry brings fear and fear is crippling. The only thing that can cause you to worry during your test is trying to do it all yourself. Know that all you have to do is hold your goal before you. Everything else will take care of itself.

Remember also to keep calm and cheerful--Calm and cheerful. Don't let petty things annoy you, get you off course. Now, since making this test is difficult, some may say why should I

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bother? Well, look at the alternative, no one wants to be a failure. No one really wants to be a mediocre individual. No one wants a life constantly filled with worry, fear and frustration. Therefore, remember that you must reap that which you sow. If you sow negative thoughts your life will be filled with negative things. If you sow positive thoughts, your life will be cheerful, successful and positive.

Now gradually, you have a tendency to forget what you've heard on this record. Play it often. Keep reminding yourself of what you must do to form this new habit. Gather your whole family about and listen to what has been said here at regular intervals.

You know, most men will tell you that they want to make money without understanding the law. The only people who make money work in the mint. The rest of us must earn money. This is what causes those who keep looking for something for nothing or a free ride to fail in life. The only way to earn money is by providing people with services or products which are needed and useful. We exchange our product or services for the other man's money. Therefore, the law is that our financial return will be in direct proportion to our service.

Success is not the result of making money. Making money is the result of success and success is in indirect proportion to our service. Most people have this law backwards. They believe that you're successful if you earn a lot of money. The truth is, that you can only earn money after you're successful.

It's like the story of the man who sat in front of a stove and said to it, "give me heat and then I'll add the wood." How many men and women do you know, or do you supposed there are today, who take the same attitude towards life. There are millions. We've got to put the fuel in before we can expect heat. Likewise, we've got to be of service first before we can expect money. Don't concern yourself with the money. Be of service. Build. Work. Dream. Create. Do this and you'll find

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that there is no limit to the prosperity and abundance that will come to you.

Prosperity is founded upon a law of mutual exchange. Any person who contributes to prosperity must prosper, in turn, himself. Sometimes the return will not come from those you serve, but it must come to you from someplace, for that is the law.

For every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. As you go daily through your 30 day test period, remember, that your success will always be measured by the quality and quantity of service you render and money is a yardstick for measuring this service. No man can get rich himself unless he enriches others.

There are no exceptions to a law. You can drive down any street in America and, from your car, estimate the service that is being rendered by the people living on that street. Have you ever thought of this yardstick before? It's interesting. Some, like ministers, and priests and other devoted people measure their returns in the realm of the spiritual, but again, their returns are equal to their service.

Once this law is fully understood, any thinking person can tell his fortune. If he wants more, he must be of more service to whom he receives his return. If he wants less, he has only to reduce this service. This is the price you must pay for what you want.

If you believe you can enrich yourself by diluting others, you can only end by diluting yourself. Just as surely as you breathe, you'll get back what you put out. Don't ever make the mistake of thinking you can overtake this, it's impossible. The prisons and streets where the lonely walk are full of people who tried to make new laws just for themselves. We may avoid the laws of man, but there are greater laws that cannot be broken.

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An outstanding medical doctor recently pointed out six steps that will help you realize success. One, set yourself a definite goal. Two, quit running yourself down. Three, stop thinking of all the reasons why you can't be successful and instead, think of all the reasons why you can. Four, trace your attitudes back to your childhood and try to discover where you first got the idea you couldn't be a success, if that's the way you've been thinking. Five, change the image you have of yourself by writing out a description of the person you would like to be and six, act the part of the successful person you have decided to become.

The doctor who wrote those words is a noted West Coast psychiatrist, David Harold Fink, M.D. Do what all the experts since the dawn of recorded history have told you, you must do: pay the price by becoming the person you want to become. It's not nearly as difficult as living unsuccessfully.

Make your 30 day test, then repeat it, then repeat it again. Each time it will become more a part of you until you wonder how you could have ever lived any other way. Live this new way and the flood gates of abundance will open and pour over you more riches than you may have dreamed existed. Money, yes, lots of it, but what's more important you'll have peace. You'll be in that wonderful minority who lead calm, cheerful successful lives. Start today. You have nothing to lose. But you have a life to win.

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