

One's associates constitute the most important part of one's environment, and environmental influences determine whether one forms the habit of drifting or becomes a non-drifter. The person who exercises due caution in the choice of associates never allows himself to be closely associated with any person who does not bring to him, through the association, some definite mental, spiritual, or economic benefit.

*Q* Isn't that method of choosing associates selfish?

*A* It is sensible and leads to self-determination. It is the desire of every normal person to find material success and happiness.

Nothing contributes more to one's success and happiness than carefully chosen associates. Caution in the selection of associates becomes, therefore, the duty of every person who wishes to become happy and successful. The drifter allows his closest associates to attach themselves to him on their own terms. The non-drifter carefully selects his associates and allows no one to become closely associated with him unless that person contributes some form of helpful influence or bestows some definite benefit.

*Q* It never occurred to me that caution in the selection of friends had so definite a bearing on one's success or failure. Do all successful people exercise caution in the selection of all their associates, whether in business, social, or professional relationships?

*A* Without the exercise of caution in the choice of all associates, no one may be certain of success in any calling. On the other hand, lack of exercise of caution brings almost certain defeat in whatever one undertakes.