



Book Tuesday Morning Coaching

Eight Simple Truths to Boost Your Career and Your Life

David Cottrell
CornerStone Leadership Institute, 2010

Recommendation

This valuable, helpful book by popular leadership author David Cottrell spells out in concrete detail “eight simple truths” to follow to achieve career and life success. These truths are self-evident and you can benefit from their presentation. Nevertheless, Cottrell errs on the side of the sentimental. This work over-references his other books and features dialogue perhaps more illustrative than credible. But the concepts remain worthy and solid, and Cottrell presents them so anyone can understand and apply them. *BooksInShort* recommends this rapid-fire read to those who want to organize their life and thoughts and who can smile through a bit of hyperbole.

Take-Aways

- Follow “eight simple truths” to attain your life and career goals:
- First, do what you must to succeed “no matter what.”
- Second, go the extra mile “and then some.”
- Third, fulfill your responsibilities, so you can say, “consider it done.”
- Fourth, stick to your principles “above all else.”
- Fifth, “from now on,” do things differently, carry change forward and avoid old mistakes.
- Sixth, “see it, feel it, trust it, do it.” Visualize your goals, make them personal, tell others about them and plan them thoroughly.
- Seventh, pay attention to what you can control by focusing “inside your boat.”
- Eighth, “knowledge is power,” so read more books to become smarter and make better decisions.
- Write down your goals and plans, thus triggering the brain’s creative right hemisphere.

Summary

Where’s My Mojo?

Ryan Harris was confused, upset and discouraged. Somehow, he had gone from a bright, energetic, optimistic young manager-trainee to a burned-out mid-level executive. He was unsure of himself, worried about the future and overwhelmed by life. He did not feel like himself at work or home. Harris wanted to regain his spark and turn his career around. He needed to “reboot.” But he had no idea how.

“Most people who are unhappy in life are unhappy because they don’t have goals or a sense of purpose.”

Harris contacted his former boss, author and consultant Jeff Walters. Harris considered Walters an ideal role model and potential teacher. Harris asked Walters to mentor him; Walters agreed. He offered to give Harris mentoring sessions on eight consecutive Tuesdays, a symbolically appropriate day. Managers like Harris often attain success quickly – “on Monday,” so to speak. Then, somehow, they lose their way. “Tuesdays are for getting back on track.”

“All great truths are simple in final analysis, and easily understood; if they are not, they are not great truths.” (Napoleon Hill)

Walters made a few stipulations. Harris would have to show up on time (7 a.m.), work hard and do his assigned homework on deadline. Harris must agree to “try something different,” without knowing what that might be. He had to be truthful with Walters – and with himself. Finally, Harris agreed to share what he learned with

others. Walters gave him a spiral-bound notebook, explaining that writing your thoughts and plans in longhand activates the brain's right hemisphere, "where creativity, conceptual thinking and problem solving exist."

"People get caught up during life's journey and forget to take care of the basics."

To commence, Walters asked Harris what was bothering him. Harris explained his sense of *ennui*, displacement and lost enthusiasm. He felt that he had lost his mojo. His unhappiness about his career fomented negative events in his home life and his health. Somehow, things had gone from great to awful. Harris didn't know why.

"When you write things down, it clarifies and reinforces your commitment to doing them."

"The problems you're facing are not unique to you," Walters said, explaining that everyone feels low at some point. He assured Harris that he could work his way out of his despondency. Harris had already taken an important first step – he had asked someone he regarded as wise for help. Walters explained that eight simple truths form the path to positive change. "Success is created – and sustained – by discovering simple truths from many people, and then applying them in your unique situation." For success, vest fully in the process. Learn to recognize and apply these truths:

1. "No Matter What" – Do What You Must to Succeed

Walters cited Aesop's fable in which the swift hare lost a race to the slow tortoise because the rabbit was so far ahead he got distracted and took a nap while the turtle plodded steadily ahead. "I've found that successful people are not distracted by their success," Walters said. This perception leads to the "first truth": No Matter What. People who achieve their goals do not let anything distract them. They go around obstacles or push them out of the way. They "accept responsibility" for their actions and their situation. They do whatever it takes to succeed – no matter what.

"Each curveball in life gives us yet another opportunity to practice the simple truths of success."

Successful people do not shy away from making tough decisions. They keep their minds open to alternatives. If one route to your goal closes up, find another. Walters suggested that whenever Harris wasn't sure how to proceed with a problem, he should make a list of "at least 10 alternatives to your situation." People find that the final alternative often proves to be the best. Harris vowed to "do something different" when he ran up against a new problem – to "focus on moving forward rather than on the distractions." Walters taught him, "The most successful people...ask themselves, 'Is this the best use of my time at this moment?'"

"Integrity is the commitment to do what is right, regardless of the circumstances."

Harris' first homework assignment was to meet with the leading salesperson in his organization, Kelley Baxley, and find out what made her successful.

2. "And Then Some" – Go the Extra Mile

On the following Tuesday, Harris told Walters that he had met with Baxley, who earned the most sales year after year because she always did something extra – making an extra call every day, sending out handwritten notes daily and so on. Walters explained that the sales superstar proved his second truth: And Then Some. She always did more – adding something extra to all of her activities. "There aren't many people traveling the extra mile," Walters said. "But that is where real success happens." Harris promised to create a list outlining the ways he could add extra effort to his own life, and to strive to turn these actions into habits that would become second nature.

"Every minute spent in planning will save you five minutes in execution."

His next homework assignment was to take Julie, the receptionist for Walters's company, to lunch. Harris was to ask for Julie's thoughts on "what makes people successful."

3. "Consider It Done" – Fulfill Your Responsibilities

Julie told Harris that the successful people she dealt with shared three characteristics. They possessed an "abundance mentality," the idea that there is enough success to go around for everyone. They are not afraid to ask others for their opinions on how to do things. And they always "follow through" on their jobs. Walters explained that he sent Harris to meet Julie because of her great attitude. Whenever he gave Julie a job to do, she always said, "Consider it done." Harris needed to incorporate this positive approach into all of his own tasks and responsibilities. "There are more than words within that phrase," Walters said. "There is confidence, commitment and accountability...plus, it reflects an attitude of moving forward."

"Change should be constant and welcomed, even when things are going well."

Harris's homework, Walters said, was to spend two hours of quality time with his wife Michele, discussing how they could apply these new rules in their home life.

4. "Above All Else" – Stick to Your Principles

At their next session, Walters discussed the danger of complacency. "Complacency is the root of mediocrity and mediocrity is success's worst enemy – a far greater enemy than failure." Walters introduced the fourth truth: Above All Else. In other words, people must establish nonnegotiable values in their lives, and stick to them above all other considerations – they never should waver. For example, Walters cited Chick-fil-A, the fast-food chain. Chick-fil-A never opens on Sundays, a profitable business day for fast-food franchises. Truett Cathey, the founder of Chick-fil-A, stands on principle that his employees should have a day off each week.

"If you want something bad enough, you will make the time to do it."

For homework, Walters told Harris to contact famous football coach Jerry Ferguson, who would be expecting the call. Given Ferguson's "unbelievable winning

streak...he must be doing something better than his competitors,” Walters said. Harris was to discover what made Ferguson special.

5. “From Now On” – Carry Change Forward

Walters taught Harris to handle problems by listing three items: “1) the problem as you perceive it; 2) the impact it has on you or others; and 3) what you want to accomplish.” Harris was to write out the causes of a specific problem and its possible solutions. Coach Ferguson told Harris that during his first year coaching he lost every single game. The team’s boosters wanted him fired. But the coach decided not to be discouraged. He would put his head down and plow ahead. From this Harris learned, “It’s okay to fail – everyone fails at some point – but it’s not okay to keep failing.” The fifth truth, From Now On, really translates to “change now!” Personal growth requires change. Ferguson had vowed to “learn from his failures” and change his actions going forward so he would never repeat an error. Many people rely on excuses and complain about their circumstances, but not Ferguson, whose early failures as a coach helped him develop “humility, perseverance and courage.”

“Saying ‘yes’ to one thing always means saying ‘no’ to something else.”

For his next assignment, Walter told Harris to contact golf professional David Cook. “I’ve arranged for him to give you a golf lesson,” Walters said. “I don’t play golf,” Harris replied. Walters said: “The lesson you’ll get from David...you can use in all areas of your life.”

6. “See It, Feel It, Trust It, Do It!” – Follow Through on Your Goals

The golf pro proved to be a sports psychologist with a PhD. He taught Harris that golf is a mental, not a physical, game. Harris never touched a golf club during his lesson. Instead, Cook taught him to establish firm objectives by using a four-step, goal-setting process:

1. **See it** – Visualize your goal as clearly as you can. Set that goal firmly “in your mind.” Imagine what you want to take place, for example, getting the “ball on the fairway,” instead of what “you don’t want” to take place, that is, putting the “ball in the water.”
2. **Feel it** – Put your goal down on paper. Make it “positive, personal and present tense.” For example, write “I am a nonsmoker on June 18.” Then perform a “reality check.” Ask yourself: “Why do I want to achieve this goal?” “Is it achievable and realistic?” “Am I willing to pay the price?”
3. **Trust it** – Tell your goal to someone who will “hold you accountable.”
4. **Do it** – A good plan for achieving your goal should include the following: a description of your present situation (“I currently smoke two packs a day”), a deadline to attain your goal, a list of the obstacles you need to overcome and the names of people who can help you. Detail every step you must take to achieve your objective.

“What’s important is seldom urgent, and what’s urgent is seldom important.” (President Dwight David Eisenhower)

Harris’s homework was to read author David Cottrell’s manual *Time! 105 Ways to Get More Done Every Workday*.

7. “Inside Your Boat” – Focus on Events Within Your Control

Harris began reading the book, but he accidentally left it in the break room and someone took it. Walters was displeased. “You haven’t lived up to your commitment,” he said. Walters gave Harris another copy. He then told Harris about his friend Charlie Jones, a sportscaster. During the 1996 Olympics, Jones covered “the rowing, canoeing and kayaking events.” Prior to their events, Jones asked the boaters how they handled “rain, strong winds or choppy water.” Every one replied: “That’s outside my boat.” These extraordinary athletes had remarkable focus. Walters’ seventh rule, pay attention to matters Inside Your Boat, provides a good lesson about time management. People can gain more control over their time through heightened attention, focusing strictly on what is within their immediate purview. “Your attention reflects your conscious decisions about which activities will occupy your time,” Walters said. It is impossible to manage time, but entirely possible to manage your attention. To do so:

- **Identify your most important priorities** – These are not necessarily the fun activities.
- **Be ready “to say ‘no’”** – If not, others will eat away at your available time.
- **Do not procrastinate** – Do things now, not later.

“According to the U.S. Labor Department, business people who read at least seven business books per year earn over 250% more than people who read just one book per year.”

For his last homework assignment, Harris had to interview Ralph Hendricks, a fire chief.

8. “Knowledge Is Power” – Keep Learning

Harris found out that the more Ralph Hendricks and his firefighters know about fire, and how to fight it, the more skilled they will be and the more lives they can save – including their own. The fire chief understands that knowledge is power, and he “believes that if his people know the fundamentals of fire and understand fire behavior, they will be prepared and the fire will not surprise them.”

“Difficult always comes before easy.”

No matter what the task, every person needs to know as much as possible about his or her job. Walters advised Harris to read as many books as he could. Reading enables people to gain broader, valuable knowledge, which translates to making more intelligent decisions. Walters pointed out that most CEOs “read four books a month,” while most employees seldom read books at all. Gaining knowledge must be an enduring imperative, he said, advising Harris to become a “lifelong learner.”

Harris thanked Walters and implemented his eight truths in his professional and personal life. As a result, things improved dramatically for him at work and at home. Harris vowed to pass along the valuable knowledge he gained from Walters. “You give more so you will have more to give.”

About the Author

David Cottrell is president and CEO of CornerStone Leadership Institute and the author of numerous books, including the popular *Monday Morning* series.
