



Book No Excuses!

The Power of Self-Discipline

Brian Tracy
Vanguard Press, 2010
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Recommendation

In this ambitious work, Brian Tracy presents a formula for overcoming life’s major challenges. It boils down to applying self-discipline to achieve overall success and happiness. Tracy’s topics range from acting with integrity to making sales to strengthening your marriage. With such a broad span, his advice is necessarily general and elementary. However, if you avoid looking for specific solutions, and focus on the overall theme of the book, you will find it quite helpful. Tracy espouses that you need to accept responsibility for your own contentment and career. His “No Excuses” approach eliminates handy scapegoats and teaches that you must take charge of your own destiny. *BooksInShort* recognizes that much of the book’s counsel appears in various forms in this prolific author’s previous work. However, that’s no excuse for not giving it a thorough read.

Take-Aways

- To be happy and successful, stop making excuses and concentrate on making progress.
- Employ 21 self-discipline methods to succeed in every aspect of your life.
- To best utilize those methods, clearly define your goals.
- Accept responsibility for your own happiness; don’t blame others for your problems.
- Master your craft and develop your skills to increase your earnings potential.
- Focus only on those activities that will help you achieve your desired results.
- Succeeding in business requires self-discipline and a thorough understanding of sound business principles.
- Manage your time efficiently by prioritizing your tasks and then completing them in order of importance.
- The ingredients of happiness are good health, meaningful work and relationships, financial independence and living up to your potential.
- Invest in your spiritual health to attain inner peace.

Summary

“Losers Make Excuses; Winners Make Progress”

You can always come up with dozens of reasons why you haven’t achieved your goals. Perhaps you had an overbearing mother, or the economy is tough or your boss doesn’t appreciate you. The list of excuses is endless. However, if you want to be successful, redirect the energy you put into making excuses into making progress. You will surprise yourself. Life is difficult for everybody, but successful people achieve their goals in spite of life’s obstacles. They eat “dinner before dessert.” They forfeit immediate pleasure for long-term satisfaction. They set goals, work hard and apply themselves. They develop and repeat good career practices until they

become second nature. This requires self-discipline. By applying the following 21 methods of self-discipline to every aspect of your life, you will improve in the three major arenas: “Personal Success; Business, Sales and Finances; and Personal Life.” By practicing “self-mastery” and “self-control,” you will like yourself more. You’ll feel a sense of pride and accomplishment, and enjoy an enhanced self-image. Ultimately, you’ll feel empowered, in charge and positive about the future.

Method One: “Success”

Imagine your perfect life. When you define what success means to you in work, family, health and finances, you’ll immediately see what you need to do to attain your ideal life. Now that you know what you want, you can discipline yourself to get it. The “Pareto Principle” defines the 80/20 relationship; for example, the top 20% of society enjoys 80% of its riches. To become a 20% member, identify the skills you need and the actions you must take. Study techniques, read books and attend workshops of the people who have succeeded before you. If you are willing to apply yourself and work hard, you can achieve your goals.

Method Two: “Character”

The defining trait of character is integrity. Acting with integrity requires the self-discipline to resist succumbing to temptation and to do what you know is right. Your true character becomes apparent during a crisis or when you are under pressure. Study the values exhibited by those whom you most respect and admire. You can develop character through “instruction, study and practice.” The “psychology of character” consists of “your self-ideal, your self-image and your self-esteem.” Your self-ideal represents the good person you want to be. Your self-image is how you see yourself, and your self-esteem reflects how you regard yourself emotionally. Practice the value you want to adopt until it becomes an ingrained habit. When your actions align with your values, you experience high self-esteem.

Method Three: “Responsibility”

Author Brian Tracy worked in construction when he was 21. He lived from paycheck to paycheck, barely earning enough to get by with no opportunity for advancement. One night, sitting alone in his bleak apartment, he experienced an epiphany. Tracy realized that only he could change his life. In his first step toward manifesting his goals, he bought a self-improvement book and studied it diligently. Negative emotions stem from anger and depend on your propensity to blame others for your circumstances. That is the easy way out. Accepting responsibility for your own success and happiness requires effort and self-discipline. That acceptance leads to control over your life and your destiny.

Method Four: “Goals”

Follow this method to set goals and achieve your ideal life: Determine what you wish to achieve, “write it down” and establish a deadline. Create a list of all the actions required, arranged by time and importance. Start to carry out these steps right away. And then “do something every day that moves you in the direction of your major goal.”

Method Five: “Personal Excellence”

Your most valuable asset is yourself. By investing in your craft and developing your skills, you increase your worth and earnings potential. However, you need to commit to making this a priority throughout your life and career. Begin your day a little earlier. You’ll be surprised by how much you can achieve in your first hour. If you read for only an hour a day, you’ll read over 50 books per year. Listen to educational audio programs whilst in your car. Soon, you’ll be an expert in your field of study. Write at least 10 daily tasks down. Don’t multitask; work on each undertaking single-mindedly from start to finish. After every business meeting, ask yourself, “What did I do right?” and “What can I do better?”

Method Six: “Courage”

Everyone is afraid of something, and most people particularly fear “failure, poverty and loss of money.” Self-discipline helps you develop the necessary courage to face your terrors. Practice confronting what you dread by identifying a person or situation you’ve been avoiding and resolving to deal with it straightforwardly. Sometimes fear takes the form of worry or anxiety. Isolate exactly what is bothering you. Next, imagine the worst-case scenario and realize that you can deal with its consequences and survive.

Method Seven: “Persistence”

Nothing great in life is achieved without persistence. The ability to persevere will get you through setbacks, frustrations, impediments and even crises; it will make you feel happier and more in control. To increase your perseverance, repeat: “I am unstoppable!” and “I never give up.” Don’t make excuses, indulge in self-pity or act like a victim.

Method Eight: “Work”

People spend too much time on unproductive tasks. Once again, the Pareto Principle comes into play: 20% of your professional activities produce 80% of your desired results. The “Law of Three” states that three tasks in your job are responsible for around 90% of your value as an employee. Identify your most productive activities and focus on them, don’t be distracted from working your hardest. When surveyed, a group of executives said that the two qualities they look for in an employee are “the ability to set priorities and work on high-value tasks,” and “the discipline to get the job done quickly and well.”

Method Nine: “Leadership”

Inspiring, effective leaders are masters of self-discipline. They have clarity of purpose and demand a stellar standard of excellence. Great leaders put the success of the organization over their personal goals. However, they are realists and see where their company needs to improve. They’re open to new ideas and are committed

lifelong learners. Winning leaders are trustworthy, steadfast and consistent in their thinking and their actions.

Method Ten: “Business”

Your product or service must be something that consumers desire, use willingly and pay a competitive price for. Work harder, longer and better than your competitors do. Know your target audience and your “unique selling proposition.” Focus on providing a high level of customer service, and always measure your performance. You will know you are doing well when your customers promote your business to their friends and family.

Method Eleven: “Sales”

A sales role can be challenging but has a huge earning potential. Ask yourself frequently, “Is what I’m doing right now leading to a sale?” Fearing rejection is a big obstacle; salespeople often avoid cold calling and stray off task. To succeed, know that “rejection is not personal.” Play the numbers game: Cultivate more prospects and you’ll close more sales.

Method Twelve: “Money”

Most people get into money trouble because they don’t exercise self-control. They want immediate gratification; they equate happiness with acquisition. Change your thinking so that saving cash becomes a source of satisfaction. As your savings grow, you’ll be much more secure and contented. Alleviating worry about money leads to personal satisfaction.

Method Thirteen: “Time Management”

The “ability to choose the sequence of events ” defines the art of time management. If you prioritize tasks and then complete them in order, you can manage your time efficiently. Think of every activity as an investment and consider whether you are getting the maximum return. Use the “A B C D E Method” to manage your day: Make a list of everything you need to do. Then assign a letter from A to E to each task, weighing its relative importance. Go through your A tasks first, and continue down the list. Never work on something that isn’t the best use of your time, focus and energy.

Method Fourteen: “Problem Solving”

Most successful people respond to challenges. Many use the following approach to problem solving: First, clearly define the dilemma. Ask yourself, “Is this really a problem?” Is it something you can resolve, or is it beyond your control? Consider the roots of the problem so you can make sure such a thing never happens again. Brainstorm all possible solutions and then pick the one that makes the most sense at the time. Decide how to implement the answer of your choice and who will be responsible. Then, as always, measure the results.

Method Fifteen: “Happiness”

Humans are social beings who depend on others for happiness. However, everyone experiences increased happiness when they feel in control of their emotions as well as their circumstances. So, take the first step toward a happier life; assume power and put yourself in charge. When you fulfil your potential, you feel better about yourself in every way. When you exercise self-discipline in physical fitness, good relationships, purposeful work, monetary security and “self-actualization,” you increase your odds of finding contentment.

Method Sixteen: “Personal Health”

Get solid information on how to reach and maintain good health. By following some basic rules, you will live longer and healthier. Eat regular meals, avoid snacking and don’t overeat. Replace white flour with whole wheat, and don’t overdo the sugar and salt.

Method Seventeen: “Physical Fitness”

Exercise for around 30 minutes as an essential part of your daily routine. You don’t need to train for the Olympics, but you do need to work out regularly. Always wear your seatbelt, don’t smoke or drink to excess. You can only feel truly happy when you are physically fit.

Method Eighteen: “Marriage”

A long-term, committed relationship is essential to your well-being. The keys to a happy marriage are “compatibility” and “temperament.” Your basic characteristics, especially your values, should mesh with and support those of your spouse. Maintaining a strong relationship takes effort and good listening skills. To become an effective listener, focus on what they’re saying, without interrupting. Take a brief moment to consider your response before speaking. If you don’t understand something – and never assume that you do – ask questions. Lastly, confirm what they said in your own words.

Method Nineteen: “Children”

The best you can do for your children is to let them know that you love them unconditionally. There are no shortcuts to or substitutes for spending time with your children as they grow up. Your responsibility is to create a safe environment in which they can explore and experiment. Through your daily actions, your children learn values, and they will emulate your behavior. If you show self-control, when dealing with problems, they will do the same.

Method Twenty: “Friendship”

The key to being a good friend is to give others what you want for yourself. Show them that you like and respect them, and that you value their friendship. Accept them for who they are without judgments. Let them know that you appreciate what they have to offer. Say “thank you.” Make sure you are someone people want to spend time with; be pleasant and affable. Be aware that when you criticize or complain, it can be destructive to someone else’s self-esteem. Practice the three “C’s”: “courtesy, concern and consideration.”

Method Twenty One: “Peace of Mind”

Invest in your spiritual health to attain inner peace. Discipline yourself to separate your emotions from material things. Let go of the “need to be right.” Stop blaming others for getting in the way of your well-being. Practice forgiveness to achieve tranquility. “The discipline of forgiveness is the key to the spiritual kingdom.”

About the Author

Brian Tracy has written 13 books, including the bestsellers *Eat That Frog* and *The 21 Success Secrets of Self-Made Millionaires*. He is a much-sought-after corporate adviser and trainer.
