

TAKING CONTROL OF YOUR LIFE
FOUNDATION OF GROWTH IS TO KNOW THE SELF & WORK ON
THE SELF

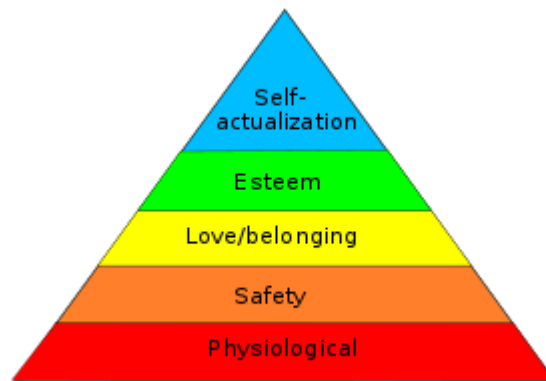
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Introduction

The first essential requirement for any achievement is empowerment. The process of gaining freedom and power to do what you want or to control what happens to you is the idea of ‘SELF EMPOWERMENT’. The essence of self-empowerment is the acceptance of the fact that YOU cannot always determine what comes your way in life, but you need to equip yourself well enough so that you can steer yourself towards a more effective and fulfilling life.

Self-actualization or the need to realize one's own maximum potential and possibilities is a desire which most people dream to achieve. *'Maslow's hierarchy of needs'* created by American psychologist Abraham Harold Maslow in 1943 was a theory of psychological health based on fulfilling human needs in priority, resulting in self-actualization. Maslow's hierarchy of needs is represented as a five-tier hierarchical level pyramid with the more basic needs at the bottom. A need on the lower tier must be satisfied first before the individual moves towards satisfying a need higher up in the pyramid.



Source: <https://www.wikipedia.org/>

The levels of needs in the pyramid in ascending order are – physiological, safety, love/belonging, esteem and the fifth and highest level relates to the need for self-esteem and self-worth. This level shows the importance of self-fulfillment for an individual and the reason why people want to empower themselves and aspire to maximize and ultimately reach their full potential.

Realizing the Power of 'YOU' is the basis of life. What 'YOU' think, 'YOU' become. What idea 'YOU' conceive, turns 'YOU' into a success story. What 'YOU' believe in truthfully and blindly from the depth of your heart ultimately happens to 'YOU'. 'YOU' can change your destiny by 'YOUR' karma. 'YOU' are the architect of your own future.



YOUR future is in YOUR hands. Empower YOURSELF and Take Control of your Life.

Power of Positive Choices

Everyone has to make choices in life. Even if you decide not to make a choice – that itself is a choice too. So a choice has to be made and it may be unnerving and anxious for many people to keep pondering over whether they have made the right choice.

Old times were simpler times. People were not stressed out in choosing between alternatives – as soft drink only meant ‘campa cola’ and entertaining television program only meant ‘chitrahaar’. Not only choices amongst material objects, but even personal and professional choices were simpler – Sunday outing meant picnic

with family and ‘gajjar ka halwa’ with dry fruits was made only when the boss came for dinner. However, the dilemma bothering people today is the variety of choices available in both personal and professional fronts:

- Tea v/s Coffee
- Sleep v/s Exercise
- Eating out v/s Eating home cooked food
- Holiday with family in Spain v/s Holiday with friends in Goa
- Army posting at non family station (higher salary) v/s Army posting at family station (lower salary)
- Designation ‘Asia Pacific – Regional Development Manager’ based at Singapore v/s Designation ‘Regional Development Manager’ based at New Delhi
- Firing employee due to recession v/s Absorbing employee in tangent department instead of firing

The choices to be made on a daily basis are endless. Making positive choices ensures that you live a happy and enriching life. A choice is a positive choice if it is made for growth and betterment. A choice is a positive choice if it is made with a positive mind-set and for a constructive outcome even in the most difficult circumstances. How are we to ensure that we have made the right choice?

There is no guarantee and no sure shot way to decipher if you have made the right choice. However, there are ways to consciously enable yourself to make positive choices, which can be listed as follows:

- Focus only on your goal and what you desire as the end-result when making a choice
- Don’t let the fear of failure disarm you. Sometimes failure is just disguised good luck.
- Don’t make any choice when in the moment of extreme emotion i.e. anger, happiness, depression etc.
- Make informed choices based on factual information and not on assumptions or hearsay or gossip
- Don’t overanalyze either before or after making a choice.
- Find a quiet time to think about your choice

- Accept the external and internal constraints within which the choice has to be made instead of avoiding them
- It is impossible to be totally free from influence when making a choice, but if we become more aware of those influences and understand how they affect our decision making, it will help in making a positive choice

Setting Goals

An aim triggers action. People find it easier to be motivated by set goals. Further if those goals are put down on paper – it adds a sense of finality to them. List what you aspire for in life whether it is material possessions, happiness, strong relationships etc. The structure you need to adopt for fulfillment of goals needs to be chalked out and put on paper. Once the structure is in place achieving the goals does not seem a daunting task. We need to draw out a time schedule of work commencement and completion and the methods to be adopted. Once that is done we have attained a shallow foundation. To obtain a deeper foundation we need to create an environment of introspection and self-motivation. Sharpening knowledge in your goal areas is imperative. There is always an innovation, a new technique, a better way of doing things being discovered and it equips you to learn the ways of the changing times. Always be in transit in life. For goal fulfillment, you can keep supplementing your knowledge forever.



Organized planning is the only route to success. Success doesn't happen overnight. Hard work, perseverance and years of consistent implementation of plans eventually make you look like an overnight success. Plans crystallize desire into action which ultimately steer you to success. Your dreams and vision take shape in the form of plans. To be effective, a plan of action must have a definite deadline as the mind works on specific information. Planning without timing is futile. Even if your idea is still in the nascent stage, an itinerary is essential. If you had the money to put the plan in action – What would you do? If you have already prepared the blueprint of plan of action, then when you actually have the capital to turn your idea into reality, your job would be easier and quicker.

For a plan to succeed it must be practical and workable. However, although your itinerary should be pragmatic but it should not be too orthodox and laden with worry and over-caution. While jotting down the plan of action remember that if you want to achieve extra-ordinary things you can't be ordinary. You may have to stick your neck out and go out of your comfort zone to make magic.

It should be a definite course of action with an unambiguous time schedule of completion. If your plan fails to achieve the desired result – make another plan – and then another. Don't be afraid if your plan fails. Failure of a plan does not guarantee failure of your goal. It just educates you to adopt a different approach and make a new map of action.

Plans require details, information, facts, figures etc. which you may not have access to on your own. To prepare a master plan to achieve your riches you may require the assistance of various people and resources. So the first step towards making a plan for attainment of your goal should be to identify the men, material and money you may need to carve your plan.

Just writing the plan will not be enough. It has to be put into action. Putting off a plan and waiting for the right day and time to put the plan in action is a guarantee of lack of confidence in your goal.

Initially when we write our plan, enthusiasm and excitement of making our first step towards our goal drives us. But as time wears on, our goal becomes distant and unattainable. That is why specific money figure and specific time figure is a must when preparing a plan. A plan to achieve a goal of “I want to make \$10,000

per month starting from 1st January 2018” is easier to implement than a plan to achieve a goal defined as “I want to make more money next year” as there is ambiguity about the initiation and completion point.

When you have determined the tasks which need to be implemented to achieve your goal, then you must determine the actions you will need to perform to attain the goal. List these actions and put each of them in a time schedule. You can break the plan down to one task each day. At times the goal looks overwhelming. When we break down the goal into small steps in the form of a schedule or plan we make our goal seem attainable as we decipher the way forward to our sub-conscious mind.

Once you have laid out a plan in the form of a daily schedule and targets to attain for the journey towards the goal, the most important part of the planning is to follow your schedule to finally achieve your goal.

Skill Development

A wise man once said, ‘add life to your days, not days to your life’. Your ability to do something is your skill. Skills need to be enhanced and upgraded. Your competence and expertise can be displayed by developing your skills.

Be a livewire: always full of life. Channel your passion towards your goal into your personal self as well. When you are energetic and vibrant you bring a new magical gusto in your small tasks. This reduces struggle and inefficiency and fills you with positivity to surge forward. Discover something new each day. Create something new each day. Leave your comfort zone, break habits, unlearn what you already know and explore new territories.

Acquire new skills and hone your existing ones. Challenge yourself and you will be surprised.

a. Personal Skills

Improve your personal skills. Soft skills are the personal attributes that enhance an individual's personality, job performance and career prospects. Some examples for the same could be Communication skills; Anger management skill; Team

management skills; General etiquette; Negotiation skills; Behavioural traits; Time management techniques; Stress management skills etc. which are your essential character traits. Your soft skills set you apart from others and give you an edge over them. They are the key factor in determining how far and at what rate you will climb the ladder to success. In both personal and professional field, soft skills are much harder to teach as compared to technical expertise. But once you enhance your soft skills your goals come closer within your reach and the path to success accelerates.

b. Interpersonal Skills

The ability to communicate or interact well with other people (whether it is peers, subordinates or your team) is what is known as interpersonal skills. Interpersonal skills differ from soft skills or personal skills as they are the skills which come into play when there is interaction between two or more persons as opposed to personal skills which are essentially your character traits. Whatever business or profession you may be in – interaction with various kinds of people is essential. The people you come in contact with may be from different social, economic and cultural background. If in employment, you may come in contact with maybe not one but many employers, your colleagues and juniors. If in self-employment, you may be transacting business with customers, suppliers, creditors etc. almost every day. Your interpersonal skills become vital in these cases – to the extent that they largely determine your success and fame ratio.

Interpersonal skills can be loosely described as life skills we use every day when interacting with others personally or professionally. They may include a variety of activities like – Communication, Listening, body language, ability to collaborate, display of work ethics and workplace etiquette, display of personal etiquette, commitment capacity, professionalism, problem solving capability, decision making ability, self-confidence, receptiveness to feedback, showing appreciation, positive attitude and overall vibrant demeanor. This list is not exhaustive and may include many more skills depending on the level of personal and professional interaction at play.

c. Leadership Skills

What or who is an actual leader? A leader is one who has a vision and set direction and inspires and guides others to the right way. It is possible for anyone to be a leader as leadership is based on the strengths and abilities individuals demonstrate. These abilities are essentially known as leadership skills as they lead the way toward achievement of goals. These leadership skills are to an extent in-built and are of varying styles, but since there is no particular style of leadership which can be considered the benchmark it is clear that leadership skills can definitely be acquired. There are certain key skills a leader must display viz.: Compelling vision, Decision making, Problem solving, Effective Communication, Effective Listening, Clarity, Time Management and most importantly Managing Emotions of self and others.

d. Presentation Skills

Presentation skill is the most important skill that a person must have for optimum growth. The presentation may be written or oral communication like power point presentations, articles, speeches etc. and may even be body language or the clothes you wear. Presentation may be you and your work as an entire package.

The first most important thing to remember in any kind of presentation is to put yourself in place of your audience (referring to people you are presenting to in whichever way as employer, leader, subordinate, colleague or otherwise) – what would you as an audience like to see, hear or read. Then explore what value addition you are bringing to the table – are you putting forward something new and innovative in what you are presenting or is it old wine in new bottle. Your audience may come from different cultural and social backgrounds – are you being neutral in your approach or is it becoming too centric on a particular thing. Happiness and positivity are global phenomenon and they sell – are you vibrant and positive (even though you may be talking statistics and financial performances) or are you dull and boring.

Be comfortable in your body. Stage fright or presenting in a boardroom full of the top management is an unnerving task for many because in their innermost existence they are not comfortable with themselves and have self-doubts. Transcend your fear with this single minded thought – If you are really truly

passionate about ‘what you are doing’, ‘how you are doing’ it becomes immaterial to the audience as they get hooked to your passion. So if you focus on your work, you won’t have to focus on results.

Practicing is the best way to improve. There is no replacement to practice – The more you practice the better you become undoubtedly. Take the advice of people who are probably in similar situations and are more experienced - Take their criticism constructively. Maintain a record book and after every presentation - note down pointers that you felt the audience liked and you make like to improvise and use again. Also identify pointers which you feel need more refinement.

Your body language and voice play a more important role in a successful presentation than the actual power point presentation you are showing your audience. If you smile, make eye contact, are willing to listen to others and are not flustered by rude interruptions – you have already won over your audience irrespective of the actual information you are imparting.

While making power point presentations remember to keep it simple. Too lengthy presentations with either too much text on one slide and inefficiently organized information on the slide can lead to a feeling of boredom and confusion for the audience. Be consistent in choice of bullets, fonts and text size. The purpose of the presentation is to hold interest and focus attention on the information itself and not puzzle the audience with over-the-top graphics. Clear and concise communication is appreciated by everyone.

When speaking in front of a live audience – the most important requirement is to connect with the audience. Focus on your audience’s need and not on your fear of interaction with them. Forge a bond with your audience before you jump into your topic of discussion and put your point across. This can be done by telling stories, narrating real life incidents or initiating an interactive dialogue with members of the audience on a neutral aspect of the topic.

Whatever your mode of presentation may be – remember the mantra for success is to just be yourself. If you just be yourself and not emulate others, you will present your presentation in a relaxed and comfortable manner.

e. Liasoning and Negotiation Skills

Liasoning is defined by oxford dictionary as an activity of communication or cooperation which facilitates a close working relationship between people or organizations. When a number of people are involved in any aspect whether it is personal or professional front – liasoning, negotiation and persuasion are a part and parcel of people involvement. Even in your personal life you play the roles of negotiator and perform various roles of persuasion, mediation, conflict resolution etc. as the situation demands.

Negotiation skill is a part-and -parcel of interpersonal and leadership skill too. Your ability to successfully negotiate empowers you to achieve mutually agreeable solutions while paying attention to others needs and viewpoints.

Whether you are a parent, a stay-at-home spouse, an employer, an employee, a facilitator or an active performer – everyone needs to improve their negotiation skills to gain self-empowerment and live fruitfully and in communion with others.

f. Communication Skills

Communication is important and it is the bridge to your destination. If written communication is faulty and lacking, the document becomes inadequate. Good correspondence has two rules; promptness and precision. Come across as clear, confident and concise. If verbal communication is ineffective you don't put across your ideas and views in the manner you had wanted to and thus lose out on a potential opportunity or valuable relationship. If your communication is not accompanied with the appropriate body language, you run the risk of an unsatisfied or unconvinced audience. Not only is communication vital in professional life, but it provides the '*fevicol*' for relationships in personal life too – it can make or break them.

Therefore, the quantity, quality and style of communication are very important for climbing the growth trajectory to success. It empowers you to put across your viewpoint in an accurate manner.

g. Perseverance Skills

Skill is the ability to do something well; and if you treat perseverance like an inherent skill and hone this skill by continuous rigorous practice you will realize that there is nothing in this world you can't achieve.

It isn't easy: but it has to be done. The only way to get over with it is to go through it: face it headlong. That in a nutshell is perseverance – the persistence in doing something despite difficulty or delay in achieving success.

The more you work, struggle and do whatever it takes to reach closer to your goal, you will observe that the worst is over and somehow things are getting better and better. Remember your goal and your well defined plan to achieve your goal, just focus on it; it will give you the strength to keep moving forward.

“Nothing in the world can take the place of persistence. Talent will not; nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent. Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not; the world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent. The slogan ‘press on’ has solved and always will solve the problems of the human race.” - Calvin Coolidge. So every time you feel like throwing in the towel, remember this famous quote of John Calvin Coolidge Jr., the 30th President of the United States of America and a Republican lawyer from New England who had a quiet but methodical climb up the political ladder.

**JUST
DONT
QUIT.**

Success and riches are not for the weak. You have to be made of strong metal to survive all odds and march on. Patiently persist.

Stress Management

‘Stress - the new killer’ is here to stay. It’s a part and parcel of what we do. It was always present even in earlier times, but probably didn’t get as much respect as it gets now. Stress is the body’s response mechanism against situations. So, when the body senses an uncomfortable situation it automatically kick-starts a “fight-or-flight” reaction to protect itself. Walter Bradford Cannon, a physiologist and professor coined the term ‘*fight or flight response*’, and described it to mean a physiological reaction that occurs in response to a perceived harmful event, attack, or threat to survival.

Stress can strike anywhere and anytime - before an important Board meeting, an approaching deadline, a job interview, your child’s board exam, a surgical operation of a loved one etc. The cause may be as trivial as the impending weather conditions. Some people may even get stress just by the ringing of their phone, even without having seen whose call it is or without even having picked up the call. It may be caused due to circumstances which are totally outside of human control and thereby imminent – however despite that knowledge, when you continue thinking of the circumstance, it completely stresses you out. In fact, stress is so bizarre that even happiness can cause stress – like marriage, pregnancy, start of a new job etc.

Stress need not always be harmful though. It motivates you and helps you to perform better. Stress to complete a project may actually motivate you to do a better job. Similarly, stress before a presentation may result in excellent preparation and practice which in turn may turn out an exemplary performance from your side.

However, too much of Stress – turns it into a disease. It can create negativity and generate inappropriate behavior which can cause immense loss in both personal and professional life. Therefore, if you learn to manage your stress, you can take total control of your emotions, responses and mindset and truly empower yourself to take control of your life.

Whatever your stress (it could range from something drastic as the death of a loved one to something as moderate as loss of a lifetime opportunity) and whatever your

method you chose to adopt to deal with your stress, there could be one ‘*root-mantra*’ you could consider keeping in mind which will most assuredly assist you in eliminating stress out of your mind. That ‘*root-mantra*’ is - “*the fact that you are alive and are in a stressful situation is a blessing – dead people are not stressed; so be thankful for being alive and solve every situation without a feeling of gloom. If it goes your way – it is good; If it doesn’t go your way – it is probably good which you cannot see as of now and time will reveal sooner or later.*”

“Everything is going to be right at the end. If it's not right, then it is not the end.”

- A Quote made famous by the 2011 movie ‘The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel’

Bullet Proof Mind

“For him who has conquered the mind, the mind is the best of friends; but for one who has failed to do so, his mind will remain the greatest enemy.”

- The Bhagavad-Gita, Chapter 6 verse 6

The single most important factor which directly determines your position in life is your own mind. Your achievement is a consequence of how your mind thinks. To be successful, you have to first train your mind. You must master your mind and have dominance over your thought.

Imagine wealth, victory, success – and you will achieve it. You want success and the universe will serve it to you if you can control your thought process. A human mind is a reservoir of power: It can conjure up zillion thoughts. The art is in taking that one thought which you believe in, and turning it into reality.



YOUR **Thoughts**
Create
YOUR **FUTURE**

The only way to control your mind and nurture your ‘positive thought which is your goal’ to scale great heights is to live in the NOW. There is no past and no future. Your present moment is the only truth and that is all that exists. Just focus on the immediate present moment which is here and now and you will make yourself powerful enough to control your mind.

Blinkers, sometimes known as blinders, are a piece of equestrian equipment that are placed on either side of a horse's head next to its eyes in order to keep the horse from seeing what is beside it and to the rear and, in some cases, to the side. The blinkers partly cover a horse's eyes so that it can only look straight ahead. If we put imaginary blinkers covering our eyes, we will condition it to look only straight ahead and not get distracted.

We tend to get easily influenced by the achievements, success and materialistic possessions of the people around us. Instead of making the most of what we have and counting our blessings we tend to count our shortcomings instead.

Let no one and nothing deviate your focus from your goals and shake your confidence. One sure shot way to achieve a bulletproof mind is to declare your goals each day to yourself by jotting them down in a diary. This keeps you focused and on the right path without distractions and digression.

Keep your mind occupied. Think laterally. When you observe something try not to see what everyone sees. Make it a habit to observe things innovatively and unconventionally from new perspective.

Self-Preservation

The idea of self-preservation or protection of oneself from harm is a basic instinct in humans. Nutrition, healthy food, exercise, mental health, social activities all go hand-in-hand in improving our quality of life. All these factors which help in self-preservation should be taken seriously as without having a healthy and well-functioning body, all other qualities are of no use and will not empower us.

a. Eating Right

Eating right has become a mantra in today's polluted and adulterated times. Every person is becoming more conscious of the substances he/she is putting into their body. A balanced diet comprising foods that contain vitamins and minerals, proteins, carbohydrates and right amount of fats are the way to a healthy life.

If you have health problems which are lifestyle diseases – blood pressure, cholesterol, obesity etc. - you can improve your condition with better nutrition.

It is hard to make a radical overnight change in your diet and eating habits. But if you consciously make small changes, you will eventually reach an overall healthy diet. Find the strong and weak points in your current diet and start from there. See what you can immediately change, and what needs to be handled slowly. Consult a dietician for best results and healthy way of eating. Keep track of your food intake by writing down what you eat and drink every day. This record will help you assess your diet. Try baking or grilling your food instead of frying it, so as to reduce fat intake. Don't eat in large portions.

There is innumerable literature on the types of super foods you should include in your diet. Try to read up as much as it interests you. However even if you have no knowledge of what foods should be consumed for healthy living, remember one thing which can never ever go wrong – “Eat natural. Avoid anything which comes in a packet”. Limit your intake of sweets and calorie high food. Eat nuts when hungry between meal times instead of snacks which come in packets. Small changes can go a long way. If you truly want to remain young, energetic and keep your body in good health – you can make small lifestyle changes in your everyday

life. Carry nuts and salted natural seeds which can be used as a quick snack when hungry instead of ordering a ‘samosa’ from the vendor close to your office.

It is rightly said that ‘Health is wealth’. You will not even be able to read what you are reading right now if you have an excruciating stomach ache. Even a small imbalance in your body can turn your entire day upside down. Eat right. Live Right. This will empower you to take control of yourself and perform to your super best capability, as only when you feel great, you work great.

To know the best diet suitable for your body and the health benefits and harmful effects of various foods, it is advisable to consult a dietician, nutritionist and other doctors of this field.

b. Exercise

Exercise benefits all parts of your body – skin, muscles, brain, heart, body weight and also prevents us from chronic diseases. With so many benefits to boost, everyone must obviously be exercising. But that is not so. We want to attain self-empowerment by developing skills and goal attainment but how will we have a body which is working in tandem with our goals and attainment of success. There can be no way in which we can transform our external life without first feeling totally fit, energetic and vibrant in our internal self. There is strong scientific evidence to prove that whatever your age may be, being physically active can help you lead a healthier and happier life.

Additionally, Meditation can be done to create more self-awareness. It identifies “You” to “Yourself”. As you meditate, you become more aware of each breath you take. Through Meditation you can identify your energies and then harness them to attract good fortune. To perform meditation and achieve its benefits it is always advisable to get in touch with a certified Yoga and Meditation practitioner.

c. Social Activities

Man is a social animal. Healthy relationships are the fundamentals of good health and well-being and in turn determine personal and professional success. When you

forge strong relationships with others you will generate a sense of camaraderie. Declare your goals and aspirations with supporters and people you trust which will in turn move you one step closer to achieving them.

The secret of happiness is being part of a community – a part of a whole. It gives you a sense of belonging and the willingness to achieve. There is a certain feeling of contentment or security which comes with kinship. Unification can come about in innumerable ways knowingly or unknowingly – you forge strong friendships in school and college; you strengthen relationships with relatives and loved ones; you bond with your neighbors; you mingle with associates and colleagues to get to know them better; you enjoy and party with friends; you join business groups with likeminded people to connect and form a network; you join the gym, hobby classes etc. to interact. Whatever the medium you adopt the purpose is to unify with others.

Although each of us has different skills, understandings and interests, we can become more conscious of our own thoughts and feelings when we integrate with our surroundings.

Financial Freedom

Robert Frost, an American poet aptly said “A bank is a place where they lend you an umbrella in fair weather and ask for it back when it begins to rain.”

That sums up financial freedom in a nutshell. You are rich but don't have freedom to use that money. You are rich but don't have freedom to earn that money. You are rich but don't have freedom to have alternative sources of income. You are rich but don't have freedom to lend that money to friend in times of need. All these are cases of absence of financial freedom.

Financial freedom would mean the luxury of not having to be anxious about money. It would mean a scenario in which money would not be the governing factor when making personal and professional decisions in life.

The first step towards attaining financial freedom is to create a ‘Financial Freedom Fund’.

Build an alternative fund other than your savings purely for utilization for that ‘One’ passion in your life which you aspire for but always ignore due to shortage of funds or guilt of spending. It will motivate you to work hard and achieve. You will want to push yourself everyday just so that you can make a small contribution to your ‘financial freedom fund’. But a word of caution – Always contribute to the fund only AFTER you have set aside the amounts you hoard every month as your savings. Otherwise you would have not only misunderstood the spirit behind the financial freedom fund but also put yourself in a difficult monetary situation.

Eventually, when you feel the time is right, dig into that fund guilt-free and spend it on the ‘reason’ you created it for. If your passion is travelling – grab your time and utilize your fund on that adventurous river rafting trip you always dreamed about but were always cash-strapped to undertake. If your passion is shopping – go splurge your fund on that Dolce & Gabbana designer dress, you always pined for.

Another word of caution – Always remember that the Financial Freedom Fund HAS to be utilized for the reason for which it was created. It is not to be built and then added into savings or spent on things it was not created for in the first place.

Always remember – Financial Freedom is more important than wealth.

Change Management

Change is the only constant in life. Accept Change. It is the shortest route to success. Acceptance does not mean compromise. It means to consent to the reality of a situation.

Flexibility or adaptability is a gift. The ability to be easily modified, change directions easily when required and compromise when appropriate, is a quality which people with strength of character possess. Flexibility does not mean ‘not sticking to your time schedule’ or ‘not doing the required task’. It means analyzing the situation and then altering a certain course of action to achieve the desired results.

Refusing to accept ‘Change’ in our lives is like refusing to accept that we are growing older – it will still happen anyway. We are too settled in our comfort

zones and feel uneasy on experiencing something different from the usual. What we forget is that the only permanent thing in this world is ‘change’ and one who does not change with the times gets left far behind.

Charles Darwin, English naturalist, geologist and biologist rightly said ‘*It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent that survives. It is the one that is the most adaptable to change*’.

Search for different ways in which you can accomplish your goal. Sometimes in life you need to stop whatever you are doing, take a deep breath and look from another point of view to see things differently. Approach the goal more creatively, with a new mindset. Sometimes all you need to do may be just to take a leap back and then re-emerge again, this time ‘packaged differently’. Changes are not an end in itself. They are just new beginnings of something different. We just have to transform, change perspective and work from a different angle.

Things, events, people cannot always be classified as good or bad; right or wrong; black or white. There are greys too – that in between ‘no man’s land’. Sometimes what is...is...and cannot be changed. In times like those it is best to change oneself and go with the flow – and you will be surprised where the flow may take you. Change your perspective and you may hit the jackpot.

Lifelong Learning

No person is ever old enough to acquire knowledge. As per the dictionary Knowledge is “facts, information, and skills acquired through experience or education; the theoretical or practical understanding of a subject”. Experience, education, observations, abilities, creativity – is all knowledge. Even if you have never been to an educational institution and acquired a degree, you may be illiterate but you may still be knowledgeable.

Knowledge is free. You can acquire it if you want. It is everywhere around you. The answer lies in choosing the knowledge you wish to acquire and the purpose for which it is required. You may need expert knowledge for the goal you want to achieve. Take steps to obtain expertise to achieve your goal. Specialized knowledge may come at a price but it may be a small price to pay for the

achievement of your goal. Acquiring knowledge and training is an investment; it should not be an afterthought.

Instead of fearing lack of knowledge, be ready to learn. In the technologically advanced times which we live in, knowledge is available at the click of a mouse. There are numerous ways to attain specialized knowledge – online courses; training courses; continuous education; courses from colleges and universities, libraries, apprenticeship, reading books, group discussions with people who already have the required knowledge of your field.

Many professional institutions and educational bodies have a system of Continuing Professional Education (CPE) for their members whereby even after completing a course and obtaining a degree, a member has to earn a stipulated number of CPE credits to retain his/her degree. These credits are earned by attending educatory seminars, workshops and conferences on further learning in the field. We must imbibe the system of CPE in our life too. Never think you know enough and there is no room for further knowledge.

Once you acquire the knowledge it needs to be organized and used in the best possible way. It is a globally competitive environment. Excellent talent may be available elsewhere but your expert knowledge will develop strong skills that enhance your performance. The pool of knowledge you have accumulated will give fresh ideas, expertise in the chosen area and practical techniques to grow your wealth.

Your ability to learn and transform that learning into an advantage will be the key to unlock your potential. Economically the world is going through a whirlpool of changes. There is technological and economic volatility. Specialized knowledge will guide you, show you opportunities and stretch your mind.

The ultimate purpose of being successful cannot be achieved if there is no aspiration to be valuable. What is the value addition we can make – will determine how successful we will become. What more can we provide? What is our skill set that is unique and cannot be duplicated by anyone? The knowledge, with which we equip our self, will help us acquire that skill set which takes us to the goal of our dream.

Apart from acquired learning there are two more teachers which impart valuable lessons to students who are willing to learn – These are ‘Criticism’ and ‘Failure’. Take these teachers constructively and the life lessons imparted by them positively. Thus life-long learning if undertaken with an eager positive mindset, will empower you to reach the pinnacle of success.

Finally, last but not the least is to keep ablaze forever the fire to keep learning. Age should never be a barrier to stop studies, work or living. Train your mind that every day you aspire to learn something new no matter how hard the concept is, how bad my health is and finally how difficult the circumstance is. Learn to overcome such situations and then only you will stand out from the crowd.

Work-Life Balance

Balance is everything. If you want to know the perfect work-life balance you should accomplish - Ride a bicycle. As is the case in riding the bicycle – maintaining a sense of balance while riding ensures you don't fall off midway and your ride is smooth and enjoyable - same is with life. A sense of balance gives you a hiccup free daily existence – it keeps you away from boredom, over-indulgence; sickness and disease; stress and anxiety; emotional imbalance and overall lack of control over yourself.



When balancing your career and personal life don't think it's the number of hours you spend on the two that create a balance. It's not the quantity of time but the quality of time spent. There may be days when you devote more time to career while others where personal life takes a front seat. Have realistic expectations from life and don't indulge in self-pity. Remember you are not the only one facing the crisis of a perfect work-life balance.

Now just like in bicycle riding, the tough part in life too is – the weight on the cycle and the force applied to take it forward ensures that there is a different sense of balance for different individual. So what may work for one need not necessarily work for the other because his/her parameters are different.

So everyone must create their own work-life balance.

Conclusion

YOU empower yourself when you sow the seed of *positive ignorance* in your mind. You will feel energized and empowered to steer your life to success if you stop treating external and internal setbacks as roadblocks in life – Treat them exactly what they are that is 'merely a block on the road'. Deal with them the way you would deal with any block lying on the road – Go around it. If you empower yourself by honing your skills and attitude you are sure to attain whatever you have desired and live a truly enriching life.