

Today's greatest adventure

In these lessons we've defined success as the progressive realisation of a worthy goal. The purpose of this lesson is to tell you how you can keep achieving your goals, one after another, year after year.

If you've set a worthy goal, it's normal that sometimes it can seem out of reach, that it feels like you're getting no closer. It's natural to lose heart. It might feel like you'll never make it. Slipping back into your old habits is tempting – they're familiar, it's easy – even if you know they won't get you anywhere. There is a way to beat that feeling, an approach that many of the world's most successful people use and many great thinkers advocate. The approach is to live successfully, but one day at a time. Stoicism, the Ancient Greek and Roman philosophy that was popular from around 300 BC to the third century AD, recommends taking life one day at a time. It's a philosophy that's become popular again recently in Silicon Valley.

Let me explain the principle. Your life and mine is made up of days put together into weeks, months and years. Rather than trying to look at the overwhelming whole – your life – or even a year, reduce your focus to a day, a single day. Now break it down even further into the tasks of that day. A successful life is lots of successful days strung together. No worthy goal can take a day to reach, it's going to take you many days to reach that goal. To get there as quickly as possible you must make every day count.

Approach each day as a building block that you're using to build the tower of your life. A bricklayer can only lay one brick at a time and you can

live only one day at a time. How you place the bricks will determine the beauty and strength of your tower. Place each brick right and the tower will be a success. But if your placement is careless, the whole tower will be unstable. This might sound simplistic, but it's a helpful way of looking at life.

Take life one day at a time, keeping your goal in mind. Every day is made up of tasks of all kinds. How successful the day is depends on how well you complete most of these tasks. If, at the end of the day, you can look back and think that you completed the tasks to the best of your ability, the day is a success. You can sleep well.

Each day do all that can be done that day. There's no need to overwork or to charge blindly forwards trying to do as many things as possible in the shortest time. Don't try to take on tomorrow's or next week's work. The number of things you do is less important than the quality, the efficiency of each. By focusing on completing the day's tasks as well as you can, you'll find that you become more efficient, that you do more.

Success is a habit for successful people. To get into the habit of success, you only need to succeed in the small tasks of each day. These add up to a successful day. Manage enough successful days and you have a successful week, month, year and lifetime. Success is not a matter of luck. Anyone can achieve it by following this plan, focusing on having one successful day at a time, keeping your goal in mind. Before you know it, you'll have reached your goal.

Think of anything you've achieved or anyone has achieved – an athlete or academic or writer or business person will work – and you'll see that success is not down to any one day, week, or month. It's the result of the consistent, successive succession of single days. It's the same way a skyscraper is built one day at a time, with each day made up of a series of successful tasks.

To reach your goal you need to do two things.

1: keep your eye on that goal; and

2: continue to grow in competence and effectiveness.

Don't get impatient. Don't get distracted by the hundreds of little things that threaten to take you off course each day. Ignore them. Stay steadily on track. Concentrate on each task and complete it as successfully as you can.

If you perform each task successfully, or at least if you complete the great majority of them successfully, your life has to be successful, there's no other option. The men and women who get ahead are the ones who are clear about what they want to be, who know what they can become and who are determined to get there.

People become what they make up their minds to become. Have you outgrown your current job? If it's obvious to you that you have, it's obvious to others. People earn promotions by outgrowing their jobs and deciding what bigger and better job or income they want next. They do it by taking one day at a time, one task at a time each day.

But how do we separate the important tasks from the unimportant ones? Nightingale tells the story of a single idea which a man was paid \$25,000 for in the 1930s. That's the equivalent of more than \$400,000 today.

The story goes that the president of a big steel company granted an interview to an efficiency expert named Ivy Lee. Lee was telling his prospective client how he could help him do a better job at managing the company when the president said something to the effect that he wasn't at present managing as well as he knew how. He went on to tell Lee that what was needed wasn't more knowing but a lot more doing. He said: "We know what we should be doing. Now if you can show us a better way of getting it done, I'll listen to you and pay you anything within reason you ask." Well, Lee then said he could give him something in 20 minutes that would increase his efficiency by at least 50%. He then handed the executive a blank sheet of paper and said, "Write down on this paper the six most important things you have to do tomorrow." Well, the executive thought about it and did as requested; it took him about three or four minutes. Then Lee said, "Now number those items in the order of their importance to you or to the company. Well, it took about another three or four or five minutes, and then Lee said, "Now put the paper in your pocket, and first thing tomorrow morning, take it out and look at item number one.

Don't look at the others, just number one, and start working on it and if you can, stay with it until it's completed. Then take item number two the same way; then number three and so on till you have to quit for the day. Don't worry if you've only finished one or two, the others can wait. If you can't finish them all by this method, you could not have finished them with any other method, and without some system you'd probably take 10 times as long to finish them and might not even have finished them in the order of their importance."

"Do this every working day", Lee went on, "After you've convinced yourself of the value of this system, have your staff try it. Try it as long as you like, and then send me your cheque for whatever you think the idea's worth." The entire interview hadn't taken more than a half hour. In a few weeks, the story has it that the company president sent Ivy Lee a cheque for \$25,000 with a letter saying the lesson was the most profitable he'd ever learned in his life. And it was later said that in five years this was the plan that was largely responsible for turning what was then a little-known steel company into one of the biggest independent steel producers in the world."

Lee's advice was to take things one at a time in the right order; to stick with one task until it's successfully completed before moving on to the next; to take life one day at a time.

Try Lee's advice for the next seven days. Tonight, write down the six most important things you have to do, then number them in the order of their importance. Tomorrow morning start working on number one and don't move on until it's successfully completed. Only then start work on number two, and so on. When you've completed all six tasks successfully, repeat the process. You'll be surprised and pleased at the order it brings into your work and how quickly you complete the things that need doing in the order of their importance.

This technique stops you going round in circles or wondering what to do next. Take it one day at a time. You don't need to worry about tomorrow or next week or next month. One day a time managed successfully will take you over every hurdle, solve every problem. Knowing that successful tasks make successful days, which in turn build a successful life you can relax.

Too often students worry about passing. They focus on the end of the year, worrying about everything they'll have to do. This approach means they focus on the small steps day after day that will earn them excellent grades.

Nightingale shares:

"The Harvard teacher and psychologist William James said: "Let not students worry about the success of their efforts. If they will do each day as best they can the work which is before them, they will wake up one day to find themselves among the competent people of their generation." Lee's plan works for everybody. It removes doubt and worry and gives order to our lives. All any of us needs to do is face each day as it comes in good cheer, knowing that we have only to succeed today to move on to our future. In this way we'll move steadily ahead, growing more competent, more confident with the passing of every day.

"Others may seem to suddenly shoot up faster and possibly fall much farther, and operate in spurts and dips, but it's to the steady that the rewards are eventually paid. St. Edmund of Canterbury was right when he said, "Work as though you would live forever, but live as though you would die tomorrow."

Beside my desk, I have glued to the wall a great saying by Ernest Hemmingway. He said, "Write as well as you can and finish what you start". It reminds me that achieving outstanding success is completely within our individual control as long as you have a goal to work towards. We simply need to do certain things a certain way every day.

Nightingale confirms it:

"There's no valid reason on Earth why you shouldn't become really successful in your field, your home life, and your community. Remember that everything in the entire limitless universe operates on the law of cause and effect. There are NO exceptions to this; nothing happens by accident. For every result there's a cause. You have only to take care of the cause – the effect will always, without exception, take care of itself. Good cause, good effect. No cause, no effect. Bad cause, bad effect. It's as reliable as the rising of the sun.

This business of living one day at a time the best we can has an almost unbelievable cumulative effect for good, for success, and the things we want. Sometimes when we see a bricklayer starting on a building and putting the first brick in place, we're struck by the size of the job he has ahead of him. But one day, almost before we realise it, he's finished. All the thousands of bricks are in place, each one vital to the very structure, each one sharing its portion of the load; and so should be the days of human life, and we'll be proud and happy with the finished product."

I have set ambitious goals for Regent Group. By 2030 Tharshiny, my wife and business partner and I will be joint CEOs of a British unicorn – a private company valued at \$1bn. We will also have opened a state-of-the-art new British university with an emphasis on a mindset shift to unleash human Natural Intelligence™. We also set out our goals to setup universities in the EU, UAE, Asia and USA. Regent Group will be a leading global technology-enabled education provider fuelled by the metaverse and Web 3.0. How do I approach such huge goals? One day at a time, one task at a time, the most important tasks first.

As soon as this lesson ends, write down the six most important things you have to do tomorrow. Then number them in order of importance. Tomorrow morning, start work on number one and don't move on to another task until it's completed. Try not to get side-tracked by people or things in successfully accomplishing each task of your day.

For the next seven days, try the \$25,000 idea in your life.

Write the six most important things you have to do in the table below and number them in order of importance. Tomorrow start work on number 1 and only when it's completed move on to 2. Keep working through the list until all six tasks are complete (it might take all week – that's ok). Only then write a new list of six tasks.

Importance	Task