

CHAPTER 4

ACTION

When it comes to action, Dad always said that when you have a great thought, a great idea, do not think about it and when you can start. Obviously, develop a clear mental picture of what you want, but then the first thing you need to do is get to work and get into action. By not getting into action, none of your ideas will turn into results. A lot of academic professionals create great ideas but do nothing about them because they do not take effective action.

The Tamil word for father is Appa, and I think of that word as an acronym, beginning with Attitude and ending with Action, wrapped around two Ps for Persistence and Planning.

Dad said, 'Have an idea, think about it, dream about it, and then you must take effective action.' You must use your thoughts as directed; that is so important. You need to do what you can do, where you are, and you must do all that you can do, where you are.

You can only advance by doing larger than your present life. No one is larger than their present place if they leave aside any of the work pertaining to that place. He talked about these ideas of being in a larger, better place, which means we actually do more than we currently do, to push ourselves forward.

Only those who more than fill their present places advance in the world. If no one quite fills his present place, you can see that there must be a going backward, because the world is not constantly staying in one place, it is moving. When I started this chapter, the world and my body and everything was in one place, and now it is in a vastly different place, after a few minutes, a few days, or weeks.

Those who do not quite fill their present places are dead weight, Dad used to say, just a cargo upon society, government and the wider world. 'If you are in a ship,' he always said, 'be part of the crew and never be part of the cargo.' Because when things go wrong, the first overboard will be the cargo and not the crew. 'Within the crew,' he always said, 'if you take effective action you will be the last person that ends up in the sea.'

If people are cargo, then others must carry them along at great expense, that is the problem. Dad said that if you're not taking effective action, if you are only doing certain things, you are not only doing harm to yourself but you are actually harming others, because you are not helping the wider world and your community. Only those who do not fill their places are slowing progress of the world; no society could advance if everyone was smaller than his place.

Physics, psychology and mental evolution have helped social

evolution. In the animal world, evolution is caused by excess of life, when an organism has more life than can be expressed in the function of its own plain. In that case, it develops the organs of a higher plain and a new species originates. That's the evolution of life – there would never have been new species if there had not been species that more than filled their places. What we are really saying is that growing and seeking more is what triggers an effective action. And if you do not take action, you cannot progress.

The law is exactly the same for everybody. Dad talked about laws and philosophies, and Bob Proctor talks about natural laws. Stephen Covey talks about principles and the late Clay Christensen also talked about nature. They are all talking about the same thing; and Earl Nightingale, the universal law... it was always like this and it will always be like this in the future. That is what Dad talked about. He said these laws are exactly the same for us all. Applying these laws, principles and concepts is mighty. Every day is either a successful day or a day of failure.

Every day I would get up and say good morning, and Dad would say, 'Son, today will either be a successful day or a day of failure. But the successful day depends on your actions, so what actions are you going to take? If every day is a success, your life will be successful.'

The consequences of ineffective action may be more disastrous than you might imagine. You might think it is only one unsuccessful day, but that's not the point. You keep on doing that for a period and the consequences will be devastating. Human life has got significant meaning attached to it and a huge reservoir of potential. If you do not take action, you are not going to make it work.

You cannot foresee the results of even the most trivial acts. You do not know the workings of all the forces set in motion. If you have this great idea and you want to achieve certain things, if you are not taking action, the world cannot react. The basic physics are that if you give and take action, there will be reaction. Those reactions will change your results, circumstances and conditions. Your future may depend on you doing something, and that may be the very thing that will open the door to opportunity. There are many great possibilities – Dad always said that.

Another thing he said was that the cave you believe will give you all the problems that you fear, is effectively where the riches await you. Whenever I was telling Dad I didn't want to do something or I was not ready, he told this story. However, he never said go and do it, he always said make up your own mind.

He used to remind me of the time in Sri Lanka during the war, when my parents wanted me to become a medical doctor. I wanted it as well because I didn't see anything else in Sri Lanka. There was a mass motivation, because you see everyone around you doing that, you are doing well in your education, so everyone thinks that is what you are going to do. That is all we knew; we did not appreciate that the world had so many other professions.

To a certain extent, it was ignorance. You should take action only based on what you want to do, and not based on the opinions of others, to make use of your desire. But nevertheless, that is what I wanted to do and then the war became really, really difficult. This was in 1989 and I could not do my advanced level exams for various

reasons. Then in 1990 I said, ‘Dad, I just need to get out of this, and I want to go to the United Kingdom and seek a life. I want to study there and make the United Kingdom my home.’ I was absolutely clear on that. I landed in the UK with £100 as a student and subsequently became a refugee of this country; this country gave me everything and I absolutely made an effective action to move; I’m so glad Dad supported me in making that decision.

You can never know all the combinations that supreme power or nature are making for you in the world. You never know and you cannot speculate. Dad always said that neglect or failure to do small things may cause a long delay in getting what you want. If you neglect something and then look for results, the results will not be forthcoming, because you have not taken action.

Do every day all that can be done that day. Do what you can, today is the wonderful day. But there is a qualification that you must take into account: you must not overwork. My dad was very relaxed – he said you should not rush about your business in an effort to do the greatest possible number of things in the shortest possible time. He said just relax, just do what is needed, do not do what is tomorrow. Being in control is being relaxed.

You are not to try to do tomorrow’s work today, he said. Never try to do a week’s worth in a day. It is not the number of things you do but the efficiency of each separate action that counts.

I will tell another story here. After coming to the United Kingdom, I started my accountancy studies and when I was in the final stages I decided to take a job for financial reasons. Mum and Dad had

joined me, so I needed to work. So, during my final exams, which was a remarkably busy year, I was working for Prudential, the largest insurance company in the world. For that I was incredibly grateful. The problem was that I was not necessarily doing enough studying – I was concentrating on my career.

So, when it came to my final exams I hardly studied, even though I was attending the classes. As the exams approached, I told Dad that I had not really studied a lot and maybe I should defer the exam. He thought about it, and then said – a week before the exam, ‘Do what you can every day.’

There was a big project going on at Prudential at the time, and advised me just to do the revision I had time to do. To be honest, I did not revise. I just went back to work and neglected study. The day before the exam, I told him I might defer it. He said I should instead try, to take action. So reluctantly I decided to go in because I had nothing to lose.

I sat the papers on the Monday and it all went very well. In those two papers I got my confidence back. I came home and said I had done well, so then I started studying hard for the next exam, which was on the Wednesday. But Dad told me to relax and he offered me a nice Scotch, something he and I enjoyed occasionally. He told me not to look at my book, and said that one day recovering from the previous day’s endeavours and being relaxed and calm would do me good. That was something I did not expect, but I took his advice and didn’t do anything. Then I went back on the Wednesday and did the next exam and, guess what, I did well.

It is absolutely incredible that in the last stages of my exams I didn't study, but I went on to qualify. On the day before the exam I did not even touch my books. I am not suggesting students do that, but it's an interesting story and obviously the huge aspects of learning that I had done before, and the work I was doing at Prudential, all helped. This proves that it is not only the theoretical knowledge that matters, but also practical knowledge and the ability to control the mind. I am grateful to my dad and I am also grateful to both my wonderful employer, Prudential, and my great boss, Finance Director Ian Baker, who I am still working with as he sits on our Advisory Board.

Every act is, in itself, either a success or a failure. Every act is an act of either effective and efficient action or is ineffective or inefficient. Every inefficient act is a failure. If you spend a lot of time doing an inefficient act, you will fail. If all your acts are inefficient, you know what will happen. On the other hand, every efficient act is a success in itself. If every act of your life is an efficient one, your whole life must be successful; it is simple logic. The cause of failure is doing too many things in an inefficient manner and not doing enough things efficiently. Dad always said you must just do one or two things properly rather than doing hundreds of things improperly.

It is a self-evident proposition that if you do no inefficient acts and a great deal of efficient acts, you will become successful and achieve your goals. If it is possible for you to make each act an efficient one, you will see a gain by becoming successful. Go back to those principles, that is what *The Power of Learning from DAD* is all about.

What I'm really talking about is how you achieve what you want to achieve. I may not have quite understood everything when my

father first told me these things, but now I am studying the materials and I'm relating what Dad said in very layman terms, to the scientific research, psychology and neuroscience; and these explore and discuss the concepts that Dad told me about.

The matter turns, then, to the question of whether you can make each separate act a success in itself. If we can each act successfully, then we will be successful. This can certainly be done. You can make each act successful because all power is working with you. Dad said you have an enormous amount of power. 'Power is at your service,' he said, 'and it will not allow you to fail. You have it, so why do you not use it? And to make each act efficient, you have only to put power behind it. Power is critical. Every action is either a strong or a weak one, and if every action is strong, you are acting in a certain way that will make you successful.'

He used to say that every act can be made strong and efficient by holding your vision, purpose and values while you are doing it; putting your whole power – every cell of your body, into it. But he also stressed that you must believe, because he had a huge amount of faith in the purpose of everything. He had complete faith that we would achieve what we set out to achieve, and his thinking very much echoes the words of Clay Christensen and others.

It is at this point that the people who separate mental power from personal action fail. This is an important point. You can have lots of ideas, but if you do not take personal action, you will fail. You need to use the power of mind and ability in both ideas and action. Do not act in another place, in another time, in another way, so that your acts are not successful in themselves. Do not let your actions be inefficient.

If all power goes into every act, then no matter how commonplace, every act will be a success in itself. It is common sense. Going back to my cricket days, if I was going for a difficult match and I came in for lunch and it looked like we were not going to make it, then Dad would say – especially if I was batting – just get out there and stay on the crease, concentrate and take action for every ball that comes to you. That is it. Do not think about the next ball and do not think about the ball that went behind you because you cannot do anything about those. Just concentrate and take action. Concentration is key, as is will power.

Since it is the nature of things that every success opens the way to further success. And returning to the cricket analogy; if I get some runs, I will take some more runs. Progress towards what you want, and the progress of what you want towards you, may become increasingly erratic, but remember that action brings humility in its results.

Since the desire for more life is inherent, when a person begins to work towards larger life, more things attach themselves to them. An example is when you do good things, which Dad was exceptionally good at, because he would love to give food to people. One of his actions every day was to give food to others. He would share his food and he would cook food – not just for people who were struggling, but for everyone. There are so many examples and when people read this book, and there are so many who will remember my dad, whatever their relationship was with him, for providing food. He got joy out of it. If a woman was pregnant, he would cook food and give it to them. He took action and every day he would do something.

‘If you want to see speedy results,’ he said, ‘spend practically all your time in this practice – it is as simple as that.’ If you really want the results quick, all you have got to do is give every moment of your time. Through continuous contemplation, you will get the picture. ‘Be patient,’ he said... ‘it will sometimes take time, but you will get it.’ He was really patient and really calm and he used to tell me that calmness of mind is the greatest gift you can have. Just stay relaxed, be calm, and things will be attracted.

So, be firmly fixed on your wish, completely transfer it to the mind, and then things will happen. ‘It is like magic sometimes,’ he said, ‘that in your working hours, you need only to mentally refer to the picture to assimilate your faith in the process.’ On working hours, Dad worked 24/7 and he took actions 24/7. He was working even the day before he passed away, at the age of 72. It was a hot day in July, and he gave ice cream to everyone before he closed the office with my trusted assistant, Alka Tailor. The next day he went to the beach and he never came back. But he was doing what he loved, swimming in the sea.

My mum also told me that when he went with my cousins to the beach that day, he got up that morning to cook and prepare food for my cousins – about 20 of them. I did not go because my daughter did not want to go that day, she felt a little bit poorly. So, I stayed. I regret not going, but everything happens for a reason, everything is based on action-reaction. I fully see now that we are formed of substance and spirit and in 2006, on 23 July, Dad’s spirit went away.

His departure was an emotional shock for me, and my life has

changed in many, many ways. I started to seek meaning in what life is about and I began to study. He always said, ‘The things that I am telling you now, some you will understand now and some you will not understand and may not understand even by the time you are about to go.’ That was quite profound, and perhaps there are things that I still do not understand.

One thing that he did not believe in was saving money – he said it is a flow, it will come, it will go. He always said that by giving, you will get back. In Tamil, his name was Selvanayagam and Selvam means wealth. He always said, ‘I do not know if I have wealth or not, but everyone calls me wealth.’ And he was wealthy, he had a fantastic life. From an incredibly young age, I lived in opulence; my parents gave me everything – we had a fantastic life and never felt that we couldn’t achieve anything. We got everything: we liked a car, we bought it; we liked a suit, we bought it. So, it was in abundance, but he just never had any money in his deposit account, he just believed it would come. I could not fully share that and even today, in 2020, I’m learning, but I can’t grasp that. And this comes back to his idea that I might not grasp everything he ever said to me.

To bring this chapter to a close, Dad said that I would become so enthused with bright promises that the mere thought of them would call forth the strongest energies of my whole being. And certainly there is this thinking from which everything is made, which from its original state and using various means, penetrates life. A person can form things in thought and in pressing this thought upon the subconscious mind, can cause the thing he thinks about to be created.

But it will not be created without action. The key is action. In order to achieve, a person must pass from inaction to action. Finally, Dad always said, please do not compete with anybody. If you want to compete, compete with yourself. But you should always be creating. You can create your own path, but do not compete with anyone, because competition is a game. At some point our education system created this culture of competition, but you do not need to compete.

He also said that having faith and purpose is critical. All that can be done each day, do that; that is the best way to sum up effective action.