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## *Wise Words for Smart Teens*

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Contents

Lessons for Life .....1

    How to Navigate Life’s Whitewater by Lori Randall .....3

    Run Eighteen, Sleep Six by Jack Pryor .....21

    What Was I Thinking? by Mary Pryor .....33

    Do What Black Belts Do by Kyle Eastham .....39

    Perseverance and Persistence by Tom Bach.....59

The Power to Choose.....67

    You Can’t Make Me Do Things by Bob Oros.....69

    24 by John Storm .....87

    To Lead or Not to Lead It’s Your Choice by Vicki Anderson.....107

    Honesty For a Better You by Ron Meyers .....119

    No Fear by Victoria Lee.....131

Create Your Future .....147

    Attitude: The Key To Success! by Vern Holder .....149

    WOW Power! by Kerry Robertson .....169

    Building Life’s Foundation for a Purpose by David Randall .....189

    Reliability: Seventy Percent of Success by Kristine Sexter .....207

    Wonder-Working Power by Mark Clemons .....219

    Swing 4 the Dream by David W. Cobb .....235

    The Secret to Being Attractive by Carrie Perrien Smith .....247



## *Dedication*

*To all the teens in our life  
past, present, and future.*



# lessons for life



**How to  
Navigate Life's  
Whitewater**

**Lori Randall**



**Do What  
Black Belts Do**

**Kyle Eastham**



**Run Eighteen,  
Sleep Six**

**Jack Pryor**



**Perseverance  
and Persistence**

**Tom Bach**



**What Was I  
Thinking?**

**Mary Pryor**





# How to Navigate Life's Whitewater

by Lori Randall



**G**rowing up in a small town in rural Oklahoma, I always thought the true adventures in life were anywhere but here! I wanted my life to be bigger — not defined by the tiny community where I lived. My secret desires were to write a bestselling book, be Miss America, sing for thousands, parasail, whitewater raft, scuba dive, and mountain climb, along with a multitude of other exciting activities. However, here was the truth: I was not brave, not popular, not overly talented, not athletic, and not rolling in cash. It seemed the cards were stacked against this small town girl.

The closest thing to adventure in my wee little life was sledding on a piece of cardboard down a snow-packed hill. Then there was singing for a county event with maybe thirty people in the audience. I can't leave out paddling (or sometimes pushing) a canoe down the creeping Oklahoma river or writing a poem for the school annual (in the fifth grade). Maybe the most exciting thing that I ever experienced was sneaking into the cemetery late at night to see who was brave enough hold hands with the Virgin Mary statue. It felt like what it was: small town, small adventure, and small existence. Sigh. Nevertheless, I always hoped I would grow up and really be someone — someone who made a difference, someone brave, someone bigger than this small town.

It seemed like the people in my life, the things they said, and what they thought about me kept me from feeling attractive, talented, and significant. Since then, I've learned a great deal about overcoming those feelings and making my life what I want it to be and more. It took me until adulthood to find my way out of thinking and living

small. I hope my words save you from years of being forced into the slow lane or aimlessly meandering down the wide, easy path of least resistance.

I have successfully achieved many of the adventures I dreamed of back then. I have had the opportunity to sing for thousands; participate in interviews for magazines, radio, and television; author a book; and be crowned Mrs. Oklahoma and Mrs. Christian World. My hubby, Carl, and I have even done some mountain hiking, snow skiing, parasailing, scuba diving, and whitewater rafting.

Life has been full and, yes, exciting. Yet, I still live in a tiny town in the same part of Oklahoma. However, I have learned many lessons about living a larger life — one with lasting rewards and greater impact. I have grown to see myself as a person who makes a difference: a person of value. I want to share some of those lessons with you so you, too, can embrace your strengths and weaknesses, make the most of your opportunities, and influence others in a mighty way. The instruction I have for you can best be learned by reflecting on our whitewater rafting adventure. It was a journey, much like life, with lots of turns and bends, rocks and stumps, calm and turbulent waters, and a final victory after a life-threatening mistake.

The mountain air was crisp yet the sun was shining brightly. It was a perfect day for whitewater rafting just above the Royal Gorge in Colorado. We were there with a couple of other families camping in our fifth-wheel trailers, fishing, hiking, and sightseeing. We had talked about the raft trip before we left home. Everyone seemed energized about the idea — everyone, that is, except me. I was secretly hoping it would just slip their minds, and I wouldn't have to face my fear of the raging, frigid river. It seemed like such an adventure when I was a kid, but now I was nearly forty years old and not feeling a bit adventurous. When we stopped at a rafting company to get more information and pricing, I knew my fate was sealed — we were going whitewater rafting.

Toby, the athletic, wholesome-looking guy behind the AVA Rafting Company reservation desk, assured us there was nothing to fear. Families booked with them everyday. Children and adults of all ages would be in capable hands from the moment they strapped on their helmets and life vests, to the moment they arrived back at the home base, safe and dry. Class 3 rapids, on a scale from 1 to 4, were the

worst that we would encounter. He persuaded us that there was nothing too treacherous for anyone in our group. I had my doubts.

We plunked down the credit cards and made our date with an explosive river named Destiny. In twenty-four hours, I would place my entire future, along with my two children and beloved husband, in a small rubber raft and hope for the best. I must admit I slept fitfully that night with dreams of small, helmeted people tumbling helplessly over a vast waterfall while I stood on the rocks paralyzed with fear. Maybe this was a premonition of things to come.

“Nonsense!” That is what I told myself the morning of the trip. No one else seemed nervous. In fact, the excitement around the breakfast table was contagious. I began to believe this was no different than floating the meandering Illinois River in Oklahoma. What could go wrong? Toby does this everyday! Surely, he would have warned us of any real danger. So I swallowed my apprehensions along with my bagel and headed for what would prove to be the trip of a lifetime.

We loaded the renovated school bus with all our gear in tow: helmets, life vests, sunscreen, paddles, and a waterproof camera to catch all the excitement on film. The road trip to our “jumping-off place” as they called it was about a forty-five-minute drive. During that drive, the head guide went to great lengths to express the importance of following all the safety guidelines. During the safety talk, the nagging voice of caution returned. “If this is so safe, what’s the deal with the helmets? Why did we have to sign all those liability waivers for our children? How many times has he said, ‘If you find yourself outside of the boat ...’ Do they expect us to fall out of the boat? This water is fed by snowmelt. It must be freezing! Did I dress my kids properly for that kind of temperature? What kind of parents put their kids into a raging, rock-embedded river on a virtual bobbing balloon? Why is there thirty minutes worth of safety instructions for a family-friendly activity?”

It was too late now. The bus rolled to a stop at our point of entry on the beautiful and, to my surprise, very calm-looking Arkansas River. They had built stairs along the canyon wall so the busloads of adventurers could climb down the steep mountain face and board their rafts.

While on the bus, river guides and raft mates were assigned for the day. Our boat consisted of Terry, an acquaintance from Oklahoma; and his nine-year-old son, Cody; my children Rachel (age ten), Luke

(age seven); my husband, Carl; and me. Our river guide was a twenty-something, mountain-loving gal named Amie. She was tanned and fit from hours spent on the river. The plastic flower in her helmet gave the impression that she was someone who acted rugged but didn't take herself too seriously.

After pushing off and getting us situated in the raft, Amie got right down to business. After looking us over, she said, "We don't have much muscle power in this boat except for you two." She was pointing at Carl and Terry. (She accurately sized up my athletic ability, or lack thereof, very quickly.) "So we will all have to work together as a team to keep this raft from getting into any hazardous spots. Listen for my instruction and do whatever I say immediately with all the strength you have. Okay?"

"Okay? No! I'm not okay." My mind was screaming, "You just said something about hazardous spots like it was no big deal. These are my children. That guy, Toby, said families do this every day. He didn't say a thing about needing to have big biceps!" Despite my concern, I couldn't help but notice that everyone else in my raft had their game face on and was nodding attentively awaiting Amie's instructions.

I gave myself a pep talk, shook off the fear, and joined the gang in practicing every command and stroke that Amie taught us while floating the Milk Run — the calmest stretch of river with the fewest obstacles or downward slopes. I liked this part. I concluded I'm a Milk Run kind of gal.

We ended up working well together and got into a good rhythm as far as Amie was concerned. Once we had maneuvered some Class 2 rapids with no loss of life or limb, I was beginning to feel more confident. Maybe this was going to be one of those life-changing challenges where I conquer my fear, do something I only dreamed of in rural Oklahoma, and teach my kids a valuable lesson about teamwork and following instructions to boot. Maybe that voice of caution was just a mother's imagination working overtime. Maybe that Toby was a good kid after all.

During another Milk Run stretch, Amie told us a little about herself as we practiced following her every command. She was a Colorado girl and had been a river guide for around five years. The kids, of course, asked how many times she had gotten into a sticky situation



Whitewater rafting with my family on the Arkansas River. An adventure about to go terribly wrong.

and ended up in the water. “Only twice,” she replied, “best record in the organization.”

“Wow, we are in good hands,” I commented aloud. “I don’t mind telling you all those safety instructions had me a little spooked.”

“Like any sport, you have to be aware of the danger and what to do in the event of an emergency. Emergencies don’t happen very often out here on the river, but when they do, they can be life threatening. So we do everything we can to keep our customers safe and alive,” she answered.

Okay, I could have done without the “emergencies” and “life-threatening” comments. Somehow, knowing she had a good track record made me feel much better. What I didn’t take into account was that her past accomplishments and our lack of strength was going to prove to be no match for the boiling rapids yet to come.

The slope and pace of the river really picked up, and Amie was barking commands right and left to keep us headed toward the safest routes around the many obstacles. Over the roar of the river, she shouted, “We are about to enter Zoom Floom. It is the most difficult rapid we will maneuver today!”

She pointed toward a stretch of the river that looked eerily similar to the one in my dreams. Massive rocks jutted up angrily all over the river. Thousands of gallons of frigid water slammed up against them blocking them from clear view. Amie shouted, “Listen for my instructions and give it all you’ve got! We want to stay to the left of those two boulders. There is a slight drop just on the other side. You will get wet, but it will be the ride of a lifetime. Let’s rock and roll!”

We all made quick eye contact and readied our paddles. On each face was a mix of fear, excitement, and determination. Carl and Cody were in the front; Rachel and Terry took the middle; Luke and I were in the third row, and Amie sat on the back center of the raft.

Just before hitting Zoom Floom, Amie had Luke move to the middle of the raft, his oar beside him. He was too small to be a real help on this particular rapid.

Amie began to shout out the strokes, and we all dug deep to fight the incredible force of the water. Despite all our efforts, the raft spun sideward like a toothpick in a bathtub drain. Instead of going left of the boulder, we hit it dead center right where Terry was sitting. Our raft did not flip up or over the rock — it wrapped around it like a wrench around a bolt.

The river immediately swamped our vessel and effectively pinned us to the spot. I turned to Amie for instruction just in time to see the force of the river sweep her right out of the raft. I watched in terror as she was sucked beneath the turbulent water of a deep pool just below us. When she finally resurfaced, she turned to yell one last instruction, but her words were lost in the deafening roar of the river. Then the reality hit — the only person who knew how to get out of this situation is about a quarter of a mile down the river, bleeding slightly and just as stunned as we were.

One by one, the other rafts passed to our left and parked quite a ways down the river at a safe stopping point. I spotted Amie on a cliff, way above us, trying to make it back to our stranded raft. Consequently, all of the other guides were also beginning to climb back toward us along the opposite side of the river. At this point, we had been trapped on the rock for around twenty-five minutes.

Amie finally made it down to the water level and began yelling something to us. I tried to read her lips, but I just couldn’t make it out. Another guide, later identified as Kyle, was standing just across



the left side of the river on a large rock. With rope in his hands, Kyle was making gestures that Carl seemed to understand.

I found myself thinking that the ropes were to free the raft after the helicopter comes to rescue us. It never dawned on me that the ropes were our only hope for rescue.

By this time, I could no longer feel my legs. Luke's oar has pinned them to the bottom of the raft, and I was waist deep in approximately forty-five degree water for the past half hour. With my adrenaline pumping ninety to nothing, I hardly noticed the cold.

Carl had finally deciphered all of Kyle's pointing and arm movements. He turned and said the words that sent me into sobs and complete panic, "Send Luke to this end of the boat. He and Rachel have to jump first."

"Jump into the water?" I shouted back to him.

He gave me a demanding nod, not at all convincing, and Luke began to climb toward his daddy. The plan was that Kyle would throw the rescue rope to Carl who would hand it to Rachel and Luke. The kids were to jump together and hold on to the rope until the next rope was thrown to them just a short distance down the river.

I was amazed at their bravery. Carl counted to three and they threw themselves into the raging waters. They held fast until the current was just too much for their small arms to handle. Even still, Rachel was able to grab the next lifeline thrown to her and was pulled to shore. Luke was not so fortunate. Several guides standing along the sides threw him ropes as he passed their rescue points, but violent water kept pulling him under and jerking him left and right. We watched in horror as he sailed right past his final rescue rope and his little blue helmet disappeared beyond the next set of rapids.

Terry held my hand as I cried uncontrollably and tried not to imagine the fate of my happy-go-lucky, seven-year-old son. (My mind was questioning why we ever came on this stupid trip anyway.) After many tense moments, Carl's shouting brought me back from the brink of despair "They got him! He's okay!" Joy and relief filled the raft, and I began to breathe again. Cody jumped next and made it safely to shore.

Now it was my turn. Terry and I pried my legs free from under the oar, and I shakily climbed up to the top of the boat to make the leap.

I had the rope in my hand and Carl again counted to three, but instead of jumping forward into the rapids, I sunk back into the boat. The fear had paralyzed me. I just didn't think I could do it. Turns out, I didn't have to — my husband pushed me! Once fully immersed in the freezing, thunderous water, I learned how difficult it was to hang on to the rope when it got its full tension. I did catch my next lifeline and made it to the shore right before Carl and Terry did.

It turned out Luke swept up to the side of our friend's boat parked down river. They said the current was still so strong they barely got him in before he was sucked under their raft.

We all sat out to dry on the bank of the river examining our many bumps, bruises, and rope burns. Meanwhile, the guides worked for another half hour to free our raft. Rachel and I decided we were just going to walk back. We had certainly learned our lesson — no more Class 3 rapids for us!

Amie had other ideas. She piloted the raft over to our partially sun-baked crew and bid us to hop in. After convincing us there was no other way out (it was a three-mile walk and the sun was already fading) we conceded. I am happy to say the rest of the trip was completely uneventful. In fact, after surviving Zoom Floom, the difficult Grave Yard rapids didn't even faze us. We had conquered the worst, although not gracefully, and we felt like heroes returning from battle.

Once we got back to home base, I thought about finding Toby and punching him right in the snout. Instead, I gathered with a nearby group of fellow rafters to relive all the details of our rescue. Then I stood in line to buy all the pictures I could get of this incredible journey. This was one adventure I never wanted to forget!

I don't want you to forget it either. There are so many great life lessons that we learned on the Arkansas River that day. So if your desire is to live a bigger, more meaningful life, read on!

## **Tips for Surviving Life's Whitewaters**

### **There's Only One Captain of Your Boat**

They told us this several times on the bus ride to the river. Evidently, they had situations where passengers tried to take control of the raft, and it usually ended in disaster. I believe this is true in life, too. You



are the only one who knows the secret dreams held in your heart. Only you can maneuver the vessel of your life to reach those dreams. So why is it such a struggle to really break out of a mundane existence and go for it? Sometimes we allow others to become the captain of our boat. Oh, it's not an obvious pirate takeover — it is a slow, internal hijack that goes unnoticed until it is too late.

The first time that I can actually identify the fact that I was no longer piloting my own vessel was somewhere in junior high school. When I was around eight years old, I would visit my cousins on the farm. My sister, cousins, and I would climb onto their huge flatbed hay trailer and pretend to be in the Miss America Pageant. I loved that game. I believed someday it would really happen for me. Why not? I was just as capable as anyone else was.

At least I believed that until junior high, and then something terrible took place in about the seventh grade. I got acne, glasses, braces, and I had no noticeable curves. When I walked by, the boys sang the song from the Clearasil pimple cream commercials. They called me “four-eyes,” “brace face,” and “oblong head.” The final blow was when Tony Tislow, who I thought was fabulous, said to me, “Lori, you’re a carpenter’s dream.” My heart soared until he finished the sentence, “Flat as a board!”

The whole crowd roared with laughter. I was so humiliated I wanted to run and hide. Instead, I kept replaying it over and over in my head. Finally, I believed they were all correct. I wasn’t the type of girl that would ever compete in pageants. I was the ugly duckling: pimply, geeky, flat, goofy, and unpopular. So I took that dream, put it up on a shelf, and left it there for over twenty-five years. They had successfully taken over as captain of my boat. I no longer believed that anything was possible for me. I felt I could only achieve things that were ordinary and small.

There are people in your life that will do the same thing to you if you allow it. I am begging you not to let that happen. Don’t agree to remain small just because they are. There is no way they can chart



Lori at age eight. A small town girl dreaming of a big, bold future.

your course to success. You are the only one who knows what you can accomplish. Just because someone says it to you, does not make it true even if she is your best friend, a beloved teacher, or well meaning parent. God himself placed your dreams and desires in your heart so hang on and fight for them. Captain your own boat.

### **Prepare For the Rapids**

Before we hit the rapids, we had to practice all of the strokes during the Milk Run. Amie wanted to make sure we could respond to each of her commands quickly and effectively so we wouldn't panic when the pace picked up and the water started churning. I was impressed that, even in the face of fear, we immediately jumped and followed her orders. Without those exercises, we would have been in the water several more times. I guarantee it.

Monitor the things that are entering your mind. It will prepare you for the emotional and mental rapids that will certainly threaten to throw you off course or make you want to stay in the stagnant waters of life. If what you listen to, read, watch, and talk about is negative and depressing, that is what you will become. If, on the other hand, you spend time taking in positive, uplifting messages or success stories, those types of things will come your way. It is an amazing principle that absolutely works. We become what we think.



Lori started a charter bus travel business at just twenty years old. They may not have made a fortune, but she felt like a winner!

I found this to be true when I read my first motivational/self-help book in college. It absolutely changed my life. I had assumed I would go from work to home, home to work every day just like every adult I knew. After reading the book, I began to see that the world was a huge place and my opportunities did not have to be the cookie cutter response expected of most adults. I could really become someone.

I started a charter bus travel business at just twenty years old. We may not have made a fortune, but I felt like a winner for the first time since I was that eight-year-old girl walking the hay trailer pageant runway. Oh, I had people who tried to discourage me by saying the business wouldn't succeed on so many levels: "You wouldn't make enough money" "You was too directionally challenged to be a tour guide," and "That sounds like a stupid idea." However, because I had been putting positive things into my brain, their criticism and unkind comments could not penetrate my boat and sink my progress.

If you will spend fifteen minutes a day reading something that makes you feel better about yourself, your talents, or your situation, you will begin to see remarkable results. There are multitudes of avenues to take such as e-mail newsletters, books, magazines, and scriptures that will prepare you for the onslaught of small thinkers. An investment of time is all you need. In fact, since you are reading this book, you will find your boat far ahead of the others in your life. When the emotional rapids come against you, you will be surprised how much easier you can maneuver yourself away from them and paddle forward into your own adventure.

### **Keep Your Nose and Toes Up**

This was the one rule we had to remember if we found ourselves in the water. It was also the last thing I shouted to my children before they bravely bailed over the side. The idea is that even though you have lost control of everything around you, you can still control your own body. You cannot control the current, the direction of the water, or any other person. You can only do your best to keep your nose and toes above the water level. If you put your feet down for even an instant, they could be forced under a boulder or tangled in a limb and you will drown.

When I was sixteen years old, I found myself in the middle of a Class 4 rapid and quickly drowning. I had made a couple of classmates

mad, and they began what they dubbed the “Stormy War.” Stormy was my albino parakeet’s name and thus had become my nickname as well. The war began with obscene gestures from passing cars and quickly escalated to signs hung all over the school, phrases written on my car windows, and ringing phones during all hours of the night. Many joined the war; few dared to oppose it. I was totally broken and gripped by a paralyzing fear of walking amongst them in



The Stormy period. Lori at age sixteen.

the hallway. I would often be tardy for class as I pretended to dig through my locker so I would not have to face them. The final crushing blow came in the form of a graphic poster displaying a bleeding parakeet in the crosshairs of a rifle. The caption read, “Stormy Dead.”

We were living in a different time back then. There had been no school shootings, and I never feared for my life. They meant to wound me psychologically not physically. For a long time, it worked. I avoided going to any functions they would be attending. I stopped going out with friends on the weekends. I became a mere shell of the person I was before. It felt like life would never go back to normal, and they had won.

My parents said, “We can call the other kids’ parents, but that probably won’t make them stop. We can call the school to see if they could help monitor the situation, but that won’t keep them away when you go to other places.” Then, the advice that turned the whole thing around was said. “You can decide you are not a victim. You can control how you react to the junk they are throwing at you. You can decide where you go, how you act, and how you feel about yourself. You have to take back control of your own life.”

I made a decision that night; I would no longer be an emotional wreck for their entertainment. I would keep my nose and toes up so they could not yank me under the current, and drown me with their mean tactics. The next morning when I found new drawings posted on the wall at the school, I walked up to one, chuckled (although wilting on the inside), and left them hanging on the walls. Next, I marched down the hall with my head held high and spoke to those who would not speak in return. I began to attend the school functions again and cruise Main Street on the weekends. I must

admit there were still times I shed a few tears at home but, for the most part, I was feeling complete again.

Incredibly, when the crowd didn't receive the angry, sign-ripping, running-to-the-bathroom reaction they had hoped for, the Stormy War quickly went away. One by one, each person apologized for taking part in something that had taken on a life of its own. They had been caught up in the frenzy like chickens pecking a wounded hen to death. When I stopped acting wounded, they stopped pecking.

Teenagers can be cruel, but you can choose to be strong. No one can make you feel like a stupid, useless, ugly, overweight loser unless you allow it. You have complete control over how you react. If you allow them to drag you under, they will. Don't give small-minded people the reaction they desire. Keep your nose and your toes up. Ride the rough waves to calmer waters where true friends are waiting on the shoreline.

### **Remember This Is An Adventure — Enjoy the Ride**

After reluctantly getting back into the boat below Zoom Floom, Amie was trying to help us relax and enjoy the rest of the river. She had bloody legs from trying to hike back to us and bruised pride, no doubt, from guiding the only boat to need a rescue that day. Nevertheless, she was still convinced we could salvage the fun in our trip. She told other hair-raising stories of boats she'd helped rescue and finally said, "You know, I usually never get to tell these stories



Lori and Carl with their children, Rachel and Luke in 2006.



because it scares the customers too much. But I don't think I could scare this crew after what you just went through. In fact, you just supplied me with my very own 'don't do what I did' story."

It turned out that as soon as we loaded our doomed raft, Amie suspected we didn't have enough strength in the boat to handle Zoom Floom. She just hated to split us up so she chanced it. We know what the outcome was. However, Amie was enjoying the ride by laughing and remembering it is all part of the adventure.

We can learn a great life lesson from her. Sometimes we are going to fail miserably; fall flat on our face; be sucked out of the boat; be bruised and bloodied; and probably have friends laugh at us. I have experienced it firsthand many times.

I was not a great history student. I just wasn't very interested in it. So imagine my surprise when I knew the answer to the question the teacher had just asked. "What was the name of Lewis and Clark's Indian guide?" He queried.

My hand sprung up in the air, and Mr. Carney said, "Yes, Lori?" He looked a little stunned to see me participating.

I proudly blurted out, "Sasquatch!"

The room erupted in laughter, but I had no idea why. Mr. Carney could see my confusion and tried to keep from busting up laughing when he asked, "Did you mean to say Big Foot or were you going for Sacagawea?"

"Oh, yeah," was my barely audible reply as I leaned back in my chair to act as if it didn't phase me. To my horror, I leaned a little too far, too quickly, and the chair slammed to the floor bringing the desk down right on top of me. I was worse than mortified.



Lori and her future husband, Carl. Carl is sixteen and Lori is fourteen in this photo.

No one forgot my off-the-wall answer and furniture-flipping feat as we finished out the school year. I didn't take it too hard though. People make mistakes and do goofy stuff all the time. In fact, just a week later, Mr. Carney returned from the restroom with his shirttail waving through his gaping fly. Once he caught on, he turned, zipped his pants, and said, "See Lori, Sasquatch happens to best of us." And he was so right!

Striving to be right, precise, or perfect all the time will turn your life into a stressful, disappointing wilderness trek. Learning to accept mistakes and failures and even laughing at yourself will color your life with great stories to tell others when they have experienced a downfall. So remember life is an adventure — enjoy it. Always remember that "Sasquatch" happens to the best of us.



Achieving her dream. Lori on stage at the Mrs. United States Pageant.

## Run Your Own Course

When we were on the river with several other rafts, we had to spread out a bit to keep from creating a traffic jam at the rapids. Each guide chose to take their boat on different parts of the river according to the expertise and strengths of the rafters. Those with experienced members maneuvered between large boulders and shot the most treacherous sections of the whitewater. Amie was wise to take it easy with us and give us an adventure tailored specifically for our abilities. For instance, if our boat had followed Kyle's, I would have started looking for a foot trail from very beginning. However, she knew that no two boats would have identical whitewater experiences that day.

The same is true with your life. Your great adventure is not going to be identical to the ones of your parents, siblings, friends, or greatest heroes. You are the original handwork of God. Don't try to be a mere copy of someone else.

My sister, Angela, is fourteen months older than I am. She was always popular, outgoing, funny, and gorgeous. I wanted to be just like her. Correction, I wanted to be her. Her life was big and exciting; mine was small and boring. She took risks and tried new things like running for pep club president, acting in school plays, and dancing at school dances.

I never ran for any office. I would only volunteer to sing in the back row of the chorus and was a self-proclaimed wallflower at every school dance. It looked to me like she got all the good traits in the family, and I got what was left over.

I spent so much time comparing her strengths to my apparent lack thereof that I almost didn't recognize my first major breakthrough in high school. I am so thankful for a couple of teachers who helped me finally see that I, too, possessed a worthwhile talent. Turns out I could sing pretty well and began performing with the Music Makers. We were a high school show choir that sang at community events, the state fair, and other schools. It gave me a real sense of accomplishment and my self-image got the boost it so desperately needed.

I ended up singing a solo for the school talent show my senior year. It was a thrill to have my cool, big sister home from college to see me take first place. I realized I didn't want to be just like her anymore. I finally wanted to be just like me. The icing on the cake was when she leaned over and whispered, "Wish I could sing like that." Wow, she actually admired me too!

There are always going to be people in your life that you wish you were more like. I don't think there is anything wrong with that. However, you can lose sight of your own life's journey when your focus is on everything but yourself. To regain the proper perspective, study the truth below — it will help bring you back on course:

God formed you with His own hands. He placed within you every physical, emotional, mental, and temperamental trait that you will need to succeed in life. He did not shortchange you in any area that will hold you back from reaching your goals. You are not a failure. You are not destined to live a small, insignificant life. Within you are



seeds of greatness. Greatness to touch, bless, and change the lives of people in your path. Greatness to make a mark, leave a legacy, show compassion, and love many. You were placed on this earth for a purpose — a purpose that only you can fulfill. It is never too early or too late to start this journey. Now go out and run your course!

*Lori Randall is a former Mrs. Christian World 2005 and Mrs. Oklahoma United States 2002. Lori is a gifted keynote and motivational speaker who captivates, entertains, and inspires her audience through her humorous, sometimes painful, yet ultimately uplifting personal experiences.*

*Her ability to relate to the hearts of those with unfulfilled dreams and point them to a life of abundant living is unsurpassed. Her wit and insight inspires, uplifts, and motivates others. She speaks to conventions, associations, church groups, and conferences nationwide. She has appeared in numerous television, magazine, and radio programs. Visit her website at [www.lorirandall.net](http://www.lorirandall.net).*



# the power to choose



**You Can't  
Make Me  
Do Things**

**Bob Oros**



**Honesty  
For a  
Better You**

**Ron Meyers**



**24**

**John Storm**



**No Fear**

**Victoria Lee**



**To Lead or  
Not to Lead  
It's Your Choice**

**Vicki Anderson**



# You Can't Make Me Do Things

by Bob Oros



**O**n March 7, 1997, I received the worst phone call of my life. My wife and I were traveling in Canada on business when our son called — Julie, our twenty-seven-year-old daughter, was found dead in her apartment from a drug overdose.

It was heartbreaking. Oddly, at the same time, it gave me a sense of peace. After fourteen years, it was finally over. She was a brilliant and gifted child. She had a promising future until age thirteen when she made a bad choice and started experimenting with drugs.

We tried everything possible within our means to help her stop using drugs. She went through all the rehab programs available, but nothing worked. Each day of her life, she fought a battle between staying clean and using drugs. You must witness the torment a person fighting addiction experiences to understand the power it holds over your life.

When we were cleaning out her apartment, there was a small box on her dresser. It was her prayer box. She would write down her prayer on a small piece of paper and put it in her box. When I opened the box, there was a single piece of paper that read, "Please stop me from doing drugs." Her prayer was answered. It wasn't answered the way she expected, but she was finally at peace.

I am now much older and wiser. If I could turn the clock back to when she was thirteen years old, what would I tell her? I have had a lifetime to think about it. Of course, I can't turn back the hands of



time, so that brings me to **you**. What can I tell you that will help you avoid failure and live a successful life?

## The Most Important Lesson in Life

This lesson I am about to share with you has stood the test of time. It will make all the difference in how you live your life. You can have an exciting life full of adventure and success, or you can have a life full of disappointment, failure, and discouragement. It is really up to you.



**“You can’t make me do things.”** That’s what my daughter, Julie, told me when she was thirteen, and I first suspected she was using drugs. I didn’t believe her. I thought I could make her stop. I was her father. I tried everything to make her stop using drugs but in the end, she was right. I couldn’t make her do anything.

Additionally, if you feel the same way, that no one can make you do anything, you are right too. That takes a lot of pressure off your parents, grandparents, teachers, and coaches. Since they can’t make you do anything, it’s all up to you if you want to be a success or a total loser.



Childhood photos of Bob’s daughter, Julie. Shown with her mother, Jane (top) and with her brother, Steve (middle).

Your parents, grandparents, teachers, and coaches are there to help you become a success, but they can’t **MAKE** you do anything. Since they can’t make you do anything, you can’t blame them when you flunk out of school, hang out with a bunch of losers, begin using drugs, become pregnant, work at a dead-end job, or spend your life behind bars.

Since no one can make you do anything, what you do is up to you. The only person

who can make you do anything is YOU. That gives you freedom, but it also gives you responsibility.

## Fast Forward a Few Years

Let me ask you a few questions. What do you want your life to be like when you are thirty years old? Where do you want to be living? What kind of car do you want to drive? What kind of house do you want to live in? Do you want a family? How much money would you like to have in the bank? Now for the big question, how are you going to pay for it all?

Since no one can make you do anything, no one is going to give you anything, not even a job.

However, if you can make yourself do things, even the things that you don't like to do, you will be better prepared to get that great job and to achieve everything you want.

What are some of the things you might not like to do but that will help you get the things you want? Let's go forward in time ten years. You are applying for a job that has a great paycheck — one big enough to buy the car of your dreams, purchase the house you have always wanted, take the vacations to the islands that you have always thought about, and have plenty of cash to spend.

Josh shows up to interview for that kind of job. He discovers that twenty other people are interviewing too. He doesn't feel very confident as he sits in the lobby. Finally, it's his turn. The person he is interviewing with looks over his application. This is what he says to Josh.

"I called some of your teachers for a reference. One said you were the class clown. We really don't need class clowns in our company."

"I talked with another one of your teachers, and she said you were always skipping class. We really don't need people who don't show up for work."

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*What do you want your life to be like when you are thirty years old?  
Where do you want to be living? What kind of car do you want to drive?  
What kind of house do you want to live in? Do you want a family? How much money would you like to have in the bank?*

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"I have a copy of your grades, and I see you flunked several subjects. We really don't hire people who don't do the work."

"I called your Karate instructor. He said you had a little more to go and you would have been a Black Belt, but you just gave up and quit. We really don't need quitters in our company."

"I see you were arrested in college for possession of drugs. I realize it was just a small thing, but we really don't hire people with a record."

"Another reference I called was your pastor. He said you never really became involved and took a leadership role. He said you acted like someone who was "made to attend." We really don't hire people without some sort of leadership experience."

"You worked at several jobs while going to school. When I checked out your references, they all said you couldn't follow the rules, and they had to fire you. We really don't hire people who don't have a good work record."

I think you are beginning to see how it works. No one can make you do anything — you do it all yourself.

## Your Mind Grows What You Plant

Every day, there are choices to make. Each choice that you make grows into something that can either hurt or help you. It's like a farmer planting his crop. If he wants to grow corn, he has to plant seeds that will grow corn. If he wants to grow watermelon, he has to plant watermelon seeds. If he planted watermelon seeds and expected corn to grow, you would think he was crazy. If he didn't plant any seeds at all, his field would grow into a jungle full of spiders, cockroaches, snakes, and skunks. His farm would go broke.

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*It works the same as the farm. Whatever the farmer plants in fertile soil, the farmland will grow.*

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**You can't make me do things.** That is a very true statement. Inside your mind is a powerful machine — like a huge computer. You are at the keyboard, and you are programming your hard drive with every key stroke. You can program this computer to work for you or work against you. The name of this computer is **habit**. Your habits dictate your daily actions. You programmed your computer, and now your computer makes you do **everything**.



No one can make you do anything, but you have the power to train your computer called **habit**.

It works the same as the farm. Whatever the farmer plants in fertile soil, the farmland will grow. Whatever you put in your computer, your computer grows it into a habit. Right now, let's look and see how this works in your daily life.

If you smoke pot, your computer tells you to smoke more and more pot.

If you tell your computer that getting good grades doesn't matter, your computer tells you that getting good grades is a waste of time.

If you tell your computer that it's okay to be a quitter, your computer will tell you to quit everything.

If you tell your computer that being the class clown is cool, your computer will grow you into a big joke.

If you tell your computer that skipping class is okay, your computer will tell you to go ahead and drop out.

If you tell your computer that it's not cool to follow the rules, your computer will tell you to break the rules even if you end up in jail.

If you tell your computer that it's okay to have sex before you are married, your computer will have you in the sack with anyone who is willing. The potential for your reputation to go down the tubes and become a parent long before you are ready increases.

If you tell your computer that it's okay to steal from a store to buy drugs, your computer will have you stealing more and more to buy more and more drugs.

If you tell your computer that it's not necessary to take a leadership role in your church or school, your computer will tell you it's a waste of time.

If you tell your computer that it's okay not to work hard and spend all your time goofing off, your computer will grow you into a loser.

## Your Computer Follows the Program

You see, you plant the seeds that grow into your habits. Those seeds can grow good habits or bad habits. Your habits make you do things and you will continue to do them — good or bad. Your habits take over your life. If your habits are harmful, you may end up in jail, pregnant, expelled from school, fired from your job, or dead.

Your computer doesn't know right from wrong. It only knows what you tell it. It only grows what you plant. You can't plant seeds of drugs, parties, laziness, a "screw the rules" attitude, an "it's all about me" mindset, sex, cigarettes, loser friends, and expect success, money, recognition, good health, respect, good friends, and a great future. That's crazy! That would be like planting watermelon seeds and expecting corn to grow. Every thought that you have and every action that you take is a seed or keystroke. You are planting your garden or programming your computer.

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*You can't plant seeds of drugs, parties, laziness, a "screw the rules" attitude, an "it's all about me" mindset, sex, cigarettes, loser friends, and expect success, money, recognition, good health, respect, good friends, and a great future. That's crazy! That would be like planting watermelon seeds and expecting corn to grow.*

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My daughter, Julie, planted seeds that grew into a jungle — a place you could only call a living hell. It was full of demons, nightmares, drug rehab centers, pain, and suffering that no parent should ever have to witness and that no child should ever have to endure.

**You can't make me do things** is one hundred percent correct.

You do it all to yourself. Wherever you end up, it is because of the seeds and keystrokes that you are planting and programming today.

Let's fast forward again to that interview ten years from now and replay the movie in our minds.

You go to the interview and find twenty other people applying for the same job. You are confident because this is something you have been preparing for your whole life. It's finally your turn. The person

you have to talk to is looking over your application. He looks up and begins to speak.

"I called some of your teachers for a reference. One said you were a very hard worker and even went out of your way to help other students. Our company could really use someone like that."

I talked to another teacher and she said you were always on time for class and never missed a single day. That's really important in our company."

"I have a copy of your grades, and I see you passed every subject with a good grade. That shows me that you really have what it takes to get the job done."

"I called another reference, your Karate instructor, and he couldn't say enough good things about you. I see you are a Black Belt. Your instructor told me that only one percent of all the kids who take Karate end up with a Black Belt. That makes you a candidate for our fast-track management program. Our company really needs someone like you. You are going to have a great future with us."

"I see you graduated from college with a perfectly clean record — not even a speeding ticket. That's important because we know that you can be trusted driving one of our company cars. Did I mention that our fast-track managers get an all-expenses-paid Lamborghini as a company car?"

"I talked to your pastor, and he said you were a great role model for the younger kids. He said you went on several mission trips, taught several classes, helped wherever you could, and took a real leadership role in the church youth program. Our company really appreciates people who take an active role in their community."



Julie as a teenager: a high school photo (top) and her senior prom photo (bottom).

“I talked to your current boss, and he said you are an exceptional employee. He said you are always on time; never missed a single day in all the time you have worked for him; always go the extra mile to make sure the work is done; are a great team player, and always have a good attitude. He said he hates to see you leave but realizes that you are meant for bigger and better things.”

“And let me add one more thing about our company. When we advertise for a job, we are required to interview twenty applicants. But, I can tell you right now, most of them aren’t as qualified as you are.” In the interviewer’s mind, he’s thinking, “They have bad grades, can’t follow the rules, have a poor job record, are class clowns, skipped classes, are quitters, have police records, and exhibit no leadership abilities. It’s almost a joke that they think they have a chance at this job. Most of them will end up in dead-end jobs and blame the government or their parents or they will complain that they never got a break.”

So the statement, **you can’t make me do things** is dead true. You do it all to yourself.

## The Power of Conditioning

All improvement starts with an understanding of how this computer in your mind works. If you are not doing well in school, if you are hanging out with a bunch of losers, if you are experimenting with drugs, if you are not able to hold a job or follow the rules, it is because of the destructive “pictures” that you are programming into your mind.

Where did all these negative images come from? How did you manage to get destructive images programmed into your mind? The answer is conditioning.

Here is an example of how conditioning (or programming) works. When an elephant is first born, it is tied to a large iron stake driven into the ground with a heavy chain tied around its foot. For weeks, the baby elephant will pull and tug on the chain trying to get loose. Then, all of a sudden, the elephant stops trying to get loose and accepts the fact that the stake cannot be pulled out. After this acceptance, the trainer can tie the huge animal to a small stake with a rope tied to the elephant’s foot, and he will never again try to pull it up.

This same thing happens to you. You think a certain harmful thought day after day and after a while, you believe it is reality.

Additionally, there was another experiment with a barracuda. The large fish tank was divided with a glass partition — minnows on one side of the glass and the barracuda on the other side. When the barracuda became hungry, it tried to eat the minnows and hit its nose against the glass. The barracuda kept trying and failing to get to the minnows on the other side of the glass. After several days, it finally gave up. The glass partition was removed, and the minnows swam within inches of the barracuda. However, because the barracuda became programmed not to move, it eventually starved to death.

This is a good example of how conditioning works. You can see how this same type of conditioning can affect you. Like the elephant and the barracuda, perhaps you tried something in your past and it did not work. You risked becoming convinced that it would not work — no matter how many times you tried. To change and reprogram your computer takes serious work on your part.

Negative words and images are already programmed in your mind. You must replace them with positive ones. You must take charge of the images stored inside you. You must intentionally program the images you want.

What happens in your life is not necessarily what you wish would happen. It is what you have been programmed to expect.

If the images in your mind show a prosperous picture of yourself, you will experience good luck. Things will go your way. If, on the other hand, the images in your mind show an unsuccessful picture, you can experience bad luck. No matter what you try to accomplish, unfortunate things beyond your control come up and frustrate you.

## **You Can Unlearn What You Have Learned**

It is possible to overcome most of the negative programming. The same methods that produce negative attitudes are reversible. You can develop new, positive attitudes. You can either reverse or reprogram what you have programmed. If daily exposure to fear, doubt, and worry created your personality, then you can reprogram it by daily exposure to more positive influences. If you have been brainwashed to believe that you have no potential, it is because you have allowed it — accepting that false information is a choice.

When you started school, your teachers began to affect your thinking. Schoolmates and neighborhood friends influenced you. No one is perfect. In the learning process, you will make mistakes and experience failures. Any programming you have accepted in the past can be reversed as you choose. You can make decisions about who



**Julie Ann Oros (1970 - 1997)**

My daughter, Julie, filled her mind with negative words and pictures that ended up killing her. No one could make her do things — or could they? Did the negative words and pictures she allowed other people to put there make her “do things?”

you are and what you will become. No one can make you do it, and no one can do it for you. You have to do it yourself.

Because you need the approval of others, mistakes that you make are embarrassing. If your friends overreacted to your mistakes, you may have regarded their reactions as evidence of your own lack of talent or self-worth. You may be avoiding the entire learning process and have adopted a mode of behavior that involves following the crowd rather than doing what is right.

Your attitude toward mistakes can either make you strong or set you back. If you regard each mistake as a serious setback, that is exactly what it will be. Instead, choose to regard them as building

blocks instead of stumbling blocks. Mistakes will make you strong. The secret is to look at failures as opportunities to learn.

Without struggle, there is no progress. If someone else gives you what you should earn for yourself, you are being robbed.

Psychologists used white mice in an experiment conducted to test their inherent “desire to live.” Each mouse was placed in a container of water. It had to swim for its life for there was no resting place in the container. Each mouse was timed to see how long it would keep swimming in order to live. Just as its strength was exhausted and it gave up, the mouse was rescued by the scientist. After enough time had elapsed for the mouse to regain strength, the process was repeated, and its efforts were again timed.



The second time the mouse faced danger, it struggled, not for a longer time as one might expect, but a little more than half the previous time. It became conditioned to expect help, not in accordance with its efforts but in accordance with its need. It seemed to know that the sooner it gives up, the sooner it would be rescued.

You may be doing the same thing. If you received too much help from others, you may have been seriously handicapped. You can become programmed to getting more help than you need.

Choose to be successful. React to failure with curiosity: “Why did the mistake happen? What can I learn from it? What adjustments do I need to make?” When you choose success, mistakes become your guideposts instead of roadblocks.

To be successful, you must program pictures of success and positive words into the computer in your mind, and hold them there long enough for them to become real. Get your power working for you instead of working against you.

My daughter, Julie, filled her mind with negative words and pictures that ended up killing her. No one could make her do things — or could they? Did the negative words and pictures she allowed other people to put there make her “do things?”

You don’t need to understand how this procedure works to use it. Nobody invented electricity. It has always been here — Ben Franklin merely discovered electricity. Since that time, we have learned how to make effective use of electricity. Today, anyone can go to the wall, flip on the switch, and presto — the room fills with light. You do not need to understand the nature of electricity in order to use it. In fact, not one person alive, even today, knows the exact origins of electricity. With all our knowledge, electricity remains a mystery.

This powerful computer that you have inside your head is much like electricity. Anyone can put it to use and make it work for or against you. Once you program it, your computer **tells you to do things**. What do you want your computer to tell you to do? **It’s up to you.**

## You Can Trust This Process

Don’t let any lack of technical understanding stop you from using this powerful computer. For example, when growing tomatoes, you plant the seeds in the ground. Once planted, the seeds sprout and

grow. You need not worry about the biological processes that make the plant grow. The plant knows exactly how to grow and produce tomatoes. You can trust the plant to do that correctly.

When you plant an image in your mind, your computer accepts the image as a command and begins to search for the ways and means to make it appear thus telling it to create that image. You are giving it a job to do, and it immediately begins to follow your commands. **You cannot stop your computer from doing this even if you want to.**

This computer in your mind does not question whether the image is good or bad for you. Since it has no ability to reason, it is incapable of evaluating that question — it merely follows orders. The thoughts and images that you hold in your mind, help decide which images that you want your computer to receive and go to work on.

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*The reason your life is the way it is, is because of the way you think. What you think becomes a habit, and you act on your habits.*

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Once you know how, you can supply the computer in your mind with images of your choice — images you wish to make real. The potential for you is there to select the things that you want in your life, program your computer to do the work, and make everything come about that you want.

Have you ever wondered why your life is the way it is? Why you must struggle to get good grades; why everything seems to be going against you, and why everything seems so difficult?

The answer is simple: The reason your life is the way it is, is because of the way you think. What you think becomes a habit, and you act on your habits.

In your unconscious memory, you hold certain images that have helped shape the way you do things. Your life is a perfect reflection of those images. You are the sum of all your thoughts. The thoughts you have held in your mind have turned into your life.

Any idea fixed in your mind becomes your future. Your health, your success, and your money are not simply matters of chance. The primary source is always your thoughts.



You must decide that you want to use this power to your benefit. Destructive, frustrating ideas pictured in your mind insure that you will have destructive, frustrating experiences in life. Successful, prosperous thoughts insure successful, prosperous experiences in life.

## **This Cause-and-Effect Relationship Cannot Be Changed**

The images that you hold in your mind shape the way your life has always functioned and always will. When you tell yourself that you are a loser, you create a lifetime of failure. When you implant an image of yourself that is overweight, unhealthy, and diseased, you create one illness after another and increase the potential to put on excessive weight. When you hold a mental picture of poverty, you will suffer continual problems with money. If you consistently impress upon yourself that you are unlucky and unsuccessful, a huge amount of creative energy will work against you making success unlikely.

As long as you hold these thoughts, your mind's computer sees to it that you fail. It is merely following the instructions you are giving it!

Change your images and watch your life change for the better. Then, no matter what you do, you will unleash positive energy toward being a success.

When you hold thoughts of success, good "luck" is certain. When you see yourself as likeable and attractive, you have plenty of friends. When you tell yourself that you are intelligent, your accomplishments showcase your abilities. When you give your mind a vision of love and understanding, you attract the relationships you desire. When you implant an image of yourself as healthy, slim, and resistant to disease, you lead a long and vigorous life. When you hold a mental picture of wealth and abundance, you live prosperously, and money does not concern you.

When you take direct control by implanting positive images into your mind, you can be sure these positive images will take effect. By doing so, you can restructure your life, your body, your financial situation, and your whole environment. This computer in your mind already holds strong images of your success or failure. These are images that you have used for years and are deep-rooted due to the conditioning that you have had in your life up to this point.

## Your Habits Determine Your Future

Since the moment of your birth, you have been engaged in a constant process of forming habits, breaking them, and forming new ones. By the time that you reach young adulthood, as much as ninety-five percent of your daily activity may be performed from habit. Habit formation is a constructive approach to meeting the daily challenges you face. Every day, you are faced with the need for making a constant stream of choices or decisions. But once you make a satisfactory decision or choice in a given set of circumstances, your computer “stores” that choice for future reference. The next time the same conditions come up, your choice is retrieved and used again. If it is still satisfactory, it becomes a habit to be used automatically in the future.

This process of habit formation helps your life move smoothly. You probably get up every morning about the same time and follow the same routine in getting ready for the day. Without the help of established habits, each morning would be a series of new decisions. For example, should I get up now or sleep another hour? Should I go to school today? Would it be better to eat breakfast or take a shower first? Making such basic decisions every day would soon drain your energy.

Are you willing to take the responsibility or are you waiting for something to happen? Maybe you're waiting for a lucky break or someone to give you something. It is up to you to take the actions and be responsible for their consequences.

Inspire yourself. Read books that will spur you to action, and talk with people whom you admire. How would you like to live your life? Make the changes necessary to be like that.

What actions will take you closer to your goals? Decide on the steps,

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*Are you willing to take the responsibility or are you waiting for something to happen? Maybe you're waiting for a lucky break or someone to give you something. It is up to you to take the actions and be responsible for their consequences.*

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and write them down. Review them until you feel comfortable with those steps. Then, repeat them at least once a day, crossing them off as you accomplish them.

The most rewarding accomplishments are those that challenge you and take a long time to achieve. It is only through these difficulties that a person can rise above the rest to be a success.

As if building a kit, follow your own instructions. Decide your best courses of action. Whether the steps are small or large, make them achievable, and then do them. Don't commit to things that you never intend to do.

Reward yourself. Don't give yourself goals that provide no feeling of satisfaction. If you want to be an artist, strive to be the best and learn from the best. Don't dwell on imperfections.

## **The Best-Kept Secret in the World**

I am going to share a secret with you. Many people don't want you to know this secret because it is so powerful. This secret has been used all through history by kings, presidents, religious leaders, big companies, TV shows, advertisers, politicians, parents, coaches, and teachers. Gang leaders, drug pushers, criminals, bullies, and thieves. Even the friends that you hang out with use it too.

This secret has stood the test of time. In one form or another, it has been used since the beginning of civilization. Many successful people have used this secret to help them reach their goals. Many people swear that the discovery of this secret is the single most important event in their lifetime. Someday you, too, will realize what you are learning. Had I known this secret when my daughter was thirteen, she would still be alive today.

"You can't make me do things." Here is the truth: you are being made to do things all the time. Nearly every minute of the day, you are being made to do things. How? You are influenced by the words and pictures you allow people to put in your mind.

The repetition of positive or negative words and pictures day after day affects you — for good or for bad. Additionally, the computer in your mind begins to make you do the things that the words and pictures represent. The use of this secret is one of the oldest practices of civilization.

The Boy Scout and Girl Scout oaths, the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag, routine prayers, and marriage vows are all forms of putting positive words and images in your mind. These positive words make you do positive things.

Marketing companies, politicians, drug pushers, and television commercials all use words and pictures in hopes that you will buy what they are selling.

If you subscribe to their selling techniques, they can become habits that are controlled by your human computer — the mind. Once the habit becomes stronger and stronger, it becomes very difficult to change. Maybe someone can make you do things, and maybe they can't. One thing is for certain, You will **do things**. Whether you end up a great success and the envy of all your friends or you end up making poor choices and living on the street, it will be because of the things you do. Here is the blatant truth: **you made yourself do things because you were influenced by the images and words you used to program your computer.**

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*The Boy Scout and Girl Scout oaths, the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag, routine prayers, and marriage vows are all forms of putting positive words and images in your mind. These positive words make you do positive things.*

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You can use this secret to program your computer for success. Below are three steps to take right now.

1. Find a mentor — someone who will help you and teach you.
2. Associate with positive friends. If you don't have any, you can often find them by joining a church or civic organization.
3. Fill your mind with positive words and pictures.

## Let's Test Your Programming Skills

Imagine you have won the starring role in a movie. You can create your own character. The following is a list of words you can use to program your mind's software for the role. Here's how you do it.

**Step 1. The words from this list are what you want your audience to use when they talk about YOU.**

Put the words on a poster and practice **being** your character each day.

Attentive	Empowering	Courageous
Committed	Decisive	Disciplined
Positive	Determined	Proud
Goal-oriented	Purposeful	Generous
Considerate	Prepared	Persistent
Honest	Ambitious	Reasonable
Optimistic	Intelligent	Powerful
Confident	Organized	Independent
Accountable	Encouraging	Focused
Perceptive	Sincere	Passionate

## **Step 2. Get yourself pumped up each day before you go on stage.**

Give yourself a big loud “YES” for each one of the questions listed on the following pages.

- Do I pay attention to what other people say? YES
- Do I finish a job even when it is difficult? YES
- Am I challenged by problems? YES
- Do I have a goal I want to achieve? YES
- Do I consider other people? YES
- Can I obey the rules? YES
- Can I bounce back after defeat? YES
- Do I believe in myself? YES
- Can I follow instructions? YES
- Can I respond to the needs of others? YES
- Do I give credit to others? YES
- Can I make my own decisions? YES
- Am I determined? YES
- Am I preparing for success? YES
- Am I ready for success? YES
- Am I working hard to achieve my goals? YES
- Do I think before making important decisions? YES
- Is this the best use of my time? YES
- Do I encourage my friends to do their best? YES
- Am I warm and sincere? YES

- Do I have the courage to succeed? YES
- Do I have self-discipline to achieve my goals? YES
- Do I have a realistic sense of self-worth? YES
- Do I give more than I take? YES
- Do I have the courage to fail and try again? YES
- Can I stop blaming others if things go wrong? YES
- Am I strong? YES
- Can I say no? YES
- Will I follow my plans to achieve success? YES
- Do I sincerely want to achieve my goals? YES

**So what's it going to be? Are you going to make yourself do the things to become a LOSER or a WINNER? IT IS ENTIRELY UP TO YOU because no one can make you do things – EXCEPT YOU.**

*Bob Oros, CSP, CMC, is the president of MoreGrossProfit.com, the foodservice industry's number one sales training company. He has been a full-time speaker since 1990 with over 1,500 speaking engagements in all 50 states and in countries as far away as New Zealand. Prior to starting his speaking career, Bob spent twenty years working his way from a street salesperson to the position of national sales manager for a Fortune 200 food company. During his best year, his personal sales exceeded thirty million dollars in new annual business. His foodservice sales course has produced sales and gross profit increases ranging from twenty percent to more than one hundred percent for some of the largest companies in the industry and can cut as much as two years off the learning curve of a new industry salesperson. For more information on Bob, visit his website at [www.boboros.com](http://www.boboros.com).*

# create your future



**The Key  
to Success!**

**Vern Holder**



**Wonder-  
Working  
Power**

**Mark Clemons**



**WOW  
Power!**

**Kerry Robertson**



**Swing 4  
the Dream**

**David W. Cobb**



**Building Life's  
Foundation for  
a Purpose**

**David Randall**



**The Secret  
to Being  
Attractive**

**Carrie  
Perrien Smith**



**Reliability:  
Seventy Percent  
of Success**

**Kristine Sexter**





# Attitude: The Key To Success!

by Vern Holder



**W**hen my son Arnie was about twenty-three years old, he bought a car. When he asked how much the car cost, the car dealer told him the list price. Arnie thought that was the final price, like buying gasoline — that's the price and that's what you pay! He didn't know about this thing called "negotiating."

A few years later, he told me I had not taught him how to buy a car. I had let him down. While I had purchased many cars when he was young, I never brought him with me when I shopped, bargained, and bought a car. I have regretted that ever since — by failing to guide my son in such matters, he probably paid thousands too much for his car! All parents want to prepare their children to meet life's challenges. That's what this chapter is all about — helping young people prepare for life.

When this book was conceived, the author of each chapter was told, "If you, as an adult, were to tell a young person how to make it in life and become a success, what would you say?" The more I thought about our task, the more I realized this could get pretty deep. How could we cover everything a young person needs to know to "make it in life?" I concluded we couldn't touch on every area of life that people might encounter, but we could give basic truths and principles that produce success. I think as you read each chapter written by a different author, you'll be amazed how each has given words of wisdom from many different facets.

I will start each section of this chapter by giving the dictionary

definition of the topic taken from the *Webster's New World College Dictionary*. This will give us a baseline of what the word really means. Sometimes people know in general what a word means but don't actually know the true definition. So you won't feel like you're reading a dictionary, I'll try to keep it interesting. My motto is "We're having fun ... but we're not playing!"

## What Is Success?

I think most of us would think "the gaining of wealth, fame, rank, etc." is the most common definition. But is that all there is to success? How do we accomplish any degree of success?

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**Success:** 1) *orig., result; outcome.*  
2a) *a favorable or satisfactory outcome or result.*  
2b) *something having such an outcome.*  
3) *the gaining of wealth, fame, rank, etc.*  
4) *a successful person.*

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Success is attained by incorporating a combination of fundamentals in your life — fundamentals like goals, education, integrity, self-esteem, communication skills, perseverance, belief in God, ethics, and attitude. Understanding these core items is difficult and creating a life that utilizes them is challenging sometimes. It takes dedication and practice but I promise the rewards are worth the work.

## Goals

All during my life, I have approached a project by establishing the end result I desired to achieve and then

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**Goal:** *An object or end that one strives to attain.*

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"backed up" to determine what it takes to reach the goal. Setting goals is one of the most important tasks in life. If you can "see" what you want at the end, you're more apt to have the direction and motivation to try harder to successfully reach that goal.

Assume I'm going on an antelope hunt. I gather all the equipment necessary for a successful hunt. That list might include a rifle, bullets, knife, compass, binoculars, maps, down jacket, hat, gloves, boots, sleeping bag, food, water, and so on. I can't wait until the night before antelope season starts to assemble my equipment though. I must start months in advance because if I forget one or two things, my hunt



Vern on a successful antelope hunt in Wyoming. He dropped this pronghorn with a 330-yard shot!

might not succeed. A successful life is much the same as a hunting trip. More important than the will to succeed is the will to prepare!

If you want to have a successful life, “back up” from your desired result. Evaluate what is required so you can start working on these steps at an early age.

## Education

Statistics show that a college graduate earns much, much more money during a lifetime than a non-graduate does. That will motivate most of us!

Money isn't the most important thing in the world, but it sure is

a good way to keep score! However, if we strive to give something back to the world, we gain a strong force known as determination and direction. The sooner you get a goal in life, the better.

When he was just four years old, my friend from school, Bryan Ferrel, saw men flying airplanes. He decided right then that he wanted to become a pilot. Nothing could stop him from becoming a pilot.

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***Education: The process of training and developing the knowledge, skill, mind, character, etc. by formal schooling and training.***

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At age fourteen, Vern didn't look much like a winner, but he was preparing to be a winner! He obtained a baseball scholarship at the University of Oklahoma.

Every decision Bryan made as he worked his way through school pushed him closer to his goal of becoming a pilot. He took the right math and science courses that he would need to become a good pilot. And fly he did. He made a career of the U.S. Air Force and flew jets in two wars. Along the way, he also became a good leader as he reached the rank of colonel. Bryan never lost sight of his goal. His goal, sense of direction, determination, and hard work paid off! Have you given serious thought to what you want to accomplish in life? If not, why not?

Eddie Reichlt and I played basketball and baseball for our high school team. Eddie was always more mature, polite, and better mannered than most. He knew what he wanted to be when he grew up — a doctor. He had a stellar freshman year at the University of Oklahoma but then disaster hit. His father died and he had to drop out of school, get a job, and take care of his mother until she was able to cope without her husband.

Despite the short-term setback, Eddie never wavered from his goal of becoming a doctor. After being out of school a year, he picked up

where he left off. After eleven more years of study, he became a great doctor. He knew that education was the key to reaching his goal of becoming a doctor. Life isn't like we see on television. Sometimes obstacles appear that seem insurmountable, but if you have the right stuff, you can reach your objective.

## Integrity

Integrity is one of the most important qualities a person can possess. Is your word good? Are you on time for meetings with friends? Do you repay your debts? Can you imagine a bank without integrity? Do you like to work with someone who has no integrity? The following story will be a self-test for your own integrity.

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***Integrity: The quality or state of being of sound moral principle, uprightness, honesty, and sincerity.***

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After I was out of school and started working full time, an FBI agent came to visit me. Harold, one of my school friends, wanted to go to work for the FBI and had listed me as a character witness. The agent asked all the standard questions and then he said, "I'd like to ask you one more question, and I'd like an immediate answer."

I responded quickly, "Fine." He asked, "If Harold wanted to borrow one hundred dollars from you, would you loan it to him?" I said, "Sure!" I knew old Harold would pay me back as soon as he had the money. He was that kind of guy. The agent said, "Thanks," and left.

I got to thinking about that question. That's a pretty good question, isn't it? You know, we say all the right things, give compliments, and talk a lot about what we should do. However, when it comes to money ... well that's a little different deal. We think twice before getting into that old billfold, don't we? How well do we know that person asking for money? Is his integrity such that we know he'll pay back the money? Here is the test: how many people do you know today who would loan you one hundred dollars on the spur of the moment with no questions asked? Are you having trouble coming up with more than three people? Integrity — do you have it? It's not too late to get it!

Whenever you face a decision, you have three choices: Do what you please, do what others do, or do what is right.



## Self-Esteem

This is one of the areas teenagers struggle with because they are forming who they are in those young years.

Many times, they are easily led by other teens who seem to have it all together and are real cool. Most teenagers don't have the maturity to set a good example; their peers influence them instead.

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*Self-esteem: Belief in oneself, self-respect.*

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You need to learn who you really are early in life. My seventeen-year-old granddaughter, Kristin Pearson, said it very well: "Remain genuine and true to yourself throughout life without changing for the approval of others." You are "somebody" and God put you on earth for a purpose. You don't have to know everything to have confidence in yourself!

Connie worked in the office of the same company in Oklahoma where I work. I could be in another city in America and call in for messages. I might be having a bad day and it could be raining or snowing. Connie, with her cheerful voice, would answer the phone. After I greeted her, she would say, "Vern, where in the world are you?" I'd tell her and she might say, "Hey, tell me a man joke I can tell Carl!" Carl was her husband and worked for the same company. I'd tell her a joke or story and no matter how bad my day was, I was always in a better mood after talking to Connie. She just had that effect on people. Unfortunately, she had a secret.

Her doctor had told her she had a bad heart and had only two years to live. She was in her late thirties and had two teenage daughters. But she never told anybody she had a problem. She just remained her bubbly self until the end. She had told her husband that she didn't want a funeral. We had to convince Carl that the funeral was for those of us who knew and loved her. After a day of discussion, Carl agreed to have a funeral for Connie.

I arrived at the church about thirty or forty minutes early thinking I might be able to help in some way. The church was already full! I was the last one seated in the main sanctuary. There was such an overflow of people that they had to sit in the fellowship hall and pipe in the audio from the service. After the beautiful service, I asked Carl why Connie didn't want a funeral. He replied, "She was afraid no one would come to her funeral."

What a tragedy! This upbeat person had such a poor self-image of herself that she couldn't believe people liked her enough to come to her funeral. It broke my heart to hear that.

What is your image of yourself? Do you know who you are and what principles you stand on? Do you have any idea what you can offer the world? You may need to take inventory of all the good qualities you have. You'll be surprised.

I have worked with technical people in eighteen countries. I observed that most of these sharp people were so much better than they believed they were! They seemed to reach a level in life and just coast. They'll never know how successful they might have been.

Be careful. There is a fine line between being confident and being cocky! It takes a degree of maturity to develop the poise to go along with your confidence! Maybe this book will give you the right tools to reach that level.

## **Personality Profile**

I strongly recommend that everyone take a personality profile course. It will teach you about the different types of personalities. You will find out what personality type you are and what type of work you are best suited for. You'll also learn to recognize all the personality types you'll encounter. The concept is the most interesting and helpful thing I have ever learned! It teaches skills that a young person could apply every day in their life.

In 1973, I was a salesperson for Spalding Sporting Goods. My job involved selling professional golf equipment. We were given the personality course in the early spring and I "bought into" everything it taught. This particular course taught us how to recognize the four personality types: Analytical, Driver, Amiable, and Expressive. I learned that you could tell what personality type a person was by studying what they say, how they say it, what they wear, and what kind of work environment they keep (messy or neat). You have been one of these personality types all your life. Study and learn about your personality type. It can change your life!

The process seems so simple that many people can't believe it is effective. I was a believer because I learned that reading the personalities of my customers helped me talk to them the way they preferred. This enabled me to reach four hundred percent of my

quota and win three of the four sales contests my company offered that year. You can see why I believed! I felt like I had the answers to the test!

I was so impressed with what the course had done for me that I became a consultant and taught the course to many companies. It was a pleasure to watch salespeople reach sales goals they had never reached before. They attributed their success to the personality profile course.

That's why I recommend all young people take a personality profile course. Understanding personalities will help you in any position where you deal with people. You will become a better manager, salesperson, teacher, or whatever career you chose. It will also help you chose a mate and raise your children. With a fifty-percent divorce rate in America, everyone needs help!

## Communication Skills

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It's a proven fact that people who express themselves well advance in their career. Managers must have good communication skills. Many times in politics, the better speaker is elected even though he really isn't the best qualified.

***Communication Skills:  
Giving or exchanging  
information, signals, or  
messages by talking,  
using gestures, or writing.***

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I'm a professional speaker. I could always talk and had what we call a "gift of gab." However, I didn't learn to speak until I joined the National Speakers Association. They teach people how to speak effectively with words, gestures, and body language. When we speak, we paint pictures with words. However, there is another factor to consider: speaking from the heart. Combine speaking from the heart with sincerity and you have one strong combination!

In 1991, I was to give the keynote speech to the Oklahoma Public Fire Education Conference. There were thirty-eight states represented. Just before I took the platform to give my speech, a man stopped me and told me he had heard me speak in Albuquerque, New Mexico a few years back. He said, "I want to ask you a question. Do you guys in safety ever stop to consider how many people are still here today because they heard you speak?" Although I always hoped I helped reduce accidents, I hadn't thought about how many people were alive because of me.





Vern Holder now and then. Vern has been a safety consultant and professional speaker since 1971. He uses humor, card tricks, and stories to entertain and educate his audiences.

After the talk, three or four firefighters came up to me shook my hand, choked up, started crying, and walked off! That had never happened before. I had given that safety talk hundreds of times, but that day I took off the mask of the professional speaker and safety expert. Instead, I simply spoke from the heart about applying good safety habits so the audience members could go home to their family the same way they came to work — safe and sound. I had a different inflection in my voice. I was really trying to save lives and my voice reflected it. I had learned to communicate more effectively by changing my attitude about why I was speaking. You can learn to be a good communicator if you want it bad enough. Do it! It will help you in every phase of your life.

### **Perseverance**

When I think of perseverance, I think of W. Mitchell CPS, CSP, CPAE. Early in his career, he was burned over sixty-five percent of

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***Perseverance: The act of persevering; continued, patient, effort in spite of difficulty.***

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his body in a motorcycle accident. Later, he lost the use of his legs in an airplane crash — an accident that put him in a wheelchair for the rest of his life. But that didn't prevent him from flying his airplane and becoming mayor of his town. He was also a congressional nominee — all while running a business! And you think you have problems! Get serious! Faced with all those obstacles, most of us would have given up — but not W. Mitchell. His perseverance made him a success in life.

He has a statement: "Before I was paralyzed, there were 10,000 things I could do; now there are 9,000. I can either dwell on the 1,000 I've lost or focus on the 9,000 I have left." Develop what you have, and don't worry about what others have.

His compelling story led him to professional speaking. He joined the National Speakers Association and that's where I met him. He is the most inspirational person I have ever known. His down-to-earth approach to life and his sincere delivery — which comes from his heart — makes him a great speaker. He has been on television many times. Do yourself a favor and log on to his website: [www.wmitchell.com](http://www.wmitchell.com). Better yet, if you get a chance to hear him speak — go see him! You'll be glad you did!

## **Belief In God**

If you want one book that has all the answers to all of life's problems, get a Bible! The Bible is the number one best-selling book in the world. The principles it teaches about how to live with your fellow man are simple and clear. This one book can be your business, marriage, and life manual all rolled into one. Believing in Jesus Christ and practicing the principles He taught guarantee eternal life.

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***Belief In God: Belief in the creator and ruler of the universe.***

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Zig Ziglar, CSP, CPAE — one of the greatest motivational speakers in America — taught me a method of explaining why Christians believe the Bible. I used it in Denver not long ago.

I was setting in a booth in a restaurant having dinner and two men were in the booth to my back. I couldn't help hearing their conversation. It was clear they were close friends and had known each other for twenty or thirty years. The man sitting directly behind me was a Christian and was trying to persuade his old buddy to

believe in God. He kept saying, "The Bible says ..." and his friend would say, "You use the Bible as your standard and I keep telling you I don't believe the Bible." The conversation went on like this all during my meal. They weren't arguing really. In fact, the tone was of two reasonable men discussing a subject.

It took a lot of nerve, but as I stood up to leave, I stopped to talk with the two men. I told them I couldn't help but overhear their conversation and that I was impressed by the gentleman who was concerned about his old friend's soul. I asked if I could ask the nonbeliever a question in an effort to explain why his friend believed the Bible. He said, "Sure." I asked, "Sir, who is your favorite quarterback?" He replied, "Brett Favre." I said, "Suppose Brett said he was going to complete 6,000 passes in a row. How much would you bet he couldn't do it?" Laughingly he said, "Well, I'd bet the farm!" I said, "Suppose he completed 1,000 in a row without a miss, what would you bet he wouldn't reach 6,000?" The man said with a smile, "It would be a miracle, but I'd still bet the farm!" I said, "Sir, suppose he had completed 4,000 in a row. What would you bet now?" He said, "Well, I'd be thinking but the odds would be changing!" I said, "Suppose Brett had completed 5,999 passes in a row. Now, what would you bet that he would complete that last pass?" He smiled and said, "I'm no dummy. If this was for real, I'd bet the farm he would do it!"

I said, "I can tell you're a thinking man! Your friend believes the Bible because he knows it has proven to be true. Are you aware the Bible contains approximately 6,000 prophecies that were predicted hundreds and hundreds of years before the events happened? And that approximately 4,000 of those predictions have come true right on time exactly like the prophets said they would! Our religion is the only one based on these true God-inspired prophecies. Just like you'd bet on Brett completing that last pass, your friend is betting his life on the Bible. He's just trying to get you in on this "good deal!"

Both men sat there in silence for a second and the Bible believer said, "I've never heard it explained that way before, but I'm sure glad you took the time to talk to us." The old friend said, "Yeah, thanks for filling me in on why my friend is so sold on the Bible. Now he has more ammunition to use on me! By the way, does Brett know he can complete 6,000 passes in a row?" We all laughed and I told them good-bye. As I was leaving, I said, "Partner, I wish I had a friend like

you do.” I don’t know if the old friend became a believer, but he sure had a different look on his face when I left.

In the 1960s, I gave a talk called “What Would Jesus Do?” to teenagers at churches all over the Southwest (I wish I had been the one to invent the WWJD bracelet that gained popularity in 2000!) Even if you don’t believe in Jesus Christ, you know what he stood for and how he lived.

Suppose you’re fifteen years old and you’re in a car with three other people who want to stop to get beer. You know it’s against the law and alcohol isn’t good for you. What should you do? Your parents aren’t there to tell you. Ask yourself, “What would Jesus do?” You see how easy it is to come up with the right answer?

## Ethics

As you proceed in your forming years and later in your business life, situations will arise that demand that you consider ethics.

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***Ethics: A system of moral standards or values.***

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You’ll be tested. There is a book by John C. Maxwell called *There’s No Such Thing as Business Ethics*. In the book, he explains there’s no such thing as *business ethics* — there is only *ethics*. Either you’re ethical or you’re not ethical. Ethics is a standard of doing the right thing in all phases of your life. I can recommend you buy Maxwell’s book and keep it on your desk all your life. Believe me, you’ll need to refer to it many times in your career! I know I have. We can’t know everything, but by reading, we can learn!

A few years ago, I was in charge of manning a booth for my company at a trade show. We were taking business cards from people at the trade show for a drawing for a golf putter. The show was nearing the end, and we drew a card out of the bowl. The person who won the putter was a meter technician at a small town in Northwest Oklahoma. Another man who worked at my company was in the booth and said, “Oh, he doesn’t buy anything. Let’s give the putter to Doyle Smith,” Doyle was a major buyer with one of our large customers. I thought he was kidding but he wasn’t. Now, here is an awkward situation!

I’m in charge of the booth, but the man is a manager who is over me in our company. However, I knew the right thing to do — my personal ethics wouldn’t let me give the putter to Doyle Smith. I

said, “The technician won the putter, and he should get it. If you want, I can give another putter to Doyle. We shouldn’t compromise our company’s integrity for a putter.” After much discussion, I suggested we contact the president of our company to see what he wanted us to do. The manager backed down.

Do you see how a very simple thing can involve ethics? You set certain moral standards in your life and stick to them. Sometimes it may cost you but in the long run, you’ll always feel good about yourself and know that you’ve done the right thing! Do yourself a favor and get that John Maxwell book. It may change your life.

## Attitude

In the Bible, Philippians 2:5 (NIV) says, “Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.” In the chapter on Attitude and Success in Elwood N.

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***Attitude: One's disposition, opinion, or mind-set.***

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Chapman’s book, *Attitude*, it simply says nothing contributes more to career success than a positive attitude.

In my years of study during my travels around the world, I’ve come to this conclusion: all the points we’ve ever heard and all the education and training we’ve ever had about how to succeed in life’s endeavors are worthless! Even the chapters in this book are worthless — yes, worthless, absolutely worthless! I think you’ll agree with me when I tell you, they’re worthless until we apply them to our daily lives!

Why don’t we apply them? It’s our attitude about putting out the effort to do the right things to be successful. You’ve heard it before, “It’s not what you know, it’s what you do with what you know!” Many of us just go through the motions of learning how to reach our potential, but we don’t really apply the important points we’ve learned. A poor attitude leads us down the path of failure. Therefore, I must put attitude at the top of the list.

At one of my safety talks on attitude, I met a man with an amazing story. In 1995, thirty-four-year-old Gary Davis fell 130 feet out of a drilling rig and lived to tell about it! He was in the top of the rig “rigging down” as we call it when he fell. The next time you’re on the thirteenth or fourteenth floor of a building, look out the window and you’ll see what Gary saw.

He broke his shoulder blade in five places, broke his collarbone, and broke all his ribs on his left side with two puncturing his left lung. His spleen and tailbone were torn out when a four-inch valve ripped through his body as he fell. His right arm was broken, his left leg was fractured in eleven places, and his left ankle was shattered. Other than that, he says he was okay! Is that an amazing story or what? But I want to talk about Gary's attitude.

In 1998, I wanted to introduce Gary at the end of my presentation at the Governor's Conference on Safety and Health for the state of Oklahoma. I asked him if he wanted to be introduced and say a few words about his experience. Talking to Gary is like talking to Billy Graham. He is a shy, good-looking, young man from Burns Flat, Oklahoma. He stands 6'2" tall and weighs about 190 pounds. He said he would be glad to make an appearance.

But then he said something very revealing. He said, "You know, Vern, I'm kinda smart." He didn't say or mean it in a boastful way. It was more like he was surprised. I said, "How do you mean that?" He explained while he was recuperating from all the surgeries, he decided to give college a try. When he was young, he felt he couldn't make it in college.

You need to understand his background. His family had been roughnecks (oilfield workers) for decades, and he had been a roughneck for fourteen years. He was surprised when he earned a 4.0 grade point average his first year of college! Do you see what I mean when I say most of us are so much better than we think we are?

Gary and I gave another program in 2000 after he had graduated with a degree in Occupational and Environmental Safety. Can't you just see him giving a safety talk before oilfield workers? He'll give new meaning to the phrase, "Been there, done that!" He also maintained a 4.0 grade point average through all four years! He isn't just smart. He is brilliant! The insurance company that covered all his medical bills hired Gary as an insurance adjuster. Part of his job is to give safety talks. He is married and has two beautiful children.

What is your attitude about yourself? Are you too afraid to risk failing to try to reach higher goals, or are you just lazy? Maybe you know what to do but don't want to put forth the effort. Sometimes you have to reach deep down inside and give it your all.



## Can You Change Your Attitude?

Dr. Russell L. Adams, PhD, professor and clinical neuropsychologist at the University of Oklahoma told me of two seven-year studies that researched what makes people change their attitude. Two findings from those studies stood out to me:

- Just because your attitude about something is very strong doesn't mean it is true. For years, most people in the world thought the world was flat. They were wrong. Most thought the sun revolved around the earth. They were wrong. You may think you can ride a motorcycle without a helmet and be safe. You're wrong. Oh you say, "I've been riding for five years and haven't been hurt." That may be true, but wearing a helmet is like buying insurance — it's there in case you need it. It's much like fire insurance. Our neighbor's house burned down. The owner said he was sure glad he paid on that fire insurance for twenty years! You see, you only have one life and that helmet may save it! Statistics indicate that.
- People will change their attitude if they see there is something in it for them — the simple old animal instinct, "What's in it for me?" As you read all these chapters that outline principles that will help you "make it in life," you're probably thinking, "How will that help me?" If you are, you're normal!

## What Changed My Attitude?

College. Boy, I had fun my first semester at college. I took study hall, pool hall, alcohol, and dance hall! I had a great time but as a result, I earned thirteen credit hours of "F" and two hours of "D." When you do that poorly at the University of Oklahoma, they send you to the evaluation center.

The psychologist looked my grades and said, "Vern, you made "F" in everything but two hours of "D" in ROTC (Military Science). I don't understand, Vern. You scored high on your entrance tests. What seems to be the problem?"

I want you to get the picture. I was 6'4" tall and weighed 210 pounds. I was wearing one of my two pair of Levis, a white T-shirt, and my high school letter jacket. I said, "Man, I don't know. I think I spent too much time studying on that ROTC stuff and didn't spread out my study time!" I thought that was funny, but you know what? He didn't even smile. Somebody else that didn't smile was my dad.





After Vern's dad retired, they spent many happy hours fishing at Lake Texhoma in Oklahoma.

You see my dad was an old Indian fighter. That's mainly because Momma was an old Indian! No, I'm just kidding. We are part Indian. My mother was one quarter Cherokee. She even attended state Indian schools. My dad was really an oilfield worker. He worked forty-three years for the same oil company. He was 6'2" tall and weighed 200 pounds and had forearms the size of your thigh. Using those two big heavy rod wrenches that weighed ten or twelve pounds each every day had built up his muscles. He worked hard. He was a man!

Man oh man, I hated to show him those grades!

I figured he'd hit me, take my car, or something worse. He was sitting in his rocker when I gave him my report card. He slumped — just slumped down in his rocker like the breath of life had gone out of him.

Have you ever seen your daddy cry? I was seventeen and had never seen a tear out of that big oilfield worker. I was stunned. He finally looked up. With tears running down his face, he said, "Son, you know your mother has a tenth grade education and I only made it through the eighth grade before my mother died and I had to go to work. You're the first one in our whole family tree to get to go off to college, and we'd hoped you get an education and maybe get one of those degrees."

I had never felt so worthless. It's the first time I realized how much I

meant to my father. I had let him down. Up to that point, I had never had a serious thought in my life. All I thought about was a ballgame or a piece of chrome for my car or girls.

At that point, my attitude turned around 180 degrees! Wild horses couldn't have kept me from graduating from college. That's the way it happens, isn't it? You come to a point in your life where you "grow up" and become aware that you're responsible for your actions. It may happen at school, church, or work. It might happen in the emergency room of a hospital. It could happen while you're reading this book. I hope so. You have the power to change your attitude.

I looked my dad straight in the eye and said, "Dad, if you'll give me another chance, I'll never disappoint you again." I graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Geology and a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration and completed a year's graduate work in physics. But I had to change my attitude "big time" to reach my goal. Do you see? You have a choice about the course of your life.

## Action

I repeat, all the above is worthless unless you take action to reach your goals in life. To help motivate you, I've assembled some quotes that might help inspire you be the best you can be.

*The great end of life is not knowledge but action.*

Aldous Huxley

*The difference between a successful person and others is not a lack of strength nor a lack of knowledge but rather a lack of will.*

John D. Rockefeller

*To look is one thing. To see what you look at is another. To understand what you see is a third. To learn from what you understand is still something else. But to act on what you learn is all that really matters.*

Bits & Pieces

*Look at a day when you are extremely satisfied at the end. It's not a day when you lounge around doing nothing. It's when you've had everything to do, and you've done it.*

Margaret Thatcher

*The success of tomorrow depends on the work of today.*

David Frost

*Success in life is a matter not so much of talent as of concentration and perseverance.*

C. W. Wendte

*The quality of a person's life is in direct proportion to his or her commitment to excellence regardless of the chosen field of endeavor.*

Vince Lombardi

*The way to get on in this world is to do whatever work you are doing well, then you will be picked to do some other job that is not being done well.*

Samuel Vaclair

*The man who gets ahead is the one who does more than is necessary ... and keeps on doing it.*

T. Carlyle

*Learning is a treasure that accompanies its owner everywhere.*

Chinese Proverb

*The man who makes a mistake and neglects to correct it, makes another mistake.*

William Durant

*Forget failures. Forget everything except what you are going to do now and do it.*

William Durant

*A man must be big enough to admit his mistakes, smart enough to profit from them, and strong enough to correct them.*

Bits & Pieces

*Quality is never an accident; it is always the result of high intention, sincere effort, intelligent direction, and skillful execution. It represents the wise choice of many alternatives.*

The Pilgrim

*I may not know all the answers, but I at least know where to get them.*

Henry Ford

*There is little difference in people, but that little difference makes a big difference. The difference is ATTITUDE. The big difference is whether it is positive or negative.*

*Clement Stone*

*If you can change your ATTITUDE, you can change your life!*

*Vern Holder*

***You can go as high as you can reach, but you gotta reach!***

*Vern was born on an oil field lease in Oklahoma and has forty years experience in the oil and gas industry. From roustabout to roughneck, Vern has been a project engineer at a research and development laboratory, and a marketing and sales manager while working in eighteen countries. He is married, has four children and four grandchildren, and lives in Edmond, Oklahoma.*

*He attended the University of Oklahoma and Oklahoma City University while obtaining a Bachelor of Arts in Geology and a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration. A year's graduate work in physics rounds out his formal education. While in the Army, he was an instructor in basic electronics of guided missiles.*

*He has been speaking professionally since 1971. Vern was named International Salesman of the Year in a professional sales club. He was also one of two speakers voted Best of Year in 1976 and 1986. He is a member of the National Speakers Association, past president of the Oklahoma Speakers Association (NSA-OK) and listed in Who's Who in Professional Speaking. He is a humorous motivational speaker and uses jokes, card tricks, and stories that relate to the topic to get his message across. His motto is "We're having fun ... but we're not playing!"*



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*"The entire event was amazing. Entertaining speakers, one right after the other, imparted their knowledge and skills to the thrill of the audience. The information was fresh and our attendees remarked about their ability to apply the concepts to everyday life. If you are looking for a 'turnkey' package to energize your conference, I would strongly recommend that you look no further!"*

*Jim Denton, Director Child Nutrition Program*