

## The Challenge

The aim of this book is to help teens become successful. But I warn you, I'll be speaking bluntly. Some of you will squirm, so if you don't want the truth—DON'T READ THIS BOOK!

Many teens destroy their futures by making dumb decisions. This book explores how you can avoid making foolish choices. I'll be challenging you with straight talk that's hard-hitting, aggressive, and thought-provoking. But you're in the driver's seat. You can either choose to listen and learn how to become successful, or reject this book. It's your choice. There are those when confronted with straight talk will hiss as a cornered rattlesnake, "No one is going to tell me what to do!"

My goal isn't to make your life miserable; I want you to have a great life and a successful future. You'll learn either from the harsh "school of hard knocks," or be wise and learn from others. This book is jam-packed with real-life experiences showing what it takes to get ahead in life. I want you to be aware that once you leave school, the workplace is a totally different world. You may get away with your foolishness and stubbornness as a teen in school, but when you leave school, the real world won't put up with your nonsense.

I want to stress, this book is not just about *my* ideas. I'll be writing about and quoting famous people like Henry Ford, Winston Churchill, Walt Disney, Martin Luther King, Helen Keller, George Washington Carver, Benjamin Franklin,

## Teen Success In Career and Life Skills

Abraham Lincoln, Thomas Edison, Mary Kay Ash, J. C. Penney, Colin Powell, and many others.

You'll learn about:

- Eddie Rickenbacker who spent 24 days stranded on a raft in the Pacific Ocean and what he learned from that experience
- A boy whose doctors wanted to amputate his legs because of a severe burn he received, but through persistence ran the world's fastest mile
- Someone the kids called "hatchet-face" who overcame his inferiority complex, opened a law firm, and became a United States senator from Oklahoma
- A woman who started a company with \$5,000 from her savings and became according to Baylor University the greatest female entrepreneur in American history
- A car salesman who sold twice as many cars as any other salesman
- What coach Paul William "Bear" Bryant, who won the most games in the history of big-time college football, told his players the first time he met them
- And many more fascinating stories that reveal the secrets of success.

In this book you'll examine such issues as the technology explosion; the value of education; choosing and preparing for

## The Challenge

the right career; instructions to write a resume and how to act in an interview; applying elephant ears, eagle eyes, and a pinhole mouth to get ahead in your job; how to handle finances; how millionaires obtain their wealth; what it takes to be a champion; understanding the free enterprise system; the importance of character; dating and marriage; how to handle peer pressure; the power of bad habits; what leads to success or failure; how simple things like shaking hands and the way you dress can impact your future; how implementing Golden Rule thinking can revolutionize your life; ingredients of leadership; practical ideas for teen success, and many more exciting topics aimed to make you a winner.

## **My Background**

Before I go into more detail about teen success, I'd like to share a few things about my background so you may get a better understanding of where I come from. After graduating from high school, I went to work first at an insurance company and then at Chase Manhattan Bank in New York City. I realized clerical work wasn't for me, so during lunch break I'd visit employment agencies in downtown Manhattan and look at their job openings. Being the mechanical type, I longed to find work in a machine shop. Without having any machining background, no one would hire me. In order to get into the machining trade, I took two nighttime classes of machine shop at Brooklyn Technical High School. Now with my schooling experience, I began searching for a machine shop job.

The minimum wage at that time was \$.75 an hour. I found a job in a small storefront machine shop in Brooklyn. The

machine shop had one employee and the owner. To get the job, I offered to work at half the minimum wage. They hired me for \$.37½ an hour. So by working eight hours, I'd earn \$3.00.

“That’s foolish!” you say. “No way should you have worked for half the minimum wage!”

Yet that was one of the smartest moves I ever made. After three months I earned \$.75 an hour. A year later, one of our customers hired me, and there I learned to become a tool and die maker—one of the highest paid jobs in manufacturing. My entire life has benefited from that decision. So if you want a successful future, Lesson # 1 is:

**When looking for employment, don't look just for what you'll earn now; look for what you may earn in the future.**

## **Marine Corps**

While working as an apprentice tool and die maker, I was ordered to report to Brooklyn for the draft because the Korean War was going on. The draft board had stamped on my papers, USMC (United States Marine Corps). All new recruits were sent to Parris Island, South Carolina. There they cut off our hair, gave us a physical, and issued us new gear. They were going to make us new recruits into “The Few. The Proud. The Marines!”

The first thing they taught us was discipline. In war you don't have time to debate. You must be trained to obey. Whatever the drill instructor (DI) said, we had to do. Period. We ate, slept, stood, marched, and ran whenever the DI gave orders.

## The Challenge

When a DI yells, “Attention!” you had better quickly snap those two legs and arms together and stand still. And don’t you dare swat that fly that’s sitting on the end of your nose.

“But the fly tickles my nose,” you may object.

Go ahead; swat that fly in front of a DI and discover what happens. It will probably be the last time you’ll try. I’ll tell you one thing; I wouldn’t want to be in your shoes. Discipline is extremely important in the military. You cannot win battles with undisciplined soldiers. Likewise in life, if you want to become successful, you must be disciplined.

### **New York City High School Teacher and Assistant Dean of Boys**

After the Marine Corps I met a beautiful girl. After dating her for one and a half years we got married and attended college together. The second year of college our first child was born, and I continued to attend. At the age of 40 I decided to leave my job as a foreman of a tool and die company and become a New York City high school teacher.

To become certified, I went back to college and attended Oswego State University, City College of New York, and New York University. In addition, I became an assistant dean of boys in a high school with 3,600 pupils where I counseled students and parents. As I taught, I saw many educational deficiencies and decided to investigate the system, both locally and nationwide. I took a one-year leave of absence, and during that time became a substitute teacher. I taught every grade level from 1 to 12 in 27 different schools in all the boroughs of New York City. I interviewed students, parents, teachers,

assistant principals, and principals. After working ten years on this project, I wrote *Schools in Crisis: Training for Success or Failure?*

From my research and experiences as a high school teacher, assistant dean of boys, and substitute teacher in some of the worst schools in New York City, I have much to say about why many teens end up as losers. No one in their right mind would want to hire some of the teens I've encountered. Some teens will wake up after traveling the road of hard knocks; others will suffer their entire lives for their defiant and bitter attitudes.

## **Founder and Owner of Three Businesses**

My wife and I decided to move our family of five children to Houston, Texas. I loved to teach, but the pay for teaching in Houston was insufficient to support my family, so I went back to my trade as a tool and die maker. After two years I found employment as a tool designer. Six months later the president offered me the job of operations manager of this large tool and die stamping shop and a machining company.

After working there as manager for 5½ years, I decided to start an electrical discharge machining (EDM) company with my son who had an engineering degree. Within four years we became the largest wire EDM job shop in Texas. During that time I also started Advance Publishing and Digital Cornerstone, a recording and video studio. After nine years, Reliable EDM, with 15 wire EDMs, became the largest company of its kind west of the Mississippi River. Today we have over 50 EDMs.

## The Challenge

What happened?

That is what this book is about: How *you* may become successful. I've shared my varied background with you so you'll realize I'm speaking from years of personal experience. As a company owner and operations manager, I've interviewed numerous employees. From my five children I've had 19 consecutive years of teenage experience, and lots of experience from my 19 grandchildren. I want to stress that what you'll be reading isn't just *my* ideas. I'll be sharing secrets from many individuals and leaders about what they have discovered to become successful.

I've elaborated on my background to show you I've learned not only from my own experiences but also from the successes and failures of others. As you read this book you may wonder, "Where did you get all these ideas and stories? Did you one day get the idea to write a book on teen success and began researching and writing?"

No, I didn't get an idea one day about teen success. This book started over 40 years ago. I have a vast filing system where I've been collecting articles and materials for many years in hopes of one day using them to inspire others. One of the subjects that always fascinated me was: how to become successful. Since I've written many children's books teaching important life skills and virtues, and now many of those children are today's teens, I wanted to write an inspiring book to challenge them how *they* can become winners starting out as a young person. Many seeds of destruction are planted in teen years, and this book is my dream of helping teens avoid

the pitfalls and instead sow seeds of success. Will you accept the challenge to become a winner?

## **Your Dream**

As you read this book, I hope it will inspire *you* to dream that one day you too will become successful. Henry Ford, the founder of Ford Motor Company and the inventor of assembly lines and mass production, had this dream:

I will build a motor car for the great multitude.... It will be so low in price that no man making a good salary will be unable to own one and enjoy with his family the blessing of hours of pleasure in God's great open spaces....When I'm through, everybody will be able to afford one, and everyone will have one. The horse will have disappeared from our highways, the automobile will be taken for granted [and we will] give a large number of men employment at good wages.<sup>1</sup>

This was Walt Disney's dream for Disneyland:

The idea of Disneyland is a simple one. It will be a place for people to find happiness and knowledge. It will be a place for parents and children to spend pleasant times in one another's company; a place for teachers and pupils to discover greater ways of understanding and education. Here the older generation can recapture the nostalgia of days gone by, and the



## The Challenge

younger generation can savor the challenge of the future. Here will be the wonders of Nature and Man for all to see and understand. Disneyland will be based upon and dedicated to the ideals, the dreams and hard facts that have created America. And it will be uniquely equipped to dramatize these dreams and facts and send them forth as a source of courage and inspiration to all the world.<sup>2</sup>

Sir Winston Churchill was the prime minister of England during World War II. This was his dream about winning the war against Adolf Hitler:

Hitler knows he will have to break us on this island or lose the war. If we can stand up to him, all Europe may be free, and the life of the world may move forward into broad, sunlit uplands. But if we fail, the whole world, including the United States, including all we have known and cared for, will sink into the abyss of a new Dark Age, made more sinister and perhaps more protracted by the lights of perverted science. Let us therefore brace ourselves to our duties and so bear ourselves that if the British Empire and its Commonwealth last for a thousand years, men will still say, "This was their finest hour."<sup>3</sup>

Since she was one year old, Helen Keller was blind and deaf, but she learned to dream. "I am only one," Keller said, "but still I am one. I cannot do everything, but still I can do

something; and because I cannot do everything, I will not refuse to do something that I can do.”<sup>4</sup>

Keller, in spite of her great difficulties, wrote books and travelled around the world helping those in need.

The last dream I’ll share with you is the famous “I Have a Dream” speech by the great civil rights leader, Martin Luther King:

I say to you today, my friends, so even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream.

I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: “We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal.”

I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood.

I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a state sweltering with the heat of injustice, sweltering with the heat of oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice.

I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character....

I have a dream that one day every valley shall be

## The Challenge

exalted, every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places will be made straight, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.

This is our hope. This is the faith that I go back to the South with. With this faith we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope. With this faith we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. With this faith we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day.

This will be the day when all of God's children will be able to sing with a new meaning, "My country, 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing. Land where my fathers died, land of the pilgrim's pride, from every mountainside, let freedom ring."<sup>5</sup>

These are dreams of great individuals. What's your dream? Do you have a dream to become a success, or will you be satisfied to drift along and end up as a failure? *Education Week* states that a majority of youth today lack a direction in life. They report: "Among the disconnected youths the researchers came across were people like Tommy, an 18-year-old from Pennsylvania, who tosses a coin to select his college courses and is candidly unbothered by his lack of goals or ambition."<sup>6</sup>

You don't have to join this army of disenfranchised youth who are living for the moment, instead of aiming for a bright

future. You can make a difference with your life. It's a choice only *you* can make. Doing nothing, and letting things happen as they may, doesn't lead to success.

Successful dreamers take intelligent action to fulfill their dreams. I hope you'll be inspired to take intelligent action to fulfill your dream so that one day you may look back and say, "I'm glad I made the right choices in my youth."

You may say, "These dreams are from great leaders. I'm just an average person." I'd like to share an article by Alan Loy McGinnis on, "Why some fast-trackers fizzle and...How 'Average' People Excel." McGinnis is a family therapist and corporate consultant and has written *Bringing Out the Best in People* and *The Power of Optimism*. McGinnis tells about Jim, a "classic fast-tracker" who made good grades and whose classmates voted "Most Likely to Succeed." However Jim just kept switching from one job to another and never seemed to make it. Then McGinnis writes about another person:

Then there is Joseph D'Arrigo. "I've always regarded myself as average," D'Arrigo told me. "I got into life insurance and did reasonably well. By a fluke, I was put on a committee with several of the biggest salespeople in the industry. I was terribly intimidated."

As he came to know these achievers, however, D'Arrigo realized something: "They were no more geniuses than I was. They were just ordinary people who had set their sights high, then found a way to achieve their goals." He also realized something more:

## The Challenge

“If other average guys could dream big dreams, so could I.” Today he owns a million-dollar company specializing in employee benefits.

Why do ordinary individuals like D’Arrigo often seem to achieve so much more than people like Jim? To find out, I interviewed over 190 men and women in my work as a corporate consultant. The results of this informal survey confirmed for me what Theodore Roosevelt once said: “The average man who is successful is not a genius. He is a man who has merely ordinary qualities, but who has developed those ordinary qualities to a more than ordinary degree.”<sup>7</sup>

Then McGinnis wrote these words, and I hope you read them over and over until they sink into your mind:

“ULTIMATELY, there is nothing more powerful than a person with an average mind who holds his or her head high and goes about life with zest and surety.”<sup>8</sup>

If you’re average, then you may become successful. But you must hold your head high and possess enthusiasm that you can reach your potential. I’ll be saying much more about this, but for now I want you to have hope that *YOU* can become successful. But I want to point out, you don’t become successful by sitting on an easy chair and twiddling your thumbs or playing video games. There are certain things *you* must learn to do. This book is loaded with universal truths that illustrate what you must do to become successful.

If you think that by simply reading this book you'll become a success, you'll be greatly disappointed. *You* must apply these universal truths. There must be a sincere desire on your part that you want a successful life. Notice I said, "universal" truths. These are not truths I invented; these truths have been around for thousands of years. You'll be reading many stories of successful individuals who have applied them.