

The Secret to Educational Success

As we have seen from the previous chapter, many famous individuals could have made excuses for being failures, but as John C. Maxwell, in *Developing the Leader Within You*, stated: “They refused to hold on to the common excuses for failure.”¹

Notice, “they refused.” You must make the decision if you want to become successful. The secret to educational success is YOU must take full responsibility for your actions. This is so important that I want to emphasize this by putting it in bold letters:

The secret to educational success is YOU must take full responsibility for your actions.

Stop blaming others. There may be legitimate reasons you’re failing now. But that doesn’t change a thing. You must decide if you want to be successful.

Taking Responsibility

Denis Waitley has a doctorate in human behavior and has been one of Americas most sought-after keynote speakers on self-determination and productivity. Waitley, writing in *Readers Digest* about “What Makes a Winner?” says:

In many years of interviewing successful people—Olympic athletes, business executives, astronauts,

government leaders and others—I have come to realize that there is a fine line between them and the rest of the pack. I call this line the winner's edge.

This edge is *not* the result of a privileged environment or having a high I.Q., a superior education or unusual talent. Nor is it a matter of luck. The key to the winner's edge, I have found, is attitude.

There are many ingredients in a winning attitude, but the most important is being honest with yourself. To do this, you must follow three major precepts.”²

Waitley lists these three precepts. The first one is, “Don’t escape—adapt.” The second precept is, “Find your own gifts; follow your own goals.” The third precept, and the one I want to stress is:

Assume responsibility for your actions. The Bible tells us that as we sow, we reap. Scientists talk of cause and effect. The meaning is the same: our rewards depend on the contributions we make. You yourself must take the credit or the blame for your place in life. Responsible people look at the shackles they’ve placed upon themselves and, in a moment of truth, declare their independence.

Joe Sorrentino grew up in an inner-city neighborhood, became a teen-age gang leader and served time in a reform school. Remembering a seventh-grade teacher’s confidence in his academic aptitude, he realized that, despite his poor high-

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school record, his only hope for success was through education. He returned to night school at age 20, went on to the University of California where he graduated *magna cum laude*, and then finished at Harvard Law School. He became an outstanding juvenile-court judge in Los Angeles. None of this would have happened if Joe Sorrentino had not had the courage to alter his destiny.³

What's your attitude? Do you always blame others for your failures? Do what Waitley says and assume responsibility for your actions. Look failure in the eye and say, "I'm going to take full responsibility for what I did and for who I am. I'm going to change and take control of my life where it is right now! I'm going to do my best to make my future bright and successful.

Discipline

One of the most important keys for educational success is having discipline. What's discipline? Discipline is eating the crust of a sandwich first and saving the middle for last. Those with discipline are willing to sacrifice the present for the future. Look at successful athletes. Everyone admires successful athletes, but many don't realize the sacrifice these athletes had to make in order to become great. Successful athletes are willing to work hard to obtain their desired goal.

The key to success is to have goals. Do you want to be successful? If you do, are you willing to pursue a lifestyle that

leads to success? The article, “What it takes to be great,” in *Fortune* magazine stated:

How are certain people able to go on improving? The answers begin with consistent observations about great performers in many fields....The first major conclusion is that nobody is great without work. It's nice to believe that if you find the field where you're naturally gifted, you'll be great from day one, but it doesn't happen. There's no evidence of high-level performance without experience or practice.... So greatness isn't handed to anyone; it requires a lot of hard work.⁴

Alan Loy McGinnis in “Why some fast-trackers fizzle and...How ‘Average’ People Excel,” said they “Learn self-discipline.” The article states: “You don't need talent to succeed,” insists Irwin C. Hansen, chief executive of Porter Memorial Hospital in Denver, who has gained a reputation for turning around under-performing hospitals. “All you need is a big pot of glue. You smear some on your chair and some on the seat of your pants, you sit down, and you stick with every project until you've done the best you can do.” Then McGinnis said, “Average achievers stay glued to their chairs and postpone pleasure so they can reap future dividends.”⁵

In the book, *The Millionaire Next Door*, Thomas Stanley and William Danko said in the introduction:

It is seldom luck or inheritance or advanced

degrees or even intelligence that enables people to amass fortunes. Wealth is more often the result of a lifestyle of hard work, perseverance, planning, and, most of all, self-discipline.⁶

Work? It sends chills into those who are lazy. But if you want to become successful, you must be willing to work. When I was 16 years old, my friends and I chipped in and bought weights. My friend's father had a health food store, and we set up the weights in the basement. I ended up being the only one weight lifting. Why did I do this? As a teen I made a goal to be strong and healthy. Along with weight lifting, I also aimed to eat right.

Results? Over sixty years later I'm still healthy and doing exercises. I eat whole grain foods, lots of fruit and vegetables, and a balanced diet. At home I exercise five times a week. Twice a week I do chin-ups on a bar between my kitchen and garage (I regularly do 40 full chin-ups at one time), and dips at our kitchen corner countertop; three times a week I do push-ups, leg raises, and work out on a home gym; and five times a week I walk on a treadmill for 20 minutes. I take no pills and have no significant problems of aging.

Thomas J. Stanley in, *The Millionaire Mind*, discovered: "The majority of millionaires exercise regularly....Decamillionaires, those with net worth of \$10 million or more, have the highest incidence of regular exercise. About two-thirds exercise regularly."

It is rather interesting, the more money these millionaires earned, the more they tend to exercise. Do I look forward to

exercise? Not really. Exercise is WORK. On Saturdays and Sundays I don't exercise. It's a good feeling to get up on these two days and go straight to the table and eat breakfast instead of doing my morning exercise. The reason I exercise is the tremendous health benefits I receive. When I tell people my age, often they don't believe me. I usually take out my driver's license to prove my age.

Since I have no plan to retire, I know a mind functions much better with a healthy body than with a sick one. So unless there's an ailment in my body, I exercise. I don't go by my feelings. I'm extremely grateful for a healthy body and that as a teenager I decided to take care of my health. I'd hate to have the body that some teens will have when they get older because of their eating habits and destructive lifestyles.

"You're young only once," you may say, "so let's have fun." That's one of the dumbest statements you can make. Yes, you're only young once, but would you want to spend the last 20 to 30 years of your life in misery because of some stupid thing you did in your youth? Who says you can't have fun doing the right things? There are lots of fun things to do that don't destroy your life. It reminds me when I worked with a man who spent the weekends partying and drinking. On one occasion he was so miserable on Monday, that when lunchtime came, he lay on the floor and wished he were four hours older so he could go home. That's a fun lifestyle? Get drunk on the weekends and suffer the next day with a hangover.

If you owned a thoroughbred horse worth five million dollars, how would you take care of it? Would you keep it up late at night? Would you feed it junk food? If you're

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smart, you'd make sure it got a balanced diet, proper exercise and rest. No way would you want to jeopardize the horse's health. Your body is a thousand times more valuable than any thoroughbred horse. Remember, it's your body you'll have to live with while on earth. Be intelligent; take care of your body as you would a five-million-dollar thoroughbred horse.

Before I moved to Houston, Texas, I took a camping trip with my family to explore the possibility of moving there. On our way home we stopped to camp outside Dallas. While sitting on a bench, I swatted at a fly and wounded him. Many ants flocked on the fly. One of the first things they did was to clip the wings of the fly. Then one ant bit off the fly's head. Now this ant had a morsel of food for the colony. It raced furiously to go home with its treasure climbing over leaves and pine needles.

I was amazed at the frantic pace this unselfish ant kept to get the food to its home. And it probably didn't even get a bite of this food because it was for the hive. This example inspired me; for nothing deterred this ant. When this ant came close to its hive, I had the ant go on a piece of paper. I then released the ant on the opposite side of her hive. Would this stop this ant? Would it become confused and drop its morsel of food? No way! It traveled in a circle, found the trail, and headed straight for home.

Delayed Rewards

Delayed reward is the ability to sacrifice a temporary pleasure for a future good. How often we become discouraged

and give up when things become unpleasant. But the successful are those who are determined to work and to sacrifice the present for their future. There's toil in work, but after the toil we receive the fruits of our labor. It's the concept of delayed rewards we must be willing to accept to become successful. Permissiveness, with its constant pursuit of instant pleasure, hinders success.

No one becomes a master of a pursuit who doesn't forsake the pleasures of the moment for the rewards of the future. It's much more pleasant for athletes and musicians to forsake their practices than to spend hours every day training. The call of nature comes to everyone to pursue leisure rather than work, but only those who have learned to discipline themselves succeed. Basking in the sun is much more pleasant than practicing. But those who are diligent in their training become successful, while those basking only in the sun fail. There's a time to bask in the sun, and those who are successful have learned when.

Importance of Literacy and Math Skills

The American Management Association, the world's leading membership-based management development organization, in a report stated: "One-third of Job Applicants Flunked Basic Literacy and Math Tests." The association surveyed firms and over 40 percent of these firms "required basic skills tests of job applicants."⁷ If applicants failed the test, they weren't hired.

One of my businesses is in the machining trade. We require applicants to have math skills. One of the first things we give applicants is a math test, regardless of whether they have a

high school diploma or not. It's amazing how many fail this basic math test. If they fail, it's an automatic rejection. I urge you if you're weak in literacy and math to get help. Your future career hinges on your literacy and math skills. Be willing to take remedial courses or go to night school. The best time to learn is when you're young and not tied down. Having basic literacy skills can dramatically affect your future.

Continual Education

You finally graduated, and now you're finished with schooling. I've got news for you. It's just the beginning. Why do they call graduation ceremonies, "commencement?" Commencement means beginning. When you graduate from school, you're beginning a new career. Wherever you go in your pursuit of a successful career, continuing education will be important. The American Management Association reports:

AMA offers a full range of business education and management development programs for individuals and organizations in the Americas, Asia, and Europe. More than 700,000 AMA customers and members a year, including 488 out of the Fortune 500 companies and many federal agencies, learn superior business skills and best management practices through a variety of seminars, conferences and executive forums, e-learning and self-study courses, books, research studies, and onsite and customized learning solutions.⁸

I've attended five colleges and earned over 180 college credits, but I'm constantly reading books and magazines to keep abreast of what's going on in the world. As a businessman I must keep up with technology, otherwise my business will eventually fail. I read magazines and go to technology shows to learn about the latest developments. I also own an audio and video recording studio, and a publishing company. I've seen firsthand the many dramatic changes in these businesses. There's constant learning. Now we hear of fiber optics, virtual reality, hard drives, gigabytes, and terabytes. People cannot afford to stay in the past.

We switched from a leading software company to another one because we felt the company decided to rest and enjoy their success instead of perfecting its software. While they were resting, another company came along and quickly usurped their position. This meant we had to make many costly changes and also learn this new software. This happened again with our video software.

Then there's the ever changing world of the Web. There's an information explosion. One can do research on practically any subject and instantly get information. In operating a business, one must be familiar with how to take advantage of the Web. I've studied how Web search engines work so we can maximize that technology to draw customers to our companies. Henry Ford said, "Anyone who stops learning is old, whether at twenty or eighty. Anyone who keeps learning stays young."⁹

The Importance of Seeking Advice

Dale Carnegie, in *How to Stop Worrying and Start Living*, related this story of a failing salesman who would ask for criticism.

When he first started out selling soap for Colgate, orders came slowly. He worried about losing his job. Since he knew there was nothing wrong with the soap or the price, he figured that the trouble must be himself. When he failed to make a sale, he would often walk around the block trying to figure out what was wrong. Had he been too vague? Did he lack enthusiasm? Sometimes he would go back to the merchant and say: "I haven't come back here to try to sell you any soap. I have come back to get your advice and your criticism. Won't you please tell me what I did that was wrong when I tried to sell you soap a few minutes ago? You are far more experienced and successful than I am. Please give me your criticism. Be frank. Don't pull your punches."¹⁰

By doing this it won him a lot of friends and priceless advice. What happened? E. H. Little's constant desire for improvement led him to gain priceless advice. Results? He eventually became the president of the Colgate-Palmolive Soap Company. At that time it was the world's largest maker of soap. Out of the entire population of America, only fourteen people had a larger income than E. H. Little.

One day, Harry Moser, president of Charmille EDM, one of the leading EDM manufacturers, came to visit our company. Out of the many EDM machines we owned, only two were from his company. After we introduced ourselves, he took out a pad and wrote down every objection we had about his machines. He was eager to learn how his machines compared to his competitors, even if it was bad news.

Tom Hopkins provides seminars to help sales personnel become successful. He is the author of *How to Master the Art of Selling*. He related an incident that happened in one of his seminars:

Even though I've seen it happen over and over, I'm still amazed when I go back to the same city and, time after time, see the same people sitting there in front busily taking notes. I had a little fun with this a few months ago at one of my seminars where about fifteen-hundred people were in the audience. A gentleman sitting in the front row looked familiar. I said to myself, "I'll bet he's been here five years in a row."

I talked to him from the stage and found out that I was right. So I asked him, "Did you bring all your people?"

He said, "Tom, I'm the top salesperson in my company, so you'd think what I say would carry some weight. I told everybody about this seminar and talked it up, but only a few of our people are here—and they're all strong salespeople. It's the same every year; the people who need it most never go."¹¹

Notice what the top salesman said, “The people who need it most never go.” These unsuccessful salesmen may wonder why they’re not successful, but the problem is they refuse to take the necessary steps to learn. You’d think that if anyone didn’t need to go to this seminar about being a successful salesman, it would be the #1 salesman. But what do you find? He *always* attends the seminars! He’s an eager learner. Tom Hopkins, who has trained nearly a million salespeople in his national seminars, also points out:

This final characteristic of great sales people is also true of their companies. They all believe in *continuing education*. They study technique. They learn new skills. The company managements encourage their salespeople to go to seminars, to listen to cassettes, to watch videotapes, and to read books. You never have to push a Champion to invest in his mind. He or she knows that if you put better ideas into your brain, better performance will come out. Champions know that the place to start improving one’s environment is inside one’s own skull. Invest more time, money, and effort into your mind, and finer things will start gravitating to you. ¹²

Do *you* want to be a champion? Then be an eager learner. One of the secrets of success is to have listening ears. Everyone desires to be successful, but are you willing to put forth your best efforts? Are you open to advice? If you go to our website,

www.advancepublishing.com, you'll see that many of the children's books I've written and the read-alongs that I speak on have won numerous awards. Why? Is it because I'm so smart? No. I'm constantly seeking advice.

I send my books to editors, and I urge them to critique my books with a sharp pen. One of the individuals I use to critique my children's books is an adjunct professor and owner and director of a manuscript critique service. She authored 29 books and numerous articles. She has also taught at over 145 writers' conferences. I deeply value her comments.

Before this book will be published, I'll have various individuals critique it. This adjunct professor will be one of them. I often quote King Solomon: "Open rebuke is better than secret love. Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful."¹³ I strongly desire correction and seek the advice of others. Through the years I've learned there are many people much smarter than I am. I've learned to pick their brains.

Parental Advice

I'm going to say something that many teens will hate to hear. I warned you in the beginning that I'll be blunt with you and make you squirm, so here it comes and I'm going to put it in bold print.

One of the best sources for teens to obtain wise counsel is from their parents.

"Not my parents!" you may object. "What do they know about me? They're too old."

Wait just a minute. We parents were once exactly your age. We also were teenagers. Do you think we've forgotten how it was to be a teenager? We remember lots of things. But along the way we learned many important lessons that we want to share with our children.

The way some teens want to live would destroy their lives. They want to stay up late at night, but don't want to get out of bed in the morning to go to school. So what do many parents do? They set a time to go to bed.

Many teens object. "If my parents love me, they would want to make me happy. They would let me decide when I should go to bed."

Many of these parents will say, "We love you so much that we're willing to incur your wrath. We know that getting proper rest is critical for your health and future success, so we will enforce a bedtime."

Loving parents are not only concerned about your wants, but also your needs. Teens make a big mistake and think when parents give rules they dislike, their parents are being mean and unfair. Some advocate, "Let the kids go through the school of hard knocks and learn from their own mistakes. Parents shouldn't be always protecting them."

There's some truth to allow kids to suffer for their mistakes, but there are some mistakes that sensible, loving parents will do everything possible to protect their kids from. Why? Some mistakes are irreversible—they will live with children the rest of their lives and may cause them untold suffering and even death.

Listen to Stephen Reynolds as he tells his story in *Reader's*

Digest. “I was in my 40s, with a young son, and my wife and I were building a life around him. That’s when something from my past threatened to take it all away.”

The past threatening his future was from his previous sexual encounters. Reynolds had a graduate degree and was a business strategist in the technology industry. He had never smoked, yet he was diagnosed with lung cancer. Reynolds reports:

Maura Gillison, a researcher and professor at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, was among the first to study the link between the growth of head and neck cancers among younger nonsmokers and certain types of the sexually transmitted human papillomavirus (HPV). It’s the same virus that causes the majority of cervical cancers and warts. The risks are scary because the virus is really common, even in teenagers...Of the more than 35,000 people who will be diagnosed with oral cancer this year, 25 percent of us will connect our diagnosis to HPV infection.

Reynolds describes his painful experiences dealing with the operation to remove the cancer and his chemo treatments. They provide a feeding tube to help him in eating. “They tell me that I can put a Big Mac in a blender,” he says, “grind it up with protein shakes, and pour it all into the tube.”

He struggles not to use the feeding tube, and his treatments leave him so frail. He longs to play with his son, but there are times, “I just don’t have it and fall asleep in the middle of

giving him a horsey ride,” he says. “My poor wife. My poor son. All I have the energy to do is lie still and try not to bother them.”

Reynolds asks, “So what is the virus that causes cervical cancer doing in my throat, creating a tumor on my tongue, leaching into my lymph nodes, threatening my larynx and my life? According to Dr. Gillison and others, the answer goes back to the late 1970s, when the medical community began to notice the spread of HPV. ‘It is linked to a change in sexual habits,’ she says simply. “Between the Pill in 1960 and AIDS in 1984, more people had more sex and more *kinds* of sex.”¹⁴

In a side note on “HPV and You,” *Readers Digest* brings out these facts: “Most people with HPV infections don’t have any symptoms. At least half of sexually active men and women may become infected in their lifetime. About 23 percent of women ages 14 to 65 have high-risk HPV, including 35 percent of 14- to 19-year-old girls....

“While most infections clear up on their own without patients ever knowing they were exposed, the consequences can still be severe. For instance, one type of HPV raises the risk of oral cancer by 3,200 percent.

“The virus spreads through any form of sexual activity, and condoms can’t fully protect against it. Having more than five oral sex partners boosts the risk of HPV-linked oral cancer by 340 percent.”¹⁵

With facts like these, is it any wonder that parents strongly urge their children to abstain from sex until marriage. You may laugh at your parents and call them “old fashioned,” but you won’t be laughing at them if you like Reynolds suffer 25 years

later from a devastating disease linked from your premarital sex.

Here's a bit of advice that will revolutionize your life. It was given by Henry Ford, the founder of Ford Motor Company. "If there is any one secret of success, it lies in the ability to get the other person's point of view and see things from his angle as well as from your own."¹⁶

Read that statement of Ford over and over until it sinks deep into your brain. Put yourself into the other person's shoes and think like that person. Teens, I challenge you; put yourself into your parents' shoes. Are your parents really mean because of all their rules, or are they really making these rules for your benefit? Can you humble yourself and be mature enough to see things from your parents' point of view?

I speak as a parent and one who has taught and observed teens for many years. I'm going to say something so important for teen success that I'm putting this in bold print:

You'll avoid many problems in life if you learn to trust and listen to your parents.

Unfortunately, many teens are cocky and take pride in their backtalk. They also get this attitude from teenage shows. They sass their parents, walk around the home with a bitter attitude, and complain when their parents want them to do something. If they're asked to put out the trash, do the dishes, or any household chores, they object. They refuse any correction. They're Mr. and Ms. Know-It-All. Their parents' hearts are broken over their defiance. But they couldn't care less.

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Let me warn you teens—you'll pay for your defiance. Some of you will never learn, and you'll suffer your entire life for your bitter and defiant attitude.

No, we're not perfect as parents, but we've learned much. We love our kids and want the best for them. We could be permissive and let you do whatever you want, but we know it will destroy your life. So we're willing for you to be angry with us. We'll lay down restrictions you hate. But one day when you're older, you'll look back and thank us for refusing to listen to you.

You should see the many cards I repeatedly get from some of my married children telling how much they appreciate the training they received. Did I get these cards when they were teenagers? Never. But now that they're grown and have children of their own, they look back and are extremely thankful for the training I provided them. Here are two Father's Day comments from two of my sons who work for me: "Thanks For Being A Wonderful Dad, A Good Boss, And A Great Man. We Love You Very, Very Much." The other comment, "Thanks for all you have done for me & my family. You are the best Dad any son could have."

I was drafted into the Marine Corp during the Korean War. When it came time for me to be going home, I wanted to do something to show appreciation for my mother. I decided to paint every room in our house instead of immediately going back to my previous job. We lived in Ridgewood, Queens, in a six-story railroad flat, all the rooms were lined up like boxcars, that had a front room, two bedrooms, living room, kitchen,

and a bathroom. These were old houses, and they had layers of paint on the ceiling that would chip off. Some of the ceilings had to be plastered. It took me about a week to paint every room.

What can you do to make your Dad and Mom glad? Shock them. Volunteer to do something around the house without being told. Weed the garden, mow the lawn, clean the kitchen floor, empty the dishwasher, vacuum the house, clean the car both inside and outside, clean the windows, clean your room....

“What?” you may ask in astonishment. “Are you out of your mind? If I’d clean my room, my mom would have a heart attack!”

Your mom has been hounding you to clean up your room, but you have stubbornly refused. Why not try to make your mom happy? Do a role reversal and visualize yourself as a parent. How would you want your child to be? Now put your thoughts into action.

One of the critical attributes for becoming successful is to have empathy, the ability to feel for others. Those with empathy realize their world doesn’t just revolve around their axis, they have a compassionate concern for others. Your parents brought you into the world and take care of you, it’s only right you show appreciation.

Coach Paul William “Bear” Bryant won the most games in the history of big-time college football. According to the Paul W. Bryant Museum, he was “national coach of the year three times, SEC coach of the year eight times, coached six national championship teams and on November 28, 1981, he became

the winningest coach in the history of college football. Bryant retired from coaching with an astonishing 323 victories.”¹⁷

Thomas J. Stanley, in *The Millionaire Mind*, told about a senior sales executive, called Hugh, who had played for Coach Paul “Bear” Bryant at Alabama. Stanley wanted to find out why this coach was successful. Knowing it would take a long time, he decided to take another approach. This is what Stanley said:

I wanted to ask why Coach Bryant was so successful, but thought it might take hours for this former football player to respond. So I asked Hugh a different question: “What was the first thing Coach Bryant said to you and the other scholarship athletes after you arrived on campus?”

Surprisingly, Coach Bryant asked the group:

Have you called your folks yet to thank them?

According to Hugh, after hearing those words the players looked confused—most had their mouths open. They looked at one another with disbelief. Apparently not one of them had anticipated this question.

These freshman athletes had been on campus less than twenty-four hours, but they already had their first lesson in team productivity. I understand that no one in the room that day acknowledged having called home with words of thanks. What was the essence of this lesson?

Hugh said that Coach Bryant followed up his initial question with a second statement:

No one ever got to this level without the help of others. Call your folks. Thank them.

In other words, the coach had news for these gifted freshmen. Extraordinary natural athletic talent does not fully account for success in football. Without their folks nurturing, protecting, and sacrificing for them, they would not have had the opportunity to play football at Alabama.

Hugh told me that he never forgot this initial experience. It served him and his teammates well during four very successful years playing football. He also gives much credit to this and related lessons from the coach for his success and achievements in business.

It's rare that anyone becomes successful without the assistance of others. A group of individuals, no matter how gifted, is not a team at all. How many running backs became All-Americans without their linemen opening up opportunities? Zero. Becoming wealthy in America is very similar. I have never met one affluent person who takes complete credit for his economic success. Most will give credit to their spouse, key employees, mentors, and others. No man or woman is an island, whether the context is sports, business, or building wealth—nobody gets to the

highest peaks without the help of others.¹⁸

In other cultures, the elderly are held in high respect for their wisdom; unfortunately, not in our culture. But think for a moment how much knowledge the elderly have gained through their years of living, and you as a teenager are just starting out. Be wise, tap into their knowledge. Go to your parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts, and the elderly. Ask them questions. You'd be surprised at the wisdom you can gain if you listen with open ears. Don't hesitate to speak to them, for you'll find they'll be thrilled to have a teenager seeking their counsel. The older I get the more I realize that in a multitude of counselors there is safety and wisdom. I'm constantly seeking advice from others. You can observe it in this book I've written. I'm constantly quoting experts. I urge you to fall in love with wisdom; you'll never be disappointed.

Andrew Carnegie came to America from Scotland and built a steel empire. How did he get to build such a great empire? You can get a glimpse into his thinking from the saying he wanted to be engraved on his tombstone: "Here lies a man, who enlisted in his service better men than himself."¹⁹

What did Carnegie do? He searched for intelligent men and used their knowledge to build his empire. He had used one of the fundamental keys to success—always seek advice. Why do so many teens get into trouble? They refuse to listen to advice.

For my *Number Success* math program I filmed my grandson Andy playing basketball to show how math is used in the real world. That night we invited his family over for

dinner. His father wanted to see the video, and while they were watching it, I called Andy into my study and said, “If you really want to be good at playing basketball, ask your dad how you can play better.”

Andy immediately went to his dad and asked how he could play better basketball. The next time he played, his team beat an undefeated team 22 to 19, and Andy made 16 of the 22 points! Andy listened to me and sought his father’s advice.

Many teens are proud and stubborn and refuse to listen to advice. They hate to be corrected. Reasoning with them has the same effect as wind against granite. It’s one of the most destructive attitudes teens can have. Many teens will suffer, even when they’re older and married because of their bitter and defiant attitude towards wise counsel. I’ve seen it. How one would love to help, but these defiant and unteachable individuals have built an iron gate around their minds.

Parents want their kids to receive a good education and graduate from high school. They want them either to learn a trade or go to college. Why? They know what’s best for their kids. Remember, there’s no one who loves and cares for you more than your parents. Don’t be a fool, be wise. Listen and follow your parents’ advice. If you really want to be super wise, take the initiative and go to your parents and ask how you can improve yourself. Tell them, “Dad, Mom, don’t pull any punches. I want to hear the truth.”