

12 Limiting Thoughts about Success

How we think about success determines our level of success in both good and challenging times. With unstable world events and stressed economics, you may have even more difficulty seeing opportunities or imaging the possibilities for your career or your business. See if you can identify common limiting thoughts that may be dampening your spirits.

1. I Can Only Be Successful in a Booming Economy. How is it that some people are successful despite economic depression? Read the newspapers and watch the trends, but trust that you have the resources you need to be successful. If necessary, regroup: look for new opportunities that are being created from current events. Choose to keep your vision alive by taking consistent steps to make it a reality. Stay determined. Don't give up.

2. It takes Hard Work, Sacrifice and Struggle to be Successful. If that were true, then everyone that works a 70-hour week would be successful! Burnout is more likely. When you're confident and passionate about your work, it's not work. It's play. If you make choices that are in alignment with your purpose, then there is no such thing as sacrifice. You're simply compelled to do the work. Struggle shows up when you get frustrated or doubt yourself. Success is enhanced when you stay focused on your preferred results and look for the joy in each task. With joy, you'll feel the support of the wind at your back.

3. Successful People are more Intelligent and Talented than I am. Anyone can be a success. According to the Carnegie Mellon Institute, star performers do not have high IQs; they use their determination and commitment to make the most of the talent they do have. Michael Jordan is an excellent case in point. He didn't start out being the most gifted player on the team; he just had the greatest desire for excellence.

4. Successful People Make No (or Few) Mistakes. Actually, the opposite is true. The more mistakes you are willing to make, the faster you will learn what works and what doesn't. Remember, Babe Ruth struck out many more times than run-of-the-mill players but achieved an extraordinary number of home runs. Edison learned over 300 ways not to build a light bulb but eventually was successful. So fail often to succeed faster! You'll be in great company.

5. IF SUCCESS COMES TOO EASILY, IT DOESN'T COUNT. You may feel that success needs to be deserved, that you must work for years before you can claim it. Who says it can't be easy? I submitted a poem to a national poetry contest for the first time, after having just started writing poetry a few months earlier. To my surprise and delight, I won first prize! There is absolutely no reason to take your joy out of any success you experience. You deserve to feel successful right now.

6. In Order to be Successful, I have to Preplan Everything. A certain amount of planning and strategic thinking is important; however, you can't know what the future will bring. Follow opportunity. Success is enhanced when you can take risks and feel comfortable in the realm of the unknown. Give yourself permission to allow each step to unfold in its own timing. Stay in the moment, listen to your inner wisdom, and become your own best compass.

7. It Takes Luck to be Successful. Luck is a natural consequence of positive core beliefs. Everyone can create luck. It's a skill that can be developed by shifting your beliefs to match your preferred outcome. You need to know what you want, believe that you ARE lucky already, and let go of your attachment to the results. In other words, be open for luck to show up without needing it to arrive by a certain date.

8. It's Not Success Unless I do it Myself. Success rarely occurs in a vacuum. An interesting fact about highly successful people is that they openly recognize the important people in their life who serve as mentors, advisers, and coaches. When you let go of the Lone-Ranger mentality and create synergy with people who guide, support, and have the courage to challenge you, you achieve much more and experience success in many more aspects of your life.

9. It's Only Success if I've Made lots of Money. This definition of success probably won't serve you well. You may need to wait for a long time (or forever) to experience success if you set it up for yourself in this way. There are plenty of successful people who aren't rich, and plenty of rich people who don't feel successful. Success breeds success. You're better off feeling successful after every minor milestone, harnessing the energy that you feel, and investing it in moving further along your path to fulfillment. Success is a by-product of doing what you enjoy.

10. It's Only Success if I'm Well Known in my Field. You can make a huge impact on the lives of hundreds, even thousands, of people and still not be recognized as a leader in your field. Does that mean that you haven't been successful? The people you've impacted don't feel that way, so why should you? Learn to appreciate your contributions without needing validation from your colleagues. It may never happen during your lifetime. Some of the best artists and greatest thinkers in the world weren't truly appreciated until they were no longer on the planet.

11. In Order to be Successful, I Have to be Doing Something All of the Time. Our culture promotes the belief that to be productive we must always be doing something. In Taoist philosophy, it is said that "a truly good man does nothing, yet leaves nothing undone. A foolish man is always doing, yet much remains to be done." The concept of doing nothing is foreign to Western culture. It means balancing the doing with the being. It means regenerating. Allow yourself some time out. Go to the beach and just be with the sun, sand, and ocean. Or get a massage and allow yourself to zone out. Once you're back, you'll get twice as much done. (If you don't have a habit of doing this regularly, you'll need to take several days, not just a few hours, to recharge your batteries.)

12. Life will be Great, Once I'm Successful. Success is not a destination. It's a continuous journey. You'll still experience the ups and downs of life that you had before. If you haven't learned how to appreciate yourself and each day, such as it is, then you will still be stressed and unhappy. Real, lasting success comes from within you. It comes from being prepared, listening to your inner guidance (your pure heart), clearing the clutter from your mind, feeling your joie de vivre, and optimistically acting on the opportunities that are in front of you right now.

