



what is success made of?

by: Pz Hopkins

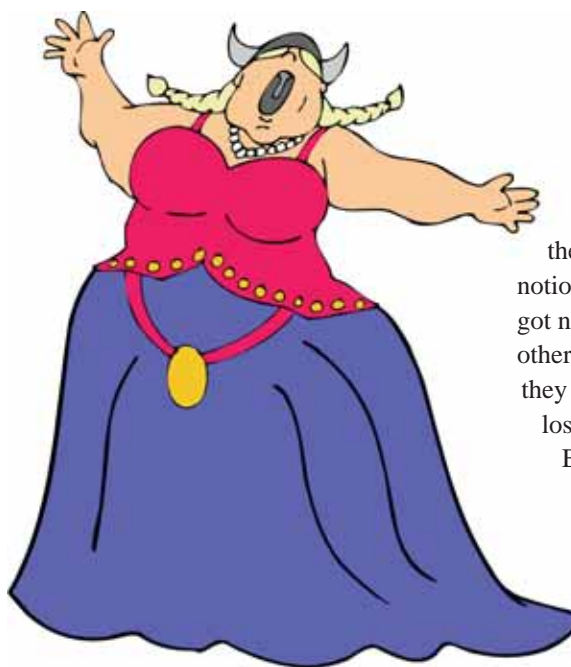
If the curtain came down on your life today, if this was it, if there was no tomorrow, no more wake ups, if the fat lady sang her swan song, ask yourself, how did you do? Did you accomplish your goals, carry out your mission, or actualize your dreams? Were you at least headed in the right direction? Did you live the life you were intended? Was the world a better place because you were in it? How was the journey? Was it a success?

Just like Dorothy and the yellow brick road, making your way to The Emerald City is not always an easy task. The twists and turns along the path can turn into a mindless maze for some and an impossible undertaking for others. Some never even make it out of Kansas. Several land in Oz but can't get past the Munchkins. Others begin the journey but get diverted by more obstacles than simply the wicked witch and her band of flying monkeys. If they could only get to the great and powerful wizard, surely, he would have the answers.

Back here in the real world, there are threats of every variety and magnitude. The list is endless: threats of bombs on planes, threats of flu from birds, threats of melting glaciers, threats of Mother Nature, threats of drunks driving cars, threats of diseases invading bodies. Lives are affected, changed, and sometimes wiped out in

a blink of an eye . . . tomorrow isn't promised. Why do we always assume it will be there? Why does our arrogance or complacency give us that false sense of security when it comes to the time we are destined to spend on this Earth? We are a culture full of procrastinators putting off the things we know are good for us until another time—a better time, a time somewhere down the road in the distant future. We'll stop smoking after we finish this carton. We'll stop drinking after we recover from this latest hangover. We'll get into shape when we have more time to fit fitness into our busy schedule. We'll get involved in the next election. We'll follow our dreams of success someday, someday, somehow, but not just yet and not just now.

Success is measured in many different ways. Just like looks, success is in the eye of the beholder. For some, fortune is the gauge by which a person's value or worth is judged. Money is the currency that floats the boat. Fame is yet another gauge by which success is judged. When strangers talk like they know us, call us by name, pay attention to what we say or what we do, that's a pretty big indicator that we've made an impact. Lance Armstrong, Bill Gates, Donald Trump, Muhammad Ali, Arnold, and, the one and only, Oprah, are folks



success is something fairy tales are made of and believe the American dream is either a dead notion or just out of their reach. I've got news for the 20-something crowd, otherwise known as the D-Generation; they don't have a monopoly on being lost. Many of the X'ers and even the Baby Boomers and beyond are still searching for who they are and how they fit into the fabric of things. Some are still trying to figure out what they want to be when they grow up. Some are still saying that

next week they will make the change, that next month they will start anew, that tomorrow they will finally achieve the success that has eluded them thus far, or, maybe, they will win the lottery and all will be well. Success knows no age—is bound by no particular stage in life. It is there for the taking. Come one, come all.

who definitely fit this definition of success. These individuals labored long and hard at their chosen craft and have made an indelible mark in the American culture for all time. They serve as role models for old and young alike and their influence goes far beyond their fortune and fame. They are focused and fixated on their innate talents and know the meaning of keeping their eye on the prize. But more than being a success, these individuals are successful human beings. By keeping true to themselves and to what they do best they have experienced success on an even grander scale.

It is no secret that there are many sacrifices and few tangible rewards in the profession of bodybuilding. Does that, then, signify that a person can't realize the pinnacle of success if the highest they ever place is third? Does it mean if they don't make millions and they never win a contest or hold a title that their success is minimized? Is their success less sweet? Many callings are similar in nature. Not everyone can have a chart topping hit record. Not everyone can star in a

I recently heard that the 20-somethings are lost and can't find their way. They think the American dream is a fable or a myth, not within their grasp, and without possibilities. They feel

blockbuster film. Not everyone can win a Super bowl. Not everyone can become a supermodel. But just like bodybuilding, if you are in the game doing your thing, the thing you love, to the very best of your ability, then success can also be yours. Success means different things to different people. Success is made up of many different facets. I have found the more you understand what success is made of and how you go about getting it, the more likely you are to actually taste it yourself.

PZ'S POINTERS FOR UNDERSTANDING SUCCESS:

No such thing as failure—When we fail it hurts. When we fail to arrive at the top of that mountain on the first climb the air is suddenly sucked out of our lungs and our spirit is deflated. What about the second or third attempts? What if we fail again? When we fail at whatever our aspiration or task or objective happens to be, we want to give up. In reality, there is no such thing as failure. Yes, you heard me. Every failure is a stepping stone to bring us ever closer to the goal. Every failure contains within the seed of success we require to press on. Every failure gives us the precise feedback necessary to show us the way to finally get it right.

We must expect more—If we don't expect more from ourselves, we make it okay to settle for less than we are able. If we don't expect more from others, we make it okay for them to give less than they are willing. If we don't expect more from our leaders, we make it okay for them to achieve less than they are capable. If we begin to expect more from ourselves, from those around us, and from our leaders, then, we have a chance to raise the bar on what everyone should expect from each other. This sounds simplistic; but it isn't. This sounds unrealistic; but it isn't. It's time to expect more on many levels so that we may rise to a point high enough to make the real changes the planet is patiently primed for us to make.

Give a hand up—We currently have what can be thought of as the incredible shrinking middle-class. We manufacture little, we import big, and we

export jobs by the millions leaving gaping holes in the ozone of our workforce. The haves seem to have found the answers to how to get more; while the have nots have found they have no answers whatsoever and are falling further and further behind. In the middle is the middle. At the rate we are headed that middle will be so small in the near future that we will be a country divided by more than just our state borders or our stance on the war. It is unconscionable that the majority of hard working families are but a few paychecks away from being homeless. The statistics are sad and startling. While we should continue to do what is necessary to protect our freedom and the safety of our great land, we must not take our attention off the crisis that is threatening within. We can't afford a country filled with the hopeless and helpless. There is time to turn this around if we intend it. This successful experiment called America is full of successful inhabitants. A successful person is one who lends a hand to those who need it. That helping hand can come in various forms. Look at your life and decide what you have to offer. It could be money or time or service or opportunity. Give of yourself to others. Think of it as your contribution to the betterment of your country and to society. Think of it as the right thing to do.

It's what you leave behind—As we go about living, each of us is creating a legacy of sorts. What we make of our lives in terms of fortune and fame isn't something we can take with us when our time is up. But what will you leave behind? This poses the bigger question. What are you contributing to the universe? Ask yourself if you are giving OF yourself in a way that will leave a mark. What kind of mark is it anyway? When you live your life in the context of what you will leave behind, you can fill your days with the promise of a better planet. You matter. You can sign on to the notion that your thoughts, words, and deeds are significant. They can and do make a difference, now, and for all time.

Celebrate the success of others—Whether they are your friends, your competitors, or your enemies, you should wish for the success of others. Be genuine and not forced or phony. It

will not lessen or diminish your own; it will serve to enhance it. If we were to practice this on a small scale and the practice emanated out to a larger scale we could put a dent in the hostility and anger among the nations of the world. Success breeds success and the world could certainly use more positive triumphs.

No glass ceiling—The possibilities in life are endless. The opportunities are limitless. There is no glass ceiling on how far we can go or how high we can climb. That stairway ascends upward into the clouds and far, far out of sight; still, the next rung on the ladder is always within reach. Don't put limits on what you can accomplish. Don't let others put their negative spin on your life either. Reach and stretch and push your mind, body, and spirit to the limit. And even then, you'll discover there is always another road around the next corner anxiously awaiting your arrival.

Success is more than making money or getting your name in headlines. It is much more than simply identifying your purpose in life. It's,

rather, how you live that life, how you go about fulfilling that purpose—that is the true gauge of success. I love the story of the woman who worked for Starbucks, won the \$87 million dollar lottery, and shared it with her twelve other unsuspecting co-workers—that's the sweet taste of success.

Strip away all the trappings: the cars, the clothes, the homes, the trophies, the awards, and the stuff, and what you are left with is the sanctity of life itself. We are privileged to have this life. For, when all is said and done, it's the person behind the life that determines success. There is no yardstick by which to quantify character or integrity. There is no meter to measure success. When we finally understand exactly what we are meant to give to this life we will get exactly what we are meant to get from this life and then some.

Pz is a motivational writer specializing in the area of relationships and the human condition. Have a topic you would like to feature? Contact Pz with ideas, questions, or comments: pzpower@aol.com

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