

Chapter 8

WHAT PREVENTS SUCCESS

*'Failures are milestones on the way to success;
they guide us along the way to success
by telling us how far we are off the target'*

There are some common causes of failures, the things which stop us from achieving what we are capable of. They may be different for different individuals but most of them are common to all. One can never let one's guard down in the face of these problems, for they are bound to fill life with frustration and failures. The things that bring us down, the things which take away the glory of accomplishing what we are truly capable of, let us take a vow to fight them and eradicate them from our life and strive to live a life that one can look back with pride and feel happy about it.

Failures create a web of doubts, which entangles most people. The man who comes out of the web is not necessarily the strongest but he is the one who keeps trying to break free despite repeated failures. *'Failure is a signboard which says, try again.'*

What does the word 'Fail' mean to you?

F- First

A- Attempt

I - In

L- Learning

For me it means that the process has begun, you have started your journey to learn, and there is great value in a failure. Fail means first attempt in learning; it gives you the right feedback as to where you stand and what you need to do in order to make yourself successful. One learns to value success by failing. For, it makes success all the more sweet. If you don't fail often, there is a great possibility that you don't do a lot of things,

or that you set low targets. If you want to succeed, learn to fail first because there is great lesson in failing which spurs you on to reach greater levels of success in your life.

'Failing never makes you a failure. Quitting does'

—Anonymous

When Henry Ford shifted Edison's lab to Dearborn village, it was shifted with all the trash intact as Henry wanted everybody to see how much effort Edison had put in to succeed. He had to do a lot of experimentation and a lot of waste was thrown out before he could succeed. The trash pile was gigantic, indicating both the preparation as well as failures in his way to success. Behind every success there is a string of failures, which often go unnoticed.

When you do something, ensure
That you don't fail for lack of preparation,
That you don't fail for lack of effort,
That you don't fail for lack of commitment,
That you don't fail for lack of practice,
That you don't fail for lack of responsibility,
That you don't fail for lack of trying,
That you don't fail for lack of focus.
Then even if you fail it will be a lesson and not a failure.

Knowledge without action and action without knowledge,
Analysis without work and work without analysis,
Demand without need and need without demand,
Success without hard work and hard work without success,
Work without enjoying and enjoying without work,
All lead to failure.

Handling defeat/failure in a graceful manner

- Learn a lesson.
- Accept that there is somebody who has done better than you or you were not up to it.
- Take it sportingly.

- Analyse what went wrong but move ahead.
- Grow with every situation. View it as a challenge.
- Try and detach yourself from the outcome. Be happy.
- Don't brood over the past. Move on, especially when you cannot change things.
- Count your blessings and be thankful for them instead of being pre-occupied with failures.
- Attitude matters most when you lose.
- Everything is temporary, it will not last.
- It makes you more compassionate and humbler.
- Always look for positive possibilities, they are aplenty, but not everybody finds them. Train yourself by always looking at the positive side in every situation.
- Everything has a cause. Everything happens for a reason.
- Forget the failures but remember the lessons.
- Keep trying, keep learning and keep improving.

Seek the power within to fight

Let not failures daunt you.

Let not fear cause strife.

Turn to your inner resources.

Spark the light of life.

Every battle of the struggle.

In your life, irrespective of the result, you will fight.

I read a story about a five-year-old little girl, Nancy, One day she went to the market with her mother. The little girl was fascinated by a pearl necklace and she asked her mother to get the necklace for her. The mother enquired the price of the necklace but it was too high for her to purchase the necklace. She somehow consoled the little girl and promised her to bring the necklace for her the next day. Next day, she brought the necklace, gave it to the little girl and asked her to take care of it and when she took bath, otherwise, she said, the necklace would turn green. Nancy was very happy and excited after getting the necklace and wore it all day long and took it off only when she took bath.

The little girl's father loved her very much and every night, before she slept, he told her a story. After finishing the story her father asked,

'Nancy, how much do you love me?' She spread her arms, indicating the huge amount of love for her father. Father said, 'Then give your necklace to me, dear.' Nancy said, 'Daddy, take away my new ribbons or this teddy bear but don't ask for the necklace.' Her father laughed. Next day again after finishing the story, he asked Nancy to give him her necklace. Again she was willing to give her toys but not the necklace. After a few days passed, one day when her father returned home from the office, she ran to her father and gave her necklace to him. Her father smiled and took out a blue velvet box in which was kept the original pearl necklace and gave it to Nancy. In fact Nancy's mother had given her a plastic necklace.

God's delays are not His denials

A lot of strife is caused in life when something is taken away by God but you invariably get something much better in return. To gain something sometimes you have to lose something. Don't panic; always remember that ultimately it all happens for the very best.

What you want might be nothing as compared to what you are going to get; just be patient.

God's plan is sometimes better than your plan. Perhaps you might be capable of getting bigger and better things than you have yourself imagined. Just carry on and know that at the end of the day, you will triumph.

Ego

During the time of communal violence, one of the Sikh Gurus visited Multan, which is now in Pakistan. He wanted to spread his message of love and peace, so he decided to talk with the people and wanted them to realise that wrong had been done to them. So he went to people and tried to explain to them; he went to a shop and when he tried to instruct the shopkeeper, the shopkeeper took a beaker and started pouring milk in it from another beaker until it was completely filled, and said to the Guru, 'If I pour some more milk in it, it will spill out. It is completely filled. Similarly, we are completely filled with our religion and we don't want to hear anyone.' The Guru looked at him and took out a rose from his pocket and pulled out some of the petals of the flower and floated them on the surface of the milk in the beaker. Then the Guru said, 'There is always room for good things; even if you are full with yourself, accommodate the good.' The person got the message and thus was humbled by the saint.

If you are full of yourself, chances are that you will not be able to learn, listen or advance in life. Even if you are full of yourself, don't reject the good things that come to you.

Don't be egoistic and don't close your mind; if you do that, failure is not far away.

Practising humility

Humility is an expression of the heart which makes communication easy; it helps you grow, learn and prosper. Humility always triumphs where ego struggles. Humility is a virtue which shows proper understanding; it knows that you are just playing your part in the cosmic design during the short span of your life. Humility is the realisation that you are an instrument in the orchestra and the symphony is created due to others also. It is the ability which provides others ample space. It is the ability which makes your good qualities quite visible. When a person is arrogant his good qualities are overshadowed by arrogance. Humility is the essence of learning; it accepts it what it does not know and is always eager to learn. It creates a lot of space for you, especially in the hearts of others. Humility is an expression of class and strength. It is the ability to achieve big things without even making noise about it. It is the absence of false pride and pretence. Humility comes when ego is conquered.

The tallest trees, the highest mountains, and the tallest structures all have one thing in common. They are always grounded. No matter howsoever high you go, keep your feet on the ground, as it hurts the most when you fall from a height.

Ego

My idea is the best.
Restrict learning and growth.
Stressful relationships.
Touchy and takes things personally.
Unapproachable.
Dominating.
Narrowminded.
Absorbed with I, me, myself.
Disliked by most people.
Idea of superiority.
Resistance.
I am the best.

Humility

The best idea is mine.
Learn from all.
Better and stronger relationships.
Look at things in the right perspective.
Easily approachable and accessible.
Cooperating.
Broadminded.
See the larger perspective.
Likeable.
Idea of service and performance.
Acceptance.
I am putting in my best.

An obstacle to leadership.	It is a leadership skill.
Deluded by pride.	No sense of false pride.
Impatient listeners.	Better listeners.
Rigid and inflexible.	Flexible.
Harsh.	Kind.

What stops you from being successful?

1. Lack of Courage to Pursue Your Dreams

Honda was a man of courage and grit. He was keen to design a new kind of piston that would improve the performance of the cars. He worked very hard for it and was sure that his designs would be revolutionary. He offered his designs to the Toyota. The engineers turned his offer down without even meeting him once. He was not one to step back; he continued to try to meet the people from the Toyota. But when they had a meeting his product was ridiculed by them. An ordinary person would have given up, but Honda provided them all the details and finally his conviction won. He got an order to supply pistons to the Toyota.

After facing all the hardships, Honda invested all his resources and made full effort to start a plant for producing pistons. But nature willed otherwise; there was an earthquake in Japan which destroyed his factory and his dream. Yet Honda retained faith and courage; he started construction of the factory again. The factory was soon ready.

When the factory was ready and production was about to start, the World War II broke out. Bombs were dropped and much of Japan was tormented and devastated by these attacks. Honda's factory was destroyed yet again, but bombs could only dismantle his factory and not his hope and spirit. Honda lost his factory, property, wealth and friends, yet he continued making all the effort in the world and began to construct his factory for the third time. Now, the Honda car company is one of the leading car companies in the world bigger than even the Toyota. Honda has shown that courage and persistence can overcome every obstacle; he who is prepared to fight will get his due. If you have faith in your dreams, the impossible becomes possible.

A life of dreams is the dream of a life. Live your dream, for that is a life which strengthens you, for that is exciting and challenging. When you live a life without dreams, aspirations, challenges and without something to look forward to, there is no joy, just the same routine and the survival of existence. Survival becomes a necessity, the struggle to sustain yourself becomes a challenge and in the end you lose yourself. Create a

life of dreams and make your presence a gift to the world; it is a privilege rarely few have.

2. Fear

'Fear is the misunderstanding and misinterpretation of the facts'

Perhaps the most common obstacle that most people are confronted with, which reduces them to limited mediocre beings is fear. Fearlessness is the facet which involves being free without being reckless. Fearlessness is different from recklessness. In recklessness there is no responsibility for action and there is the lack of proper understanding, whereas fearlessness is taking responsibility for your actions with proper understanding. Let us look at some basic types of fear which paralyse a man.

Types of fear	Stages
Fear of failure.	When you want to start something.
Fear of results.	When you are in the process.
Fear of losing it.	If you win or get the desired result.
Fear of what others have to say.	When you are doing something.
Imagined fear.	Associated with future.

Fear arises when you focus on the wrong things. It arises when you focus on the results instead of focusing on the work. When you look at the result and not the activity, the mind becomes anxious and hence the fear comes. It arises when you don't have faith in yourself and in the higher power. If you trust yourself, all the doubts and fears will be dispelled. Know that you are part of the divine; you are not an ordinary creature but you are specially designed to accomplish something big.

Fearlessness comes with the faith. The degree of fearlessness depends on the depth of your faith. The more fearless you become, the greater the things you can achieve.

Faith in yourself is the beginning of fearlessness.

Fear imposes shackles of mediocrity, whereby one goes about in a routine manner and does what everyone else is doing, does not listen to himself but sees and follows others, and does not realise his own potential. Fear is also 'the state of inertia', whereby one is opposed to change, thus avoiding failures and in the process avoiding success. Avoiding failures because of fear is known as the 'fear of failure syndrome.'

Look around at anything great that has ever been done, there has been a sense of fearlessness and risk about it. You need to have firm

belief and faith to make it possible. Everything new and different has a lot of apprehension around it. But with fearlessness you can conquer all the doubts. Once it was considered impossible to fly.

People feared flying. But two men, the Wright brothers, were busy defying fear; they had faith in themselves and they made flying possible. They did not create the plane out of fear; Mozart did not compose out of fear; the greatest artists, the greatest professionals did not work in fear, but they worked with faith in themselves. The people who work under external fear seldom achieve greatness but people who work with faith in themselves do.

3. Reckless, Careless Attitude

There was a seventeen-year-old-boy who was gifted a bike on his birthday by his father. He had a long-cherished dream of riding a bike and finally he received his gift. He went for a ride and drove the bike as fast as he could, and, while carelessly taking a turn, the bike slipped, causing a severe accident. While in hospital, the boy regained consciousness after the accident. Beside him was his father; he looked at his father and asking him not to worry said, 'Daddy how is my bike? I will never ride the bike recklessly again. I have learnt the lesson after the accident and will be careful with my driving.' Father started weeping and said to the boy, 'Son, you will never be able to ride the bike again.' The son impatiently asked, 'Why, what happened to my bike?' Father hugged the boy and said, 'Son, your bike is intact but you have lost your left leg.'

Had the mistake been avoided, the consequence would have been different

By all means avoid mistakes as much as you can; when you prepare well, when you are careful and cautious, you eliminate chances of committing mistakes. If you take precaution in doing things that you do, it increases your chances of success.

Carelessness can be costly

Carelessness can cause a severe damage; very often we are casual and careless, which can really hurt. Most often one thinks that it doesn't matter much and becomes casual in his approach; you may be safe so far, but there is no guarantee that you will always be saved; sooner or later you will have to pay for your careless attitude, so better take pains and act as well as you can.

A bad example is the best instructor, provided you are not the setter of the example

One learns from a mistake, but one learns best from the mistakes that others make. Sometimes a mistake can be really costly. Great people learn not only from their own mistakes but from other people's mistakes as well; a mistake can change your life; it can take up your time. Therefore be open-minded and learn from as many sources as you can; learn from the experience of other people.

A careful and a meticulous programme has to be made in order to minimise mistakes. Mistakes can be a curse. It is just impossible not to make mistakes and be perfect, but it is always possible and plausible to avoid and reduce chances of making mistakes. Experience, as they say, is the best teacher but often an expensive one. Beware of life, it offers no retakes.

Don't just let go an opportunity of your life in a careless, unconcerned and ignorant manner, which may lead to a disaster.

4. Low Aim

'The greatest danger for most of us is not that we aim too high and miss it, but we aim too low and reach it'
—Michelangelo

You are born to live a great life, then why settle for mediocrity? Don't settle for anything less than the best. Give your best and expect the best. Low aim is a crime, given the potential in a man. Everyone is capable of achieving great things but not everyone realises this. Dream and think of big things. Achieve even bigger things by working hard for them. Set yourself onto goals which stretch you and bring out the best in you. The difference between success and failure is small and is shaped by the way you think. People who are successful set for themselves difficult goals; they aim high, whereas unsuccessful people either don't set goals or settle for too less.

5. Procrastination

'Procrastination is avoiding that needs to be done and doing what needs to be avoided'

Perhaps the most common obstacle to success is procrastination. All people procrastinate but in varying degrees. The best professionals are those who do their jobs right away; others wait for a tomorrow that never comes. Procrastination follows the law of inertia; if you are not doing

anything, you will avoid action. If you are doing something, if you are busy; then the tendency to procrastinate becomes less. The people who are busy and doing a lot of things are less likely to procrastinate than those who are idle. So avoid idleness as much as possible; even when you don't have any work, engage yourself in something useful like reading, meditation, visualisation, etc. but don't stay idle for long, as it creates lethargy which increases the habit of procrastination.

Causes of procrastination

Waiting for the right time.

Laziness.

Delaying in order to avoid confronting the problems.

Dependence on others.

Lack of mental discipline.

No driving force in life.

Absence of risks, a laid-back job.

Complacency.

Focusing too much on what next than on what now.

Distractions.

Fear lack of priority.

Mood, waiting for the right mood.

Lack of intensity.

Indecisiveness.

Low self-Image.

Low self-confidence.

Unorganised approach.

'Life is like a slope; for going up you have to put in a lot of effort. But once you stop putting in the effort, you start sliding down. You don't have to make effort for that. You are either going up or going down, there is no status quo'

Laziness and procrastination will ensure that you go down at a great speed. Beware of them. Excessive procrastination leads to a loss of self-esteem, makes you feel weak, useless, helpless, frustrated and decreases your capacity to perform and increases the stress, sense of guilt and self-doubt. It makes failure a high possibility. Research has shown that

procrastination is related to the behavior of a person but it can be controlled. The emphasis should be on doing things. Remember that the mantra for achieving success is to do things without delaying even for a second.

Overcome procrastination

Don't ignore the problems, confront them.

Make schedules and stick to them.

Get busy, get occupied.

Avoid distractions, get on the job.

Don't wait for the perfect day, the perfect time.

Stay on purpose, analyse reasons, make an effort and begin.

Do away with the beliefs that make you half. Make a list of such beliefs and eradicate them one by one. It is a matter of attitude. Practise to focus on the job and do it as soon as possible. Practise time management.

When you make a schedule, stick to it even when there is no pressure or a deadline.

Tomorrow is said to be the busiest day, so do it today, do it now.

6. Complacency

'Success is a lousy teacher'

—Bill Gates

Success does not teach you so much as failure. In moments of success there is celebration, in moments of failure, there is learning. Most of the people tend to lose their sense of balance when they get success. It is imperative not to take success too seriously; to repeat success you have to keep improving. Concentrating your mind and energy on your success may deprive you of the same in future. If you think too much of the past success, it will affect your present action. Concentrating the mind on what you are doing is important; let not success distract you. Even when you are successful, analyse the grey areas, the areas where you can improve. That is the hallmark of a true and successful professional.

A champion in any field is known by his consistency; see any sportsman, any athlete, the best professionals are the people who are consistent. The champion teams are those who perform consistently. Consistency is the mark of a champion. Everyone can have a day or two of glory, but not everybody can retain it for a long period. Edwin Moses, the former

world record holder in the 400m hurdle-race, won 122 races consecutively. That is what consistency is made of. The greatest champions display a consistency level, which distinguishes them from others. Once you get to the top you have to work harder to stay on there than you did to reach there in the first place.

‘Practice is the best company. The longer you keep it, the better the rewards will be’

Jahangir Khan, one of the very well-recognised names in the world of sports, is no doubt one of the greatest sports icons, a champion in the game of squash. His achievement of winning 555 international games remains one of the greatest sporting spectacles ever. It speaks about his great consistency, application and the will to win. To win he had to train himself and he did it as hard as anyone. He once said, ‘To be the best, I had to work harder than everyone else.’

Talent doesn’t win for you anything. It is the application which invariably does it. Without application talent is useless. Whatever be your profession, a high level of effort and practice enhances your skills and polishes your talent. Practice holds the key to good performance; it is the best way to keep complacency at bay. Ordinary people introspect after every failure, whereas the champions do it after every success. You become complacent when you rest on your laurels once you have had success in the past. Work hard and don’t lose perspective; one of the greatest distractions in life is when you get success. You can go on to greater heights if you can stay focused on your work and maintain a learning attitude even in success rather than becoming complacent.

7. Avoiding Failures

‘I’ve missed more than 9000 shots in my career. I’ve lost almost 300 games. 26 times I’ve been trusted to take the game winning shot and missed. I’ve failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed’
—Michael Jordan

The successful people fail more often than others. They are the people who strive and venture out, make an effort and get involved. They get out of their comfort zone and do something and that is what makes them successful. It is about grit and perseverance. People who fail are the people who do not attempt things. The man who does not fail at anything is the man who does not do anything. Once you begin to fail, once you begin to do something, once you strive, your chances of success will be bright. Unless you take chances, your chances to succeed are not bright.

Do not fear failures. Don't be reckless, adopt a calculated approach, but do things that you love and want to do. Be ready to fail more often and then you become ready to succeed.

8. Indecision

What makes a person indecisive?

- Lack of clarity of thought.
- Lack of courage.
- Fear of criticism and what others will say.
- Lack of initiative.
- Fear of failure.
- Reluctance to accept responsibility.

How you make your decisions

What drives you to act is very important. Are you a person who is driven by the fear of losing your job? Or by the fear of failure? Are you driven by external rewards and punishments? Are you a person who blindly follows others? If your answer is yes to any of these questions, then you should definitely change the way you make your decisions.

Easy or difficult

It is easy to get into problems but difficult to solve them.

It is easy to criticise but difficult to accomplish.

It is easy to be sad but difficult to be happy.

It is easy to know but difficult to practise.

It is easy to be lazy but difficult to work hard.

It is easy to procrastinate but difficult to do a work right away.

It is easy to practise but difficult to perform.

It is easy to say but difficult to do.

It is easy to quit but difficult to persist.

It is easy to be reckless but difficult to be responsible.

It is easy to follow but difficult to lead.

It is easy to be ordinary but difficult to be special.

It is easy to be arrogant but difficult to be humble.

It is easy to live for yourself but difficult to live for others.

Life becomes easy if you make the difficult choices and it becomes difficult if you make the easy choices. It is better to choose the difficult options for they lead you to success rather than easy options because they lead you to failure.

Decision-making

Every single decision in your life is important, though it may not seem that way. Every decision that you make shapes your future. Your ability to make decisions is imperative for success. Success lies in making right decisions at the right time and then following them by your actions. Decision-making is necessary at every moment of your life, be it dealing with people, work, objects or your future; the best decisions will give you the best results. The best decisions are those that are not left to chance but made by effort. Always remember that a decision can change your life. When you make a decision

- Analyse your own strength and weaknesses before making a decision.
- Timing of decision—even a right decision taken at a wrong time leads to failure. It is important to make right decisions at the right time.
- Don't try to win the approval of all. It is very hard to please all the people, but the important thing is to do what you believe in.
- Take the advice of other people, reflect over all possibilities and then take your own decision.
- Difficult decisions need a bit of intuition; trust your intuition and go ahead. All great decisions have a certain amount of intuition and instinct behind them.
- Don't compromise on your values in life when you take a decision, otherwise what you gain will be nothing as compared to what you lose.
- See what drives you, go for it. Involve your heart and be passionate about what you want to do.
- Never step back even if your decision involves a calculated risk or difficulty.

'Of all the options, if you choose the easiest among them, chances are that you have chosen the wrong one'

More often than not the best choices are never pursued owing to risks and difficulties. If the best choices are pursued, then they need to

be pursued persistently. A failure does not mean that your choice was wrong. Persistence is needed; once you make your decisions, stick to them and you will be successful.

9. Too Much Reliance on Others

‘The road to success is different for everybody; nobody can build it for you. You have to make it in your own way’

Be a self-starter; don’t wait for things to happen. You have to go out and make things happen; no one can make you successful; you have to go out there and do the hard things yourself.

An old story is told about a king. Once when the Delhi Fort was attacked, the son of one of the Mughal kings was captured by the opposing army. When asked why he did not run away, he answered, ‘There were no servants to help me wear my shoes.’

Many times we land into a soup or lose the golden opportunities in life by depending too much on others; one should be a self-motivated and keen worker. Don’t depend on others for the things that you can do yourself; don’t be a slave of lethargy; try to do even small things yourself.

Disappointment is faced by those who depend too much on others, as it leads to unnecessary delays; the task may take a long time; others may not do it as you want them to do it.

There are a lot of benefits when you do things yourself, as it enhances your self-confidence and patience, makes you a self-starter, helps you to take initiative and increases your concentration and the sense of self-respect.

10. Labelling Things as Impossible

‘Those who say it cannot be done should not interrupt those who are doing it’

—A Chinese proverb

History shows that impossible has always been made possible. Look at the Wright brothers who developed an airplane; look at Newton who found out ways to measure the distance of the sun and moon from the earth. He calculated the size of the sun and moon which was considered impossible. Bell was laughed at for his idea of telephone; no one paid much attention to his idea and the critics said it to be a useless idea and a waste of time. Marconi’s wireless communication was regarded as illogical and impossible.

You can achieve anything once you make up your mind. Nothing can stop you. A well-directed effort can help you achieve your goals. Most of the things you see today were thought to be impossible but only a few people did not believe so and they were busy making the impossible possible.

11. Falling for Short-term Gains

The good is one thing, the pleasant is another.

Both, differing in their ends, prompt to action.

Blessed are they who choose the good; they who choose the pleasant miss the goal.

Both the good and the pleasant present themselves to men.

The wise, having examined both, distinguish the one from the other.

The wise prefer the good to the pleasant;

—*Katha Upanishad*

To choose the good over the pleasant is a tough choice. Success requires making tough choices, which make the difference between the ordinary and the extraordinary. On a cold winter morning you may not feel like getting up, the pleasant thing is to stay in the bed, but the good thing is to get up and go in the direction of your dreams. If you want to achieve great things in life, you have to make hard choices in life. You need to be disciplined. Success cannot be good for free. It comes only to those who can afford it; the price of success is making tough choices. You have to be clear in your mind and make a clear distinction as to what will help you proceed in your life. The things which are going to take you up the ladder of success in the long run are the things which are difficult to be pursued, but you have to choose them and that is the price that you have to pay for success. There will be a lot of disturbances which may prevent you from climbing up but be vigilant and by conscious effort avoid them and go for real success. Don't be distracted by short-term disturbances; always think in the long term.

12. AVOIDING RISKS

'Almost all external expectations, all pride, all fear of embarrassment or failure—these things just fall away in the face of death, leaving only what is truly important. Remembering that you are going to die is the best way I know to avoid the trap of thinking you have something to lose'

—*Steve Jobs*

All extraordinary things in life involve a bit of risk; if they are accomplished, people will call you a genius, if they are not accomplished people will call you a fool. Calculated risks are risks when you take the responsibility for your actions. The actions bring growth and improvement in your life. They are good actions, not taken recklessly. Reckless actions are those for which you do not take responsibility. Trust yourself and do not miss the opportunity to chase success.

Benefits of taking a calculated risk

You can follow your heart and passion.

Live your dreams.

Satisfaction that you pursued your goals irrespective of the outcome.

It is better to fail than not to try.

Growth and opportunity

Bring adventure into your life.

‘If you want to climb, don’t fear falling’

The most successful people are those who often take risks and make early moves. The laurels are won on the battlefield and not in the comfort zones. To come out of the comfort zone requires a big effort; you have to take a chance. There is no possibility success without taking chances. Do not let previous mistakes dictate the choices you make. Life keeps moving; think and analyse what can go wrong; look at all the possibilities and then decide just go for it.

13. Habitual Mistakes

‘Man is a master of his habits’

One of the most important things successful people do is to learn from their mistakes; on the other hand, those who keep on repeating their past mistakes and do not learn do not move ahead of a threshold limit, which keeps pushing them back .

You are the master of your habits, and not a slave to them. Often one is not aware of the mistakes that one makes and the negative habits may develop which lead to failures. People fail because they do not realise that they have such habits as prevent them from achieving success. It is all about making a sincere effort. The beginning takes place in your mind with the thought that you have to do it and that you have to give up these habit patterns. Once you realise it you can start working on it and slowly change your habits. A series of small efforts go a long

way in improving you as a person. Don't stop but continue; ultimately little steps make a big journey.

14. Giving Up

Sir Winston Churchill had delivered a number of electrifying lectures. Once he was invited to deliver a speech before a young audience. He went onto the stage and said just one thing, which perhaps is what makes the difference between success and failure. He said, 'Never, never, never give up.'

There is immense value in this statement: if you do something, try to stick to it until you finish the job. Everybody can start but everybody does not finish. Those who finish and finish well are the successful people.

15. Fatal Attitude

'Hard work is the torch which successful people use to move ahead; some men never see that torch, because when the torch is used they sleep and wake up saying that success is luck'

Lack of self-belief and too much reliance on luck leads to failure. Understand the basic principles governing luck and then act. Everything that you do makes a difference; do not bother about luck but keep doing your best.

Many scientific discoveries have been attributed to chance or luck. The X-ray, LSD properties and penicillin are some such discoveries. If you were to carefully analyse these achievements you will find that they are the results of efforts and experimentations, which bore fruit in unexpected hours. Luck does not favour those who take it for granted. Luck favours those who are prepared for it.

Interestingly, Albert Hofmann, the scientist credited with the discovery of LSD properties, wrote, 'It is true that my discovery of LSD was a chance discovery, but it was the outcome of planned experiments and these experiments took place in the framework of systematic pharmaceutical, chemical research.'

Luck favours when preparation meets opportunity

1. Luck is the reward for hard work. When you put in something extra, you get something extra, that is luck. Do a little more whenever there is an opportunity.
2. Luck follows the law of cause and effect. Everything that you do has an effect; it may be instant or it may take some time, but sooner or later it is manifested.

3. There is a saying that luck favours a prepared mind.
4. No one ever got lucky by taking rest. Not even Newton; he was vigilant to analyse the phenomenon of the falling apple.
5. People who get lucky are the people whose subconscious mind attracts positive things. Their subconscious mind is always at work; they have consciously or otherwise programmed the subconscious mind to give them the answers to their questions.
6. The harder you work, the luckier you get. Preparation brings luck.
7. All those people who plan, prepare and practise, prosper and get lucky.

16. Lack of Focus

Success requires single-minded devotion and concentration. You cannot expect to be the best in any field if your energies are scattered. You need to work hard and concentrate on one thing at a time. Doing one thing at a time is necessary for success.

‘How long did it take you to learn to play violin?’, asked a young man of Geradini. ‘Twelve hours a day for twenty years,’ replied the great violinist. Big things in life are achieved by regularity, patience and concentration; quick fixes have never made ripples in the annals of history. Look at all the great things that have been achieved by men and they will all tell you the tale about an extraordinary amount of work. Doing the same thing over and over again requires a lot of effort, but unless you focus on work you cannot be efficient. Genius is infinite focus on work. Look at all the greatest artists and you will see that part of their success is due to their ability to focus on their work.

Bill Gates once said, ‘My success, part of it certainly, is that I have focused on a few things.’ Success is the result of focusing on a particular work. If you do too many things, chances are that you will not be able to do them well.

17. Underestimating Oneself

*‘Use what talents you possess; the woods would be very silent if
no birds sang there except those that sang the sweetest’*

—Henry Van Dyke

No man is born on the earth without some talent. Each and every one is unique. Most of us don’t recognise the abilities and talents we possess and waste our life in mediocrity of effort and achievement. Explore the talents

that you have and pursue your interests. You are nothing short of a miracle, you are the only one who is you, never forget that. Believe in your ability; everybody is special. You have all the potential to conquer; do not live like a slave.

18. Misplaced Priorities

Make a clear distinction between what is important and what is not. The ability to focus on important things in life is very important. You have limited time; if you focus on unimportant and useless matters you are doomed to fail.

'If you fail to plan, you plan to fail' —*Anonymous*

Plan carefully how you want to invest your time and energy. The best people are those who have the ability to distinguish between the important and unimportant tasks. Cut down your activities which are unimportant and consume your time. Be sure that you invest time in the best possible manner. Schedule your day according to your priorities.

19. Self-Deprecatory Attitude

Some people believe that they are born to lose. They always wonder why it happens to them. They rationalise and impress upon their subconscious mind the belief that they are not good enough for achieving big things in life and immerse themselves in such thoughts.

They rationalise and say things like

'I am too old for success.'

'I am not intelligent enough.'

'I am not lucky.'

'The time is not right for me to do it.'

'I knew something would go wrong.'

A story is told about a man in the *Guru Granth Sahib*; the man goes to a mystic, and asked him his own worth. The mystic smiled and gave him a very precious stone and said, 'When you do as I say, you will get the answer to your question.' The mystic put forth the condition that the man should not sell the stone but he had to go around and search for the person who could buy that unique stone at the maximum price. The man went on his trial; he went to a beggar first, who was not willing to pay anything for that stone. Next he met a fruit-seller who offered one kg apples for the stone; then he met a clerk who was willing to give 1 thousand rupees for it; thereafter he met a jeweller who offered 1 lakh

rupees for that stone; finally on his way back he met a person who knew the value of that stone and said that the stone was priceless and he was willing to pay anything for it to the man. The man returned to the mystic and said to him that still he did not get the answer, to which the mystic replied, 'Just as different people valued this stone differently, some thought it was not worth a penny, yet there were others who thought it was priceless. Similar is the case with this human body. Some think it is useless, others think it is priceless.' One who knows his own worth is a priceless being, otherwise life is just wasted.

Know yourself, you are unique, priceless and a gift to this world.

Life is a waste, if one does not know his own worth.

Everyone is capable of greatness; a few do not believe in it that makes them fall short of it.

When you realise that there is divinity within you, you realise how special you are. That is when you really get to know what you are worth.

Come out of this self-deprecatory attitude if you have to get big success. You have all the resources you need to be successful.

20. Taking Things for Granted

***'Unless you pay the price for success
you will not know its worth'***

Once a young man, a very successful researcher and a breakthrough inventor, was asked, 'What is the defining moment in your life? What made you such a successful researcher that made you solve so many problems that others could not?' He replied, 'When I was young, my father loved me a lot, but he had a very peculiar way of giving me my pocket money. He used to hide it under the ground and asked me to dig it to find my pocket money. It was a matter of fun for me when I was a child and I loved to play in the mud. When I grew up, I did not like the idea of digging the ground to earn my pocket money. One day I told my father that I did not enjoy playing in the mud anymore and asked him to stop putting my pocket money under the ground. I asked my father the reason for hiding my pocket money under the ground. He grinned and said something which left an impression on my mind and changed my life. He said, 'Son, all I wanted you to learn is unless you dig deep you cannot find solutions to your problems in life. You have to get to the root to solve any problem. And never take anything for granted in your life; you have to earn everything. There is a price for everything, nothing comes for free.'

Get to the root of the problems.

Unless you confront your problems, they will always trouble you.

Resolve your problems, do not be afraid. Never procrastinate. The more you neglect a problem, the bigger it will grow. Problem grows like cancer; we make it unmanageable by sitting over it.

21. Stagnating with Old Beliefs, Ideas.

Learning is the prerequisite for success; you cannot stop learning. You have to constantly reinvent yourself and increase your knowledge. Information is increasing every second.

David Kolb, a professor at MIT, says, 'In a world where the rate of change is increasing every year, in a time when some men will end their careers in the same jobs or even same occupations that they started in, the ability to learn seems an important, if not the most important, skill.'

'Learning to learn is the learning to learn'

Learning comes to the one who is open, keen, willing and has a thirst for knowledge and to the one who is ever keen to find better ways and means of doing things and improving. Learning is natural for such a person. One has to have these attributes, only then can learning begin.

Common obstacles to learning are:

Ego – I know it all.

Ignorance – I don't know.

Indifference – I don't care to know.

It is difficult to know, how to know.

It is more difficult to know, what to know.

It is most difficult to know, how to apply what you know.

Stimulate yourself with all the knowledge you can and dive deep in the ocean of learning, which is vast and deep and without limits. Enhance your abilities and keep refining your skills by learning. Continually seek to know, improve, and learn from all the people, situations, failures, setbacks and circumstances. Everything that you associate with in your life has a message of advancement, a message of progress for you. Learn it and move ahead as a better person.

22. Lack of Regularity

A young man went to a doctor and complained of severe bodyache. He was unable to move. The doctor asked him about his condition and the reason

for it. The young man replied, 'I watched a movie yesterday.' The doctor shook his head and said, 'But I didn't get the point.' The young man in a shrill voice, with pauses in between, confessed, 'I liked the hero's physique a lot, so thought of giving it a try. So I brought dumb-bell and barbell etc., and worked out the whole of yesterday in order to have a physique like him. Somebody told me to work hard, to get that kind of a physique, so I did exactly that.' The doctor's prescription, in addition to the medicines, read like this, 'Regularity is essential for anything to be accomplished. From a scientist to an athlete, all their accomplishments are the consequence of a regulated effort. Erratic efforts bring pain.'

A spark is a result of regulated work as in the case of Archimedes. The 'Eureka' moment, what was that? The answer could be a flash of genius. Yes, may be. But that was the result of a regulated effort that he had put in for a long time, and not just a momentary flash. He constantly pursued his work and did experiments and also at the time of bath, he was absorbed in thinking about his research problem, so he got the answer. Regulated effort is the sure way to success. Human body, nature and just about anything that you see around you, all work in a regular manner. There is great strength in regularity.

23. Inability to Perform under Pressure

The major reason why people perform badly under pressure is nervousness and anxiety. Nervousness is natural when you are confronted with a do-or-die situation; it means you are doing something which is important and critical for you. What happens as a result of this is that you start to think what would happen if you don't perform well. And this shifts your focus on the results of your actions instead of on the activity and you become nervous and anxious. So you are in a state of nervousness and anxiety; at the back of your mind you are worried about the consequences of not doing well and thus you are not able to do your best.

A student, when he participates in a competition which is critical for his success in life, is naturally under pressure. Now during the exam if he is not able to solve a few questions correctly he starts thinking whether he is going to pass or not. He is not able to concentrate on solving the questions, instead his mind starts thinking about the results and thus he is not able to do his best due to anxiety and pressure. If the same time is utilised in solving the problems the result will be much better.

You can fight anxiety by

- Recalling your best performances in your life and triggering your brain positively when things start getting dicey.

- Concentrating on your breath and not thinking too much and being as calm as possible.
- Focusing on the process and not worrying about ifs and buts, just doing what you are doing with full concentration of mind.

24. Unwilling to Change

Change is a compulsion. Change is a necessity, otherwise everything would stagnate. If you don't keep changing proactively you will have to change reactively. Either way change will happen.

Thomas Watson, the former chairman of IBM, was once asked about the demand for computers in the world, to which he replied '***I think there is a world market for maybe 5 computers***'

This was a valid statement a few years back, but people will laugh at this statement now.

Things keep changing; the rate of change keeps getting faster and faster. The one who does not adapt to changes is left behind. Unless you keep yourself abreast of the changes you cannot succeed. Success requires you to change proactively; it requires you to be flexible. It is about making meaningful changes to grow. If you resist change you resist success.

Causes for resisting changes

False sense of security.

Unwillingness to take risk.

Opposition to new ways and methods.

Unwillingness to work hard for making changes.

Reactive approach, waiting for things to happen and then to make a move.

What things should change for growth?

1. Change and growth

Knowledge, skills and learning require you to change; only when you change you can progress. Constant refinement and improvement need to be done; what is relevant today may not be so tomorrow. For example, a scientific theory which is valid today may be proved wrong or be bettered tomorrow. Thus change is important and growth depends on change.

2. No change and growth

Values and principles do not change. One has to be firm in matters of values and principles and only then growth happens. If you do not have

consistent values then growth does not happen. Stick to your values and beliefs and do not change them to make progress.

3. No change, no growth

If you don't keep yourself abreast of the knowledge and skills in your area of work, then you cannot grow. Growth depends on change; technologies change and the skill required to do a particular job changes, so without change there is no growth.

4. Change, but no growth

All activity is not progress. Transfers and relocations may be a change but not necessarily progressive. Sometimes changes are ineffective.

Change to change the things you want to change

Change to change your thoughts.

Change of thoughts leads to change in actions.

Change of action leads to change in results.

Change of results leads to change of fortunes.

Change of fortunes leads to change in your life.

25. Lack of Concentration

Often one notices that two men, equally skilful, work equally hard but they get different results. What is the difference between them? The difference lies in the ability to concentrate. It does not matter how long you work; as long as your mind is not on the job, there is not much chance of your being successful. The quality of time spent is very important. If one works with single-minded determination, the results are great. Single-minded determination means your mind is on the job. Your focus is restricted to your work and the mind does not wander. So many times, we are doing our job, but the mind is constantly wandering here and there; this is the result of an untrained mind. Try to focus hard on your work and bring back your mind to work; this is the secret of success. The greater your ability to concentrate, the better is your performance.

It is better to be alone on the path of righteousness than to be with many on the path of wrong.

It is better to be defeated than to win by cheating.

It is better to give your best and not have something than to have something without giving your best.

It is better to learn humility in defeat than arrogance in victory.

It is better to be tired than to be lazy.

It is better to be guided to your mission in life by failures than to live misguided all your life.

‘Success is going from failure to failure without losing enthusiasm’

—Abraham Lincoln

Enthusiasm is common when you start something; real enthusiasm is that which remains throughout the course of your pursuit of your journey. It is easy to lose enthusiasm in the middle and when things are not going well, but real success lies in sustaining the level of enthusiasm even in failures. Once you do that success is guaranteed.