

The Assumptions of Success

Too often, we are taught that our success lies outside of us. Whereby there will always be external factors that can determine success, often the solution is to change how we think. Adopting these tenets can help ensure we get more of what we desire.

"This time it'll be different!"

"What do you mean?"

"Exactly what I said; in the past I wasn't willing to do what it takes. But THIS TIME I mean it. This time, I'll get there."

"What are you going to do differently?"

"I don't know if I really need to anything different. I just need to stay focused."

"Why will you stay focused this time when you didn't the last three times?"

"I'll just do it. I mean, I really want it."

"Didn't you want it before?"

"Yeah, sure. But I wasn't willing to do the work. I gave up too easily."

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"I see. So how do you know you won't give up again this time?"

"I know me. Now, I really need to do it. My doctor said that if I don't, I'll be in trouble."

"I thought she told you that last time too."

"She did. But I don't think I was ready. I had too much going on. Life was busy, you know?"

"Yes, I do. So, your life's not busy now?"

"Well, no, it still is. But this time I'm ready. This time I'll just find the time."

"Where? What will you give up to find this time?"

"I'm not sure I really need to. I just need to work smarter and stick with it."

"Why will you stick with it this time when you didn't the last time?"

"That's easy. Because this time I mean it."

"You didn't before?"

"Sure, I did. But, I didn't really, really, really, really, really mean it. Now I do."

"Good luck with that."

How often have you made the same promise over and over? How many ended up exactly like the others?

Detect a theme?

As they say, *"If you always do what you've always done, you'll always be where you've always been."* Should you prefer a better visual, how about, *"When you get tired of walking into walls, open a door."* Or, if you want to add a bit of the cosmic to it: *"The Universe will not change its rules to accommodate your whims, fantasies, or desires."*

Changing a habit, whether that means quitting smoking, exercising more, or even having a better attitude; requires



an understanding not only of what you want in the end, but why you're not already there.

As a habit-change primer, I offer the **Four Assumptions of Success** (in no particular order). Understand and adopt these, and change comes easier and is more likely. (These are based on NLP, Neuro Linguistic Programming; which Wikipedia describes as "a pseudoscientific approach to communication, personal development.")

1) Every behavior is generated by positive intention.

Even what we call "bad habits" are born of the goal of making our life easier, healthier, or happier. As example, smoking – although obviously not a good thing to do – has the positive intention of reducing stress. Sadly, the "side effect" of the behavior is it harms your health. Identify the intention of the behavior you're trying to change and work to find a new way to accomplish it, leading to...

2) There is always another choice.

It might not seem like it but there is another option. Continuing with the same example, I could reduce stress by meditating or exercising. I might not want to or I might not like the options, but if I ask "how do I get the results I want?" Instead of "why do I have to change?" A path will make itself know.

3) There is no such thing as failure, only feedback.

Simply because we didn't get what we expected doesn't mean we failed. Labeling something as "failure," generates within us the urge to quit. After all, if it's not working, why would I continue to pursue it? To get past this barrier, look at the results you get from your actions in the same way that a scientist would conduct an experiment. See what worked and what didn't. Alter the course and move forward.

Said Paul Batalden, active Emeritus Professor of The Dartmouth Institute, "Every system is perfectly designed to get the results it gets." In other words, if you're not getting the results you expected, it's not that the system is "broken," rather you're using the wrong system. Tweak it.

4) You have all the tools you need to accomplish whatever you want.

No one is born onto this planet doomed to failure. We all have skills and strengths to move us toward whatever we need. Sometimes, however, it's important to realize that the tool we are using might be inappropriate for the results we desire and the correct tool might be the willingness to reach out and seek advice.