

[RUNNING HEAD: Success and Personal Growth]

By Beth Kirby and Jarrett Luke

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### Abstract

This paper will substantiate Tim Foley's statement concerning success and personal growth. His statement was "positive expectations combined with well-focus enthusiastic effort will yield success and personal growth." The paper will examine the statement in four areas: positive expectations, informed, well-focused, and enthusiastic effort.

We believe positive expectations relate to optimism, self-efficacy, self-concept and self-esteem. Expecting the best of an individual can directly impact these qualities. To be informed is to have the prerequisite skills and knowledge to be successful. We believe this is the foundation of success and personal growth. Well-focused will be defined by goal setting and self-regulation, while enthusiastic effort will be discussed in terms of motivation, emotional IQ, values and character.

The importance of teaching these characteristics in the classroom will also be discussed in the paper. We as educators, must know how to succeed and personally grow to provide the necessary skills for our students to be successful in all areas of life.

## Success and Personal Growth

Success can be defined as steadily moving towards worthwhile predetermined goals (Ziglar, 1982). However, a person's belief system or paradigm also interprets success. People whose lives are based on shared paradigms are committed to the same rules or practices. For some individuals, success may be limited to one area, such as business or education. For others, success is not truly accomplished until they have fulfilled all areas of life, which may include financial, spiritual, career, and social (e.g., Ziglar, 1998; Waitley, 1986; Huitt, 1996a).

Qualities or characteristics for success can change depending on forces and factors of our environment. A shift in one's paradigm may change the prerequisite skills needed to be successful. "Social institutions, educational systems, along with families and religious organizations, bear primary responsibility for providing young people with paradigms that will allow them to be successful in our society" (Huitt, 1997b).

Victor Hugo believes that we are the creators of our future (as cited in Huitt 1997b). If you believe you are going to be a millionaire in the future, you would probably base or select your paradigm to this goal. Pilzer (1990) has developed a paradigm of unlimited wealth. He believes wealth is in the mind and how we use our minds. If everyone truly believed as Pilzer does, students would probably approach schooling and education more aggressively.

Tim Foley, former National Football Player and now a successful businessman and motivational speaker, says; "Personal growth and success are primarily the result of positive expectations combined with informed well-focused enthusiastic effort." Based

on knowledge coming from the class and knowledge coming from our lives, we believe that his statement about success and personal growth is completely true.

It is very important that we realize we can be successful in some areas and unsuccessful in other areas of our life. However, anyone who applies Tim Foley's statement about success will be successful in whatever area of life it is applied to.

### Positive Expectations

We believe that when Tim Foley speaks about positive expectation, he is implying high levels of optimism, self-efficacy, self-concept and self-esteem. We believe all of these are important attributes of expecting positive expectations out of life.

Optimism can be defined as the inclination to anticipate the best possible outcome for actions or events. This term is generally contrasted with pessimism, which can be defined as an inclination to anticipate the least favorable or worst outcome for actions or events. Optimism has been demonstrated to be important for executive's success (Costello as cited by Huitt, 1996b). Also, people who are optimist are more likely to handle stress and be physically healthy at all ages. This is true for college students (Morrison and others as cited by Huitt), middle aged adults (Thomas as cited by Huitt), and for older adults (Barer, Hurwish, O'Brien & Conger as cited by Huitt).

Seligman (1990, 1995) and McGinnis (1991) are two researchers who believe optimism is a major component in living a successful life. We also agree with these two researchers. We believe that if someone wants to succeed and personally grow in an area of their life then they must show a high level of optimism or positive expectations. The person must expect to be successful. Optimism is a positive emotion that must be expressed in someone's life if they expect to succeed and grow as a human being.

Self-efficacy is a significant part of someone's belief system. Self-efficacy is defined as "beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations"(Bandura, 1997, p. 6). If someone wants to be successful and personally grow in his or her life, then one's belief regarding the capacity to handle any situation that arises is crucial. When something becomes a barrier between to achieving one's positive expectations, then action must be taken to see that the positive expectations are met.

Lastly, when Tim Foley speaks about success and personal growth, we believe he includes self-concept and self-esteem in his area of positive expectations. Self-concept generally refers to "the totality of a complex, organized, and dynamic system of learned beliefs, attitudes and opinions that each person holds to be true about his or her personal existence" (Purkey, 1988). Franken (1994) states that "there is a great deal of research which shows that the self-concept is, perhaps, the basis for all motivated behavior. It is the self-concept that gives rise to possible selves, and it is possible selves that create the motivations for behavior" (p. 443).

Many people believe, as we do, that the two terms are related. Franken (1994) suggests that self-concept is related to self-esteem in that "people who have good self-esteem have a clearly differentiated self-concept and when people know themselves they can maximize outcomes because they know what they can and cannot do" (Franken, p 439).

We believe that the qualities of self-esteem and self-concept are developed by people reflecting on their past accomplishments. If someone has had successful positive outcomes in the past then they are likely to have positive expectations in the future.

James (1955, 1890) states that “increased self-esteem results when success is improved relative to expectations.” Also, success is limited by expectations and self-esteem. However, as noted by James, the limits of one’s success can be improved by increasing expectations and/or self-esteem.

We believe that someone who is comfortable with their self-concept and self-esteem will have positive expectations about their goals in life. We, also, believe that equally important to these qualities are the qualities of optimism and self-efficacy. When Foley spoke about positive expectations, we believe that optimism, self-efficacy, self-concept and self-esteem would be included in that category. If someone wants to be successful and personally grow in his or her life, then one must develop these qualities related to positive expectations.

#### Informed

The term informed is the next term that Foley discusses in his presentation on success and personal growth. We believe that this includes prerequisite skills and knowledge as well as intelligence.

A person who wants to grow and be successful in life must be informed. He or she must master certain prerequisite skills and knowledge to be successful. Without certain skills and knowledge, a person cannot grow and be successful. Also, a person must strive to be intelligent. According to Sternberg(1990), intelligence is the cognitive ability of an individual to learn from experience, to reason well, to remember important information, and to cope with the demands of daily living.

We believe that certain experiences in life allow a person to be informed about success. The ability to reason well and to remember important information would go right

along with prerequisite skills and knowledge. Finally, if someone cannot handle the pressure of daily living then he or she will not be able to process the information needed to grow and be successful in life.

#### Well-focused

The third part of Foley's presentation on success and personal growth is that a person be well-focused in life. The term well-focused means someone who sets goals and is self-regulated. A well-focused person will also demonstrate the attributes of ambition and will engage in strategic planning, self-determination, and self-regulation (Bridges, 1994).

A person who wants to grow and be successful must define a vision of a successful life and corresponding goals (Waitley, 1997). Once this is decided, ambition and determination will help an individual achieve his or her goals. We believe that a person who sets goals will be well focused when trying to achieve success and personal growth in their life, in their relationship, and in what they want out of life.

We believe a person who has the quality of goal-setting will make sure accurate goals are set. People, who do not set accurate goals and are not well-focused, will climb the ladder of success, get to the top rung, and discover it leaning against the wrong wall (Covey, 1989).

#### Enthusiastic Effort

The last part of Foley's presentation on success and personal growth deals with an enthusiastic effort. We believe this to be an aspect of motivation, as well as values and character. Motivation is an internal state or condition that serves to activate or energize behavior and give it direction (Kleinginna & Kleinginna, 1981). Franken (1994) provides the additional component of the persistence of behavior.

Emotional intelligence (EQ) is someone's ability to be self-motivated and to display resilience in the face of personal setbacks (Goleman, 1995). Goleman believes it will be twice as important as academic intelligence (IQ) in determining how successful one becomes in life.

As for motivation and emotional intelligence, we believe that motivation and emotional intelligence are related. A motivated person is more likely to work hard to succeed and grow. A person with a high level of emotional intelligence will more likely be enthusiastic and focus on giving the effort that will make us succeed and grow.

A related issue is one's values and character. A value is a criteria for determining levels of goodness, worth, or beauty. Character is engaging or putting values into action. A person may have good values but not put them into practice and therefore not have good character. We believe that a person who has the value of hard work, and will put hard work into action will give an enthusiastic effort.

To be successful and grow, we must give an enthusiastic effort. The only way for us to give an enthusiastic effort is by having the proper motivation, high levels of emotional intelligence, proper values, and character.

#### Implications in the Classroom

Education should be a process through which every student is able to reach his or her greatest potential. All children must be treated as equal members of society and encouraged to participate in all activities. From this perspective, teaching is an art and science of helping children reach their greatest potential and becoming valuable members of society. Teachers should use all of the scientific knowledge available about how and why children learn to guide children to realize their greatest potential. "In addition, all of

our teaching must be done within a democratic environment that recognizes the worth and integrity of each child” (Kirchner, 1988, p. 12).

We believe Tim Foley had teachers and significant others who held positive expectations of him. The first two words he expresses when communicating to others of his success are positive expectations. If someone expects you to succeed at a given activity, it is probably more likely that you will put forth the effort to do so. However, if someone expects you to fail or expects very little from you, your efforts and accomplishments will probably reflect this. This is why it is so important for educators to have positive expectations of each and every student, just as Dr. Huitt has expected of us.

The Connecticut Department of Education acknowledges high expectations as one of the principal characteristics that differentiate more effective from less effective schools in terms of promoting children’s academic achievement (Gauthier, 1982). High expectations are one of the department’s most promising areas for school intervention and improvement. The link between teacher expectations and student achievement is firmly established by classroom research. For example, Lockheed (1979) found that for average students, high teacher expectations were estimated to increase achievement as much as one standard deviation when compared with similar students for whom teachers held low expectations.

“What you measure is what you get” (Hummel & Huitt, 1994) sums up how important teacher expectations can be. According to the Transactional Model of the teaching/learning process (Huitt, 1997a), the output category impacts the importance of the variables in the other categories. If we as teachers decide what it is we are going to

measure and then expect our students to meet those measurements, the success of our students will be inevitable.

We believe that positive expectations will lead to success which in turn, will lead to a positive self-concept or self-esteem. According to the SCANS report, there are essential foundations and competencies needed to work effectively in the information age. These foundation skills fall into three domains and are academic and behavioral characteristics to build competencies on. The domain of personal qualities contains responsibility, self-esteem, integrity, and self-management which we believe are all related to positive expectations.

Foley suggests these positive expectations be combined with informed well-focused enthusiastic effort. In our opinion, to be informed is to have the prerequisite skills and knowledge necessary to be successful. We can teach the knowledge and skills through three important behaviors: planning, management, and instruction. Providing corrective feedback and increasing student/teacher interaction are two ways that are related to student learning.

Academic learning time is also a critical component in learning the skills and knowledge necessary to be successful. A high academic learning time means that students are covering important content, the students are “on-task” most of the period, and those students are successful on most of the assignments they complete. The teacher’s classroom behavior has a direct influence on student behavior and academic learning time is directly linked to student achievement.

Teacher efficacy is the measure of the teacher’s belief that students can learn and that he or she can teach. We believe that teacher efficacy not only directly impacts positive

expectations of a teacher, which in turn, impacts the student's development of the necessary prerequisite knowledge and skills learned by the student.

A well-focused enthusiastic effort involves three areas of Huitt's (1996a) Brilliant Star model: cognitive, affective, and conative. The cognitive area deals with the mind (informed). The affective area deals with the body and one's feelings (enthusiasm), and the conative area involves taking the knowledge and putting it in a situation and knowing what to do (well-focused).

In the cognitive area, the SCANS report seems to be the most deficient. Huitt (1996) believes there is research in the behavioral sciences literature to justify the addition of at least four additional qualifications: optimism, setting and using goals, self-efficacy, and self-regulation. We believe Tim Foley is implying the importance of these qualifications in his statement of success, more specifically in a well-focused enthusiastic effort.

Optimism, setting and using goals, self-efficacy, and self-regulation can all be strengthened in the classroom. Optimism has been related to social skills and coping skills. We as teachers, can provide successful experiences with social skills and coping skills within our classroom by using cooperative learning and group projects. Placing children in positive social situations can have a positive impact on optimism. Setting and using goals can also minimize stress in the classroom. We as teachers need to encourage all students to set positive, reachable goals. By setting goals, a student can improve his level of competence and one's self-worth. Self-regulation is also improved by setting goals. The student can overcome obstacles and tasks when they monitor and strategize the effects of their engagement.

Self-efficacy is also related to success because it is an expectancy belief. One who has self-efficacy believes in his or her capabilities to organize and execute actions to manage certain situations. We have to believe in our students for them to believe in themselves. We can accomplish this in the classroom by setting high expectations, helping each student meet those expectations, and providing successful experiences for them along the way.

Every individual tries to explain success or failure in their life. The difference between the two lies in their determination. Being successful lies in an individual's belief system and paradigms. This can be summed up in the statement "Success is an attitude." There will always be obstacles in life that must be overcome to succeed and grow in life. Everyone will experience the ups and downs of life. However, we cannot let these obstacles keep us from succeeding in life. We must expect to succeed and not to fail. If we will apply Foley's statement that positive expectations combined with informed well-focus enthusiastic effort to our life, then one day we can say we succeeded as well.

Tim Foley's statement on personal growth and success can be interpreted in many ways. However, we believe that any interpretation will consist of positive actions and values one can instill in his or her own life to gain success and growth in their personal life. Our interpretation of this statement relates to optimism, self-efficacy, self-concept, self-esteem, prerequisite skills and knowledge, intelligence, setting goals, self-regulation, motivation, values, and character. This list may seem lengthy, but to fully succeed in the areas of Foley's statement, we believe an individual must possess and demonstrate these qualities.

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