

UNIT 2

WHAT DO I WANT?



# LESSON 7

## THE MEANING OF SUCCESS



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Fulfillment is largely based on living your life in line with your values, purpose, and the feeling that you're making a meaningful contribution to the world.

What does it mean to be successful? Oftentimes the word success conjures images of money, nice cars, mansions, and of course a private jet for travel to your own tropical island.

This is the predominant vision of success in our society – we see it in movies and advertising all the time – the message is that the size of your bank account and the things you own become the standard by which you measure the value of your life. The more money you have, the more successful you are. The more successful you are, the happier you will be.

Messed up, right? And even though it's been shown time and again that money does not lead to fulfillment, this is what we are conditioned to believe.

This is an unhealthy form of success - success based on external factors – the acquisition of money, status and material wealth. The imaginary standard by which you measure yourself will always seem just out of reach, your peers become your competitors, and there will always be someone who has more than you.

Fulfillment, as we discussed earlier, is largely based on living your life in line with your values, purpose, and the feeling that you're making a meaningful contribution to the world.

Now, it's important to clarify, there is nothing inherently wrong with money. Money is a tool through which we live our lives. The problem arises when you attach your self worth – your value as a human being – to a dollar amount or the things you own.

For example, we'll hear that Bill Gates is “worth” \$76 billion. But, neither Bill Gates nor your true self worth can be determined by money. Your self worth is inherent. It cannot be measured. You are worthy. You are enough, as you are. Period.

Success is “the accomplishment of an aim or purpose” and the healthy form of success is a great tool. It can help you stay focused as you work towards your goals and will determine when you have achieved them.

Here's the key – you determine what that aim or purpose is. Your definition of success is unique

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Your success does not depend on the approval of other people – not your family, friends, or anyone else.



to you, based on what you find important, your goals, how you want to live your life, and the contribution that you want to have in the world.

Keep in mind - your success does not depend on the approval of other people - not your family, friends, or anyone else. The approval of other people may be a result of your success, but it's not a measure of it. Success depends on your own personal definition.

You can look at specific areas of your life and define success for each of them. For some goals, success might mean simply having the courage to attempt it, to sign up for the race, or pick up the phone. And we can also look at success in a much broader context – what does it mean to lead a successful life?

In this lesson, we're going to look at this broader context and you're going to create your personal definition of success. A definition that on your 90<sup>th</sup> birthday, if you were to reflect on your life, you could say, "Wow, I wouldn't change a thing".

One thing is certain, if you're not clear on your definition of success, you may be led to believe

that your self worth can be determined by your ability or inability to live up to society's definition of success - the acquisition of money, recognition, or material things - and as I said before, your self worth is not up for grabs. You are worthy. You are enough, as you are. Period.

**THIS IS YOUR LIFE.  
MAKE IT SPECTACULAR.**



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# REFLECTION

## LESSON 7 · THE MEANING OF SUCCESS



- 1 When you first think of the word “success” what words and images come to mind?

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- 2 What does self worth mean to you? On a scale of 1-10 (1 being the lowest, 10 the highest), how would you rate your current feelings of self worth – in other words, the opinion you have about yourself, your sense of value or worth as a person? Does it depend on the situation you are in? If so, in what situations, circumstances, or with what people in your life would you say you feel you have a higher self worth versus feelings of lower self worth?

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- 3 “You are worthy. You are enough, as you are. Period.” When you forget this, as we all do from time to time, what are three things you can do to help remind you?

1	
2	
3	



- 4 Sean mentioned that success is often based on external factors, such as the acquisition of money, status, or material wealth. What are some internal factors that you could base success on?

- 5 In what areas of your life do you base your success on the validation or acceptance of other people?

- In what ways do you try and live up to society's definition of success?

- How does this comparison impact you, positively and negatively?

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- 6** List three goals you have for this year (consider using the same three goals you listed in the Reflection Questions of Lesson 6). Name three specific measures of success for each of them – what would success look like? What would it feel like?

	GOAL	MEASURE OF SUCCESS
1		
2		
3		

- 7** Sean said, “The approval of other people may be a result of your success, but it’s not a measure of it. Success depends on your own personal definition.” What does that mean to you?

- 8** What would a “successful life” look like to you? What would it feel like?



## YOUR UNIQUE DEFINITION OF SUCCESS

In this exercise, we will reflect on people that you admire, people that you would consider successful and use them to help you determine your unique definition of success.

- 1 List 5 people that you admire and/or that you would consider successful. They might be people that you know, perhaps that you have only met once, or they might be people that you have never met. Try and choose at least a few people that you know so that you can make it as personal as possible.

	PERSON	ATTRIBUTES THAT MAKE THEM SUCCESSFUL
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		

- 2 For each person above, list all of the attributes that you believe make them successful.

To help, here are some questions to consider: What personality traits do they have that you admire? What is it about their accomplishments that make them successful in your opinion? What do you admire about the way they live their life and how does this make them successful? How do they treat other people? Is this an aspect of what makes them successful in your opinion? How do other people treat them? How is this representative of their success? Is it something about their role as a father, mother, husband, wife, or friend that makes them successful in your eyes?

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## EXERCISE

### LESSON 7 · THE MEANING OF SUCCESS



- 3 What would success look like and/or feel like in different areas of your life – family, work, friendships, community, financial?** Often we'll associate our level of fulfillment with how successful we are. Great, but let's go further. What does fulfillment mean to you? What does fulfillment look like and/or feel like in different areas of your life (family, work, friendships, community, financial)?

	SUCCESS	FULFILLMENT
FAMILY		
WORK		
FRIENDSHIPS		
COMMUNITY		
FINANCIAL		

- 4 Take a look at your answers to 2 and 3. Do you notice any common themes? Choose at least five attributes of success that you most resonate with. Try to use a combination of various attributes.** For example, choose from personality attributes of success (i.e. respectful, kind); choose feelings associated with what you would consider successful (i.e. feeling of connection, genuine friendships); and choose what success looks like for you in the area of accomplishments, family, or work (i.e. meaningful work, wealthy).



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## EXERCISE

### LESSON 7 · THE MEANING OF SUCCESS



- 5** Use these attributes to create your unique definition of success. You will likely have to play around with it a bit to make it fit for you. That's okay. Keep working on it until it feels right. It may help to structure your definition using the following sentences:

Success is \_\_\_\_\_

Success means to me \_\_\_\_\_

A successful life is \_\_\_\_\_

As an example, here is Sean's definition of success from Lesson #2:

*"Success is treating others with respect, love, and kindness; a feeling of connection with genuine friendships that truly support and care for me. Success is being a contributing and valued member of my community, doing meaningful work, and earning enough money to support my family and live the lifestyle I want."*

#### MY DEFINITION OF SUCCESS



## SUCCESS OR FAILURE?

Read the following scenarios and decide:

- Whether the person in each scenario is a success or a failure.
- What about the scenario makes the person a success or a failure.

	SUCCESSFUL?	WHY?
1 <b>Politician:</b> Ran for political office seven times and was defeated each time.		
2 <b>Cartoonist:</b> All he wanted to do was to sketch cartoons. He applied with a Kansas City newspaper. The editor said, "It's easy to see from these sketches that you have no talent." No studio would give him a job. He ended up doing publicity work for a church in an old, dilapidated garage.		
3 <b>Writer:</b> His first children's book was rejected by 23 publishers.		
4 <b>Inventor:</b> In the first year of marketing his new soft drink, he sold only 400 bottles.		
5 <b>Athlete:</b> As a baseball player, he struck out more than any player in the history of baseball: 1,330 times.		
6 <b>Politician:</b> Flunked the sixth grade. As a sixteen-year-old in Paris, a teacher had written on his report card, " <i>Shows a conspicuous lack of success.</i> " He wished to become a military leader, or a great statesman. As a student, he failed three times in his exams to enter the British Military Academy.		
7 <b>Athlete:</b> As a high school student, he felt so unpopular with the girls that he thought he might never be able to find a wife. That's why he took a cooking class. He thought he might never have anyone to cook for him.		



### WHO ARE THEY?

- 1 Would you have given up on politics if you had been defeated seven times in your run for political office? Any guesses as to who it was? I'm glad that **Abraham Lincoln** didn't give up. He was defeated for legislature, defeated for speaker, defeated for nomination to Congress, defeated for Senate, defeated for nomination to Vice Presidency, defeated again for Senate. Yet he hung in there and succeeded in becoming the 16<sup>th</sup>, and one of the most respected, presidents of the United States.
- 2 And what about the cartoonist whom no one would hire? The one who was told that he had no talent? The old garage he worked in was in such bad shape that it had mice. One day, he sketched one of those mice. Any guesses as to the name of that mouse? The mouse one day became famous as "Mickey Mouse." The artist, of course, was **Walt Disney**.
- 3 The writer whose children's book was rejected by 23 publishers? Take a wild guess.... **Dr. Seuss**. By the way, the 24th publisher sold six million copies.
- 4 The soft drink that sold only 400 bottles its first year? **Coca Cola**.
- 5 The baseball player who held the strike-out record? He also held, for many years, the home run record. His name is **Babe Ruth**.
- 6 The student who showed a "conspicuous lack of success" on his report card? Who failed three times to enter the British Military Academy? Many of us would have given up after one rejection. But **Winston Churchill** stubbornly refused to accept defeat and became one of the greatest men of the 20th Century. Though he was rejected many times by the voters of Great Britain, he finally became the Prime Minister, standing between Hitler and the free world.
- 7 The athlete who was so unpopular with the girls that he took a cooking class in case he never found a wife? The one who was cut from the Varsity team his sophomore year? The cut may have been the best thing that ever happened to him. Angry and embarrassed, he began to get up early each morning to practice with the Junior Varsity coach. Eventually he not only made the Varsity team, but became one of the best basketball players of all time: **Michael Jordan**.

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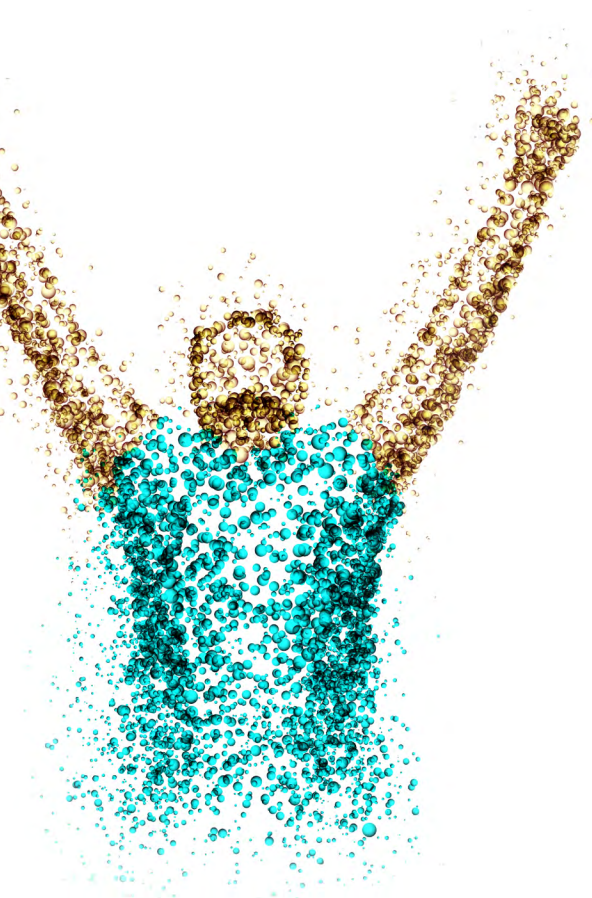
## DISCUSSION

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- 1 Sean emphasized that your self worth can't be measured, especially through a dollar amount. Do you agree? If so, why or why not? Can you think of a healthy way that self worth could be measured? How might this help you in making decisions or determining the type of people you want to surround yourself with?
- 2 What are some ways to increase your self worth or self-esteem?
- 3 How is success typically defined in our society?  
What are the implications of this definition of success to the individual and subsequently our relationship to work and job satisfaction?
- 4 What are some alternative ways to define success? What are the implications of these alternate ways to define success – to the individual, and subsequently our relationship to work and job satisfaction?

## NOTES



Success is the accomplishment of an aim or purpose. You determine what that aim or purpose is and how you are going to measure your success.

If you don't determine what success means to you, it's easy to believe the judgments of others on whether you are successful or not. In doing so, you risk wasting a lot of time trying to achieve other people's goals, which may or may not be important to you.

There will always be people that will judge you, your life, and your accomplishments based on their definition of success. This can lead to feelings of inadequacy or even worse, spending your time and energy seeking the approval of others to validate your success.

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There will always be people that will judge you, your life, and your accomplishments based on their definition of success...Focus on your unique definition of success. It is the only one that matters.

Focus on your unique definition of success. It is the only one that matters.

Your definition will likely change from time to time and will be dependent on the area of life, or goal you are measuring. If it no longer feels quite right, re-visit it to make sure that it is always in alignment with who you are and what makes you feel and perform at your best.

“Success is liking yourself, liking what you do,  
and liking how you do it.”

– Maya Angelou

