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HOW TO BE A SUCCESS AT EVERYTHING

# THE SELF-MASTERY SECRETS OF CEOs

WE CAN ONLY CONTROL WHAT WE CONTROL. THAT SEEMINGLY SIMPLE IDEA CAN YIELD BIG RESULTS.

BY: ETHAN HALE

**“The hardest victory is the victory over self.”**

- Aristotle

CEOs are different people than most, according to a recent survey of about 1,000 top leaders in the U.S. by John R. Graham, Campbell R. Harvey, and Manju Puri of Duke University. While 64% of the general population can be described as “risk-averse,” only 9.8% of CEOs fall into that category. Moreover, 80% of CEOs are optimistic and proactive--a number also well above the normal percentage.

Those findings make complete sense. Effective leaders can't be afraid to make tough choices--and must be able to envision successful outcomes. And one more key trait they need to have in place is self-mastery.

We can only control what we control. Overall economic conditions and political movements are beyond our individual control. Laws and taxes are also unchangeable. Nor can we expect to fully control other people's opinions of us--or whether they choose to treat us fairly or unfairly.

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What we can control, however, is ourselves--and that doesn't mean just how we react to all of the above. No, what we really should work on controlling is the pace of our own growth and development, as well as our approach to each day of our lives.

Instead of accepting where we are in life, we can put self-mastery into action--and be as proactive as possible to create the kind of success we want to experience in our lives.

The business greats--people like Jack Welch and Richard Branson--all display self-mastery on a daily basis. They have focus, motivation, and the passion to constantly seek to move themselves and their enterprises forward. Their success and fame can't be chalked up to luck or coincidence--because their ongoing fortune is a consistent effect of their self-mastery.

The late, great Stephen Covey perhaps summed up self-mastery best in his mammoth best-seller, The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People : "The ability to subordinate an impulse to a value is the essence of the proactive person."

In other words, when we exchange what we want to do now for what we want to achieve later, we display the most powerful aspects of self-mastery. We demonstrate the discipline that prepares us for success. We can't change our future and our outcomes until we change ourselves.

Here are a few important ways in which you can harness your own individual power--and work toward being, as the old Seinfeld classic episode had it, "master of your domain."

### **CREATE CONCRETE GOALS**

If you don't know where you're going, how can you steer yourself in the right direction? When you are able to brainstorm challenging but realistic objectives that you're excited about achieving, you're motivated to do what it takes to attain them. Without these kinds of goals in place, self-mastery often seems senseless. When we do have a desired destination in mind, we're more able to channel our passion and energy to reach it.

### **MOLD YOUR EMOTIONS AND ATTITUDES**

We can't completely change who we are; we all have certain traits, talents, and dispositions that we're born with. However, we can reprogram and transform our basic "circuitry" so we can be as proactive and productive as possible. Studies show that up to half

of our happiness potential is directly under our control--so make the most of what you have and greet each day with a positive attitude and a strong plan.

## **FIND YOUR FOCUS**

You can have a wonderful goal and an amazing attitude--and still wander through your days not getting any closer to what you want out of life. That's why focus is important. When you drill down on what you need to actually do to create a successful outcome, you actually advance yourself and your business ambitions.

## **INCREASE YOUR WILLPOWER**

Willpower is an essential element of leadership. If a leader shows strength in avoiding impulsive and destructive behavior, he or she inspires followers to do likewise. Temptation, of course, is always the arch-enemy of willpower--but the more we fight temptation and show self-restraint, the more we make self-mastery an ingrained part of our DNA, and the closer we get to our goals.

The very traits that cause CEOs to be successful--being unafraid to take a risk and being overly positive about the future--can also lead to self-indulgence and disaster. Self-mastery prevents that from happening. We should always keep a firm hand on the wheel of our own personal behavior, especially when our success takes us into the fast lane. That's how we make sure we win the race.

[Image: Flickr user [Jan Sane](#)]



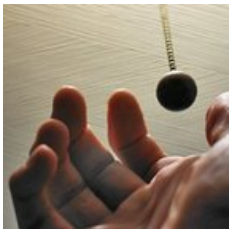
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**July 19, 2013 | 6:00 AM**

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