
DEVELOPING
YOUR
STRENGTHS



Executive Summary



Finding Your Passions

You can only reach your ultimate development in those areas in which you have passion. For example, you can never become a truly great golfer if you don't even like to play.

Maybe you're fortunate enough to already know what you're the most passionate about. Or maybe you feel that you've never had the chance to really consider your aspirations. I wasn't raised by parents to have goals and dreams, or to even think about the possibilities that come with living in the United States. My parents weren't educated past high school and didn't even have a conversation with me about my future. I had to figure that out on my own.

Now, I don't know about you, but for me, this made success as an adult a lot harder to figure out. I didn't know what my strengths were and didn't know how to find out. When I took a personality test in High School, the results that came back said I'd make a good farmer. Great news for a kid that never set foot on a farm and lived in a small town all his life.

But if you're finding yourself in a similar situation, where you have a dream of being an entrepreneur and you're not sure which direction to go in, take some time now to find your passions.

Your greatest strengths will ultimately be those things that you do, practice and develop the most. It only makes sense to spend all that time on something that you love.

Here is a sure-fire plan to find your passions:

- Consider your history. Looking back, what are the things that you've enjoyed the most? What are some things that you've always wanted to try but never have? What things have you naturally been really good at?
- Ask yourself, "Could I see myself doing this regularly over time?" It might be a blast, but if you only want to do it twice a year, it's not a passion. A passion is something that you want to learn all about and develop a real level of expertise for.
- Consider if there is a way to make it a career. Maybe you can make money at your passion. Maybe you can only do it part-time. But consider the possibilities. If your work is related to your greatest passion, it's like you'll never have to "work" again!



I thought that my love of Astronomy would lead me to becoming an Astronomer, but I couldn't see me loving it if I did it full time (and at the time, in the late 70's the pay was very low).

- Find something that you're passionate about and you'll be in a much better position to develop your strengths and enjoy a wonderful life. Do you have a natural tendency to enjoy something specific? Has anyone said to you 'I wish I could do that?'



Meditation/Prayer

When you hear the word ‘meditation’ or ‘prayer’ is it something you’re already familiar with or does it seem a strange to you? You’re probably not alone, but meditation is a tool that can be used by everyone and you don’t need a pillow to sit on either.

The truth is that prayer or meditation can be done every waking moment. Sitting in a peaceful, quiet, low-light situation is like meditating with training wheels – it’s mediation under ideal circumstances. By learning to pray and meditate when it’s easiest, it will be possible to mediate on a loud, smelly, subway while you’re angry with your spouse and stressed about work.

While there are all kinds of meditation/prayer, we’re going to use it for two purposes. And for the rest of the text, I’ll just be using the word prayer for simplicity:

- Prayer to stay focused. You might have heard of the idea of ‘mindfulness’. This is simply the idea of staying focused on what is in front of you. So, if you’re washing the dishes, you’re only thinking about washing the dishes. If you’re playing tennis, you’re only thinking about playing tennis. If you’re trying to create content for your new business, you’re able to tune out other things (like the background distractions I have right now) and focus.
- To deal with fear and anxiety. It is our fears and resistance that stop us from achieving great things. It’s very difficult to fail if you have a purpose and continue towards it until it’s accomplished. Remember, it is our doubts and fears that stop us from trying.

Think about the biggest accomplishments you’ve had in your life. Were they the result of you making a decision based on fear? I’m going to make an assumption here and say, no. For me, the biggest accomplishments and personal gains were the result of positive thinking and the perspective of opportunity and the possibilities, not out of fear.

Focus and prayer are incredible tools and perhaps two of the most important skills that a person can learn. They’re skills that anyone can learn to do well. The key is to start where you are and keep improving. Soon, you’ll be zoning in on your strengths in no time and you’ll see a huge leap in your accomplishments.



Goal Setting

Goals can be used to accomplish certain tasks, like deciding what retirement will look like, or if you have certain financial goals you'd like to achieve as an entrepreneur. But goals can also be directed toward developing a certain skill. Think about what would be most meaningful to you and develop a goal around that.

To have the best chance to accomplish anything, having a goal is a huge advantage. Without the intention of accomplishing something specific, there's really no telling where you might end up. Have a specific destination in mind and you can determine the course of your life.

To be the most effective, a goal needs the following components:

- A specific time frame. If you don't have a deadline, when will it ever get done? Most of us are already great at procrastinating. A goal without a deadline is not a goal.
- It is measurable. There should be no doubt in your mind whether or not you've accomplished your goal. "Start a side business" is tough to measure. But, "Start a business that brings in \$1000/month" is more measurable.
- It is specific. Now the goal of 'bring in \$1000/month is a great goal, but how are you going to do that? What about "My business will bring in \$1000/month by both active and passive income. I'll perform 75% of the services directly, and will create a way to have 25% of my income through passive means, like E-books and affiliation marketing." Now that's a little better. If you're too vague then you'll get less than great results. You need a specific target if you want to do your best.

To set yourself up for success at developing your strengths, set specific and achievable goals for what you would like to accomplish.



Visualization

We all visualize various things throughout the day. As an exercise, try to remember something without visualizing it. You likely can't! Why? Our brains work in pictures. That's just how it works.

That's why visualization is a very powerful tool when used properly. It's also very powerful when used improperly, except that the results are negative.

There are several keys to visualizing anything effectively:

- Your vision must be believable. You shouldn't visualize yourself being the owner of a restaurant if you don't know the business. Your visualizations should be related to your goal, and your goal should be reasonable (but a stretch) for you.
- Your vision must be realistic. Don't visualize yourself becoming a multi-millionaire if you don't have a solid plan in place. Believability is about scale and realism is about practicality.
- Visualize consistently. Twice a day, at a minimum, will best help you succeed. First thing in the morning and last thing at night works well. It gets your mind in a positive place as you start your day and before you fall asleep.
- It takes time. It will take some time to be effective. It's like gaining or losing weight. You can't gain or lose 10 lbs in a day, but the change over time can be impressive. Stay with it.
- Work on the big picture. Instead of visualizing only improving your strengths and abilities, visualize yourself as the type of person that would have those strengths and abilities. You need to see and be comfortable with the whole package, not just a piece of it.
- Be as vivid as possible. Experience your vision with as much sensory detail as possible. Don't just 'see' it – think about how you'd want to be living and where you'd want to be living...the details of that lifestyle. The more complete the experience, the more you will get out of it.

Visualize daily and you'll change your life.



Positive Affirmations

Visualization is a great tool, but it's not the only tool. The other half of the puzzle is managing self-talk. We all say things to ourselves, constantly. One way to minimize self-talk is to be mindful and focus on the task at hand. But anytime there is self-talk, it should be positive.

These techniques will help you use affirmations to your best advantage:

- Make a list of all the things you say to yourself that are negative and do not support your goal. We all seem to have those negative soundtracks playing in our head telling us negative thoughts. Remember, just because you think something, it doesn't make it true.
- Re-write your list. Take all the negative things and re-write them into a positive version. For example: "I can't speak in front of 100 people" might become, "I can easily speak in front of 20 people and eventually, I'll be speaking in front of 100 people or more."
- Monitor yourself 24/7. If you're awake or dreaming, monitor your self-talk. Anytime you observe negative self-talk, replace it with something positive and repeat it to yourself several times. Again, think about those soundtracks that are playing.
- Read through that list occasionally. Read it to yourself. Read it aloud. You might even re-write the ones that are the most significant. Expose yourself to them regularly. You could even record them so you can listen to them as well.

Affirmations have been around a long time for a reason: they work!



Evaluation

Imagine trying to lose weight, but never having the opportunity to weigh yourself or see yourself. How would you know if your diet and exercise program was working? No matter what you're trying to accomplish, it's important to measure your progress in some way.

That also means you need to measure yourself before you start. If a method of measurement isn't obvious, invent one. Maybe you need to tame your nervousness during presentations. You could develop a 1-10 scale or wear a heart-rate monitor. There is always a way – figure one out that works for you.

Perform this process at the end of each day, or if that's too much, at the end of the week:

- List your successes and failures. What did you do today to progress toward your goal? What did you fail to do? What did you do that was a step in the wrong direction? How was your self-talk? Your visualizations? Meditation? Consider everything.
- Congratulate yourself on your successes. Be proud of yourself. A little momentum and encouragement can go a long way.
- Address your failures, but don't think of yourself as a failure. Something didn't go the right way, or didn't go as expected, that's all it is. Learning from failure is part of success. Why did something not succeed? Was it a bad decision or was it something beyond your control? What can you do to do better tomorrow? Come up with a solution to each item. Tomorrow you can use the solutions and re-evaluate yourself again.
- Measure your progress toward your goal. This might not be practical to do on a daily basis for all goals, but you should be measuring your progress on a regular basis.

Can you see how difficult it is to fail if you use all the tools up to this point? If you have a goal, reinforce it daily, use the tools (meditation, visualization, affirmations), and evaluate your thoughts, behavior, and progress... you will continue to move forward toward your goal!



Practice, Practice, Practice

Practice is king.

You don't have to get it right on the first try. Few people do, if any.

The only reliable predictor of success is based on the number of hours, or times the task is practiced. No one reaches the highest levels without many, many hours of practice.

Now let's look at some practice strategies:

- Practice as frequently as possible. As they say, repetition is the mother of skill. Five times a week is better than two. Twice a day is better than once. Obviously, physically strenuous things can't be done daily, but with planning, you might be able to do them more frequently than you are currently.
- Have a plan. There is a huge difference between practicing haphazardly and having a plan in place. Know what you're trying to accomplish before you even get started. It doesn't matter whether you're shooting a basketball, making cold calls, or learning something new; have a plan.
- Practice the right things. We tend to like to practice the things we're good at, but we need to practice the important things we're not good at. Be sure your time is being spent in the wisest manner possible.
- Evaluate after each session. What went well? What did not go well? What do you need to work on next? Should you change your approach?

The most important thing to remember is that the more you practice the better you will become.



Conclusion

Developing a strength is really all about practicing it as much as possible. By finding something that you're truly passionate about, you'll find it much easier to put forth the effort.

In truth, you can create a strength from a weakness by spending enough time on it... all it takes is practice. Being passionate makes practice a lot more fun.

A goal provides a target. You can't choose where you want to end up without a target. Reviewing it daily keeps the target fresh in your mind and prioritizes it.

Prayer and meditation is a wonderful tool to learn to focus and to minimize the stress and distractions in your life. If you can control your thoughts and focus, you can control your behavior.

Visualization gives the experience of already being proficient at something. It also provides a means to detect emotional resistance to achieving your goal.

Positive affirmations help to develop new, positive thought patterns and to eliminate the negative.

All that's left is to practice and continuously evaluate your progress. Find your passion and develop your strengths!

You'll be glad you did!