

Excerpts from

9 Things You Simply Must Do to Succeed in Love and Life

Déjà Vu People

My feelings of déjà vu came from my growing sense that certain kinds of people, given certain circumstances, always face and resolve situations in the same way.

People who possessed this one pattern in common were all successful in life. They moved forward. They did not stay stuck, repeating the same mistakes over and over again.

And these people were getting from life what they had decided they wanted from their vocation, relationships, spiritual attainment, or otherwise. Life was working for them.

Nine Things Hidden in Plain Sight

I had discovered nine principles that are like gravity. These Nine Things are there, and we can work with them to achieve great results in success, relationships, etc. or we can ignore them and suffer the consequences. Over the years I've come to realize three truths about these principles:

1. They are paths or patterns of behavior that really do make a huge difference in the lives of those who practice them.
2. Avoiding these principles can lead to disastrous consequences, such as loss of love, dreams, goals, etc.
3. These principles are often ignored.

Principle 1: Dig it Up

The invisible world is always where the visible originates.

The reality of the life we see and live on the outside is one that emerges from the inside, from our hearts, minds, and souls. It is our internal life that creates our external one. So, to find our lives we must find what lies below the surface of our skin. We must look at, listen to, discover, and be mindful of our internal life – of such things as our talents, feelings, desires, and dreams.

There is no shortage of things in life than can cause you to bury your heart and soul. Those who succeed in life have not allowed those influences to keep their dreams and desires hidden. They have dug them up, faced their fears, taken risks, failed, gotten up again.

It is our job to dig up whatever potential we have in whatever situation we are in, and then to invest it and see it grow. The choice is whether we are going to allow fear and failure to keep our potential buried or choose to step out in faith and see that potential turn into reality.

Avoidance of risk is the greatest risk of all.

There is very little growth and reward in life without taking risks. A successful déjà vu person is not afraid of the downside of taking risks. But risk is calculated and then executed with diligence and thoughtfulness. It is a three-step process:

1. Become aware of whatever is in your heart and “dig it up.”
2. Weigh it, deal with it, talk it through, process it, integrate it with your values, judge it, and chew on it until you know with wisdom exactly what you are doing.
3. Take action.

Grasp your dreams. Take appropriate risks. One of the worst things you can die with is potential. Die with failures before you die with potential. Potential is something to be realized, not guarded and protected. So, dig it up! Invest it and you will realize life comes from the inside out.

Principle 2: Pull the Tooth

Successful people do not hang on to bad stuff for long.

Déjà vu people get rid of bad stuff. Period. Sometimes quickly and sometimes through a process, but they get rid of it. They do not allow negative things to take up space in their lives, draining them of energy and resources. If the tooth is infected, they pull it. Immediately. They finish off problems and do not allow them to remain.

A few examples:

- Relationships that are not going anywhere.
- Activities that are not getting you where you want to go.
- Time you are spending that is not contributing to your real well-being or mission in life.

So, the successful déjà vu person deals with anything that drains time, energy, and resources from the life of those desires and dreams he is working on.

Your success in relationships and in life is going to be limited or enhanced by how well you confront and resolve negative things quickly, directly, lovingly, thoroughly and effectively.

The Cringe Factor

The cringe factor is when you go against your gut feel to work with someone. Do not get involved with a person who causes you to cringe when you think of them. Learn to listen to that little voice inside that tells you things like:

- This doesn't feel quite right.
- I don't like what I'm agreeing to.

- This violates an important value.
- I'm going to regret this tomorrow.

Principle 3: Play the Movie

Déjà vu people rarely take any action without considering its future implications.

You never know exactly what might happen on down the line when you make any given choice, but the wise person at least thinks about it.

If I sow this particular behavior, choice, attitude what is the long-term consequence? More accurately, what is the end view. *What will happen in the end?* is the question the wise person seeks to answer.

Playing the movie means never seeing any individual action as a singular thing in and of itself:

Any one thing you do is only a scene in a larger movie. To understand that action, you have to play it out all the way to the end of the movie.

The Future Will Come

When we think of a difficult thing to do, like attending graduate school or changing careers, we often just think of the immediate discomfort that comes from doing it. No, *I won't do it* does give a little relief in the present moment from not doing it. But, that is a big lie we tell ourselves – a lie that hides the future consequences of our choices. Yes, you avoid the work. That feels good at the moment. But in doing so, you have made another choice as well: to have a life you hate three years from now.

We act as if the present is all there is: we forget that the future is going to come either way. By avoiding the immediate discomfort, you also sign up for the negative consequence residing within the future reality.

Help Along the Way

Playing the movie allows successful people to live out future difficulties before they actually occur so they can do something about it. They worry ahead of time – they play the movie – and then they take active steps to make sure they are ready when the scene arrives.

Principle 4: Do Something

Déjà vu people ask themselves the question: What can I do to make this situation better?

Déjà vu people tend to call on themselves as the first source to correct difficult situations. It does not matter whether they think they are to blame or not. Even if someone else is at fault, they will ask themselves, *What can I do to make things better?* It could be a number of things. But whatever the answer, they make a move.

What Making a Move Looks Like

When there is a breach in a relationship, the déjà vu person figures out what she can do to repair it. The déjà vu person might take the following actions as appropriate:

- Ask, is there anything in my attitudes or actions that have contributed to this problem?
- Go and apologize.
- Go and confront.
- Go with an agenda of only listening and trying to understand how the other person has been hurt.
- Get feedback from others on what ways I need to change and find out how to do it.

I have seen lives transformed when people begin to adopt the déjà vu person's strategy of asking himself, *What can I do to make this better?*

Principle 5: Act Like an Ant

My déjà vu friends achieve their successes by acting like the ant. They achieve their goals by taking many tiny steps towards their goals over long periods of time. It is the method used by anyone who has ever accomplished anything substantial. Things grow one little bit at a time, and it all adds up.

Wanting it now keeps you from having it.

Taking the long road, one tiny step at a time, will actually get you there faster because you will not lose time by trying shortcuts. People who want it now face frequent discouragement because of their many false starts.

All success is built and sustained just like a building is built, one brick at a time. Déjà vu people value the little increments, the tiny steps to success.

Principle 6: Hate Well

What we hate says a lot about who we are, what we value, what we care about. And how we hate says much about how we will succeed in love and life.

What We Hate Defines Us

What would you think, for example, about a person who said he hates the following things: arrogance, lying, innocent people being hurt, evil practices, telling lies about others, and things that stir up dissension among people?

Wouldn't you be inclined to like that person? Even trust him?

Character is in part formed by what we hate, because we move to be different from whatever it is that we hate.

How We Hate is Important

Déjà vu people hate in a way that solves problems as opposed to creating them. Successful people move against the problem and show love and respect to the person at the same time.

Subjective vs Objective Hate

The difference between those who hate well and those who hate destructively lies in the difference between subjective and objective hate. Subjective hate is not directed at anything specific. It is already there, sort of like an infection of the soul. It just lives there.

But this subjective hate does not just lie dormant. It jumps out. It expresses itself if given the opportunity, usually when prodded by some incident that reminds the person of some significant hurt in the past.

Turning Subjective to Objective

The goal is to transform subjective hate to objective hate, a hate that solves problems, protects things that you value, and stands against the things that you do not want in your life. To do this requires finding the real objects of the hate, make them specific, and using objective measures to enforce them productively, getting the rage out of the equation.

This is what successful déjà vu people do. They can tell you specifically what they stand against, why they stand against it, and what they propose to do to solve the problem when those things occur. And they do it not with a hateful attitude but with one that is respectful, kind, yet firm.

So to become a déjà vu person, you have to take the subjective hatred that you feel and make it objective. Figure out where it comes from. Put a name and face to it.

Déjà vu people tend to address the real toxins of life in specific, effective ways that face the issues and respect the persons involved.

Assessing What You Hate

What is worth hating? And where has hate gone awry for you? What do you hate that is really not “hateworthy?” Where has subjective hate filled you up so much that it finds expression in ways and at times that are not good for you or for others?

Destructive or Constructive

Things that you do not like are going to happen. The question is this: will your response be constructive or destructive? You can respond in immature ways and destroy relationships, your career and people you care about; or you can avoid responding and destroy yourself in the process. Or you can learn the way of déjà vu people, the pattern of hating well. You can be one

of those people who objectively chooses what they will hate, and how they will deal with those things when they present themselves. In the process you will preserve most of the good things in your life, eliminate most of the destructive things, and experience much more success in both love and life.

Principle 7: Don't Play Fair

Give back better than you are given.

People who succeed in life do not go around settling scores. They do not even keep score. They “run up the score” by doing good to others, even when the others do not deserve it. They give them better than they are given. And as a result, they often bring the other person up to their level instead being brought down to the level of the other.

Get Rid of Anger

Giving back better than you are given is the law of love. It has the power to improve those who are failing. It has the power to turn them around. Instead of lowering yourself to their level, you elevate them to yours. This is the only way that problem relationships get better.

You do not see people who are successful in the true sense of the word who are hotheads and have never gotten control of their anger. The successful ones do not let anger spoil relationships. A wise man once said, “It is to a man’s honor to avoid strife, but every fool is quick to quarrel.”

Get Past Your Own Need

To possess goodness and maturity you must practice them *regardless* of how you are being treated. If your spouse is not being what you need, then you should not continue to depend on the spouse for that need when he or she is not going to deliver it. It is like trying to get water from an empty bottle.

You must find other ways and places to meet those needs. That may mean getting support from friends or by joining a support group. When you are full, you can do what is needed in the difficult relationship to make it better.

Successful people see life as a place to give, and as a by-product of giving, they receive back in the end. When a person takes the high road and helps a wayward spouse through love they often get a mature spouse as the reward for their sacrifice. The high road that leads to payoff is always the one that begins with sacrifice. That may not be fair, but it’s true.

So, become responsible for getting what you need and maintaining your own emotional health so that the other person cannot drag you into the gutter. You cannot help another if you are deprived of the thing you need.

Sometimes Love Means Giving Better Than They Deserve

Not giving others what they deserve is a big part of not playing fair. To give them better than they deserve is called grace. The word means unmerited favor. Instead of blasting a coworker for not getting something done, the déjà vu manager goes in, closes the door, and asks, *Is everything okay? It looks like you may be overwhelmed at the moment.*

What happens when the déjà vu person gives back better than he is given and it doesn't work out? They are free to move on. They do not need to settle the score. They let it go and because of that they free themselves from becoming bitter and dragged down by old hurts and grievances. Forgiving and letting go have set them free.

Principle 8: Be Humble

Humility is not having a need to be more than you are.

Identifying with those who fail leads to two behaviors that are huge factors in achieving success:

1. Successful people show kindness, understanding, and help to others who fail.
2. Successful people are not derailed by their own failures; they accept them as a normal part of the process.

Truly successful people are givers. Non-givers end up losing their success. Self-serving success always implodes. Self-centered lives always create self-destructing black holes. Always.

Déjà vu people do two things very well that builds success, fosters good relationships, and encourages learning, growth and wisdom:

1. They admit it quickly when they are wrong.
2. They receive correction and confrontation from others well.

The first quality aids in learning and is always correlated with wisdom. We cannot grow and learn if we cannot admit our mistakes. How can we get better if we do not think anything is wrong? To see our own faults is a key to growing in wisdom and learning how to make things work.

Closely related to admitting our own mistakes is responding constructively when the news of our imperfections comes from others. The way of the déjà vu person is to receive correction as a gift, and not to be defensive.

Principle 9: Upset the Right People

Déjà vu people do not make decisions based on the fear of other people's reactions.

Think of situations where being overly concerned about hurting someone's feelings can cause a person to drag a bad thing on too long:

- Firing a person
- Confronting a person
- Telling a person that he has overstayed his welcome
- Breaking up with a person you're dating

What you should do, and what someone's response is going to be, are two very different issues. And because they are different, déjà vu people do not mix them together. They do what they need to do, and then they figure out the best way to handle the situation with the other person's feelings. But they keep the two issues separated as two different problems.

If you are resetting your course based on the fact that someone might get angry with you, you have chosen a flimsy foundation upon which to make a decision. You have lost control of the situation. That is not what successful people do. They are not held hostage by anger.

Set Your Heading

To be a successful déjà vu person, you may not keep everyone around you happy. You cannot speak the truth, live out good values, and choose your own direction without disappointing some people.

Do not try to avoid upsetting people; just make sure that you are upsetting the right ones. If the kind, loving, responsible, and honest people are upset with you, then you had better look at the choices you are making. But if the controlling, hot and cold, irresponsible, or manipulating people are upset with you, then take courage! That might be a sign you are doing the right thing and becoming a déjà vu person!

Becoming a Déjà vu Person

Growth is a process. Give up your demand to have it all together right now. Whatever you choose to accomplish, you will get it wrong more than once as you move toward your goal. Failure is a part of the process, and no one who ever got there did it without becoming a good loser. Get used to it. A winner is someone who steps out, fails, regroup, and instead of beating himself up, learns the mistake and tries again.

That is a winner is – a good loser. Because good losers – those who learn and try again – become winners in the end. The losers in life either do not lose well, or they avoid losing altogether by not trying in the first place. They avoid losing, and thus they avoid winning as well.