

## For Best Success, You Must Succeed - Part 2

Written by Alex Baer

Saturday, 03 November 2012 17:49

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Money, success -- it all gets tumbled and jumbled around together, mixed together and stirred 'round and 'round. It's little wonder we've lost track of everything that might rightly be beneath any banner called Success. We usually restrict Success to dance a jig on the rusty insignia of a battered money clip.

Maybe this is a Big Step Up for the Species. Hard to tell. We used to invoke Success only on the heads of dead animals we were dragging back to the hearth in the cave.

But, to that law of the jungle: Money is just bloodsport, turned on its side, and gutted alive, while loved ones watch. It's called unrestricted, unregulated, unfettered, unchained, vampire *capitalism*.

If you've got a problem with that, you're in the wrong country, my friend, and you're playing by outmoded rules for success.

Under the current rules, losing can seem almost as bad as winning to some. But, no matter. There's survival to be attended to. It's the law of the jungle, no matter how well disguised. The game must be played. It is still eat or be eaten -- the only improvement is that the game is done with slips of paper, markers, and questionable witch doctors we call bankers.

Those who do poorly at or detest the contest say it is a curse that comes with being alive. Those who excel at it and adore all aspects of the game say it is the only thing really worth living for. One would think the truth must be somewhere near the middle -- but, I have learned to not get my hopes up.

One group -- about one percent -- runs a stranglehold on the country, and one group -- about 47 percent, according to one of the one-percenters -- struggles to get by. The rest are lumped into the limbo of the fearful -- those who believe they still have something left to lose.

George Carlin called it, as he often did: There are those at the top who call the shots, those in the middle who are allowed some small bits of power and wealth -- and then there are those at the very bottom, whose job is to scare the living hell out of those in the middle.

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Yes, the lack of a job -- meaningful or not, one loved or hated -- can play havoc with one's sense of self-worth, especially if one's spirit and brain-box are not tightened down. Even in reasonably hand-snugged individuals, stresses over time can wobble things loose now and again. What can tighten-up someone to torque specs, as suggested in the manual?

In this regard, *money*. How to get some? Well, one can be born with piles of the stuff, or marry into it, one supposes, or fall into an inheritance, out of the blue. Otherwise, short of golden-egged geese or diamond-bearing Neptunians that have taken a real shine to you, one needs to rely on the ancient triumvirate: win, steal, or earn some. Of course, you can always borrow it, and sell off things you already own for some. That's pretty much it.

And when the opportunity to earn some is not available / forthcoming / offered, one calls this state *unemployment* or, as the Brits would say, being made *redundant*. It is difficult to tell which term might be most or least offensive.

- *Unemployed*: □ *Not employed, without work, idle, not being used.*
- *Redundant*: □ *Surplus to requirements, unnecessary, superfluous.*

Which do you prefer? A temporary pass from being revved like hell, just because someone *could*, then used-and-abused by a system that holds capital in far higher regard than people... or being made to feel like you've walked on stage to perform in a role cut long ago, now stranded as a person entirely uncalled for in this world?

There are plenty of human issues present in having no money and no work, ranging from self-esteem and survival, to a sense of loss at being no longer able to participate in a broader world, and on a much more desirable level.

Somewhere, the kernel of that idea got enough heat in my brainpan and popped: Some of this

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country's restless frustrations may be from equivalent lacks of success, belt-tightening, financial embarrassment.

Not just monetary effects and losses, but seemingly emotional ones, too. For example, have you noticed how much the general mood changes during boom times and bust? It's as if the system requires some loosey-goosey, over-and-above *juice* beyond mere dull-normal to operate best.

When booms end and bubbles pop, and things tighten up, everyone starts tightening up and becoming more tense, too -- perhaps fearful for their ability to obtain what is needed for survival. Things that were easily obtained before, but not now.

Recent example? Hurricane Sandy: Fights broke out while people waited in fuel lines. *Poof!* Our civilized veneers quickly wear thin and disappear, like spirit vapors exposed to air. And worse. That's just how it is, in our culture, where competition is king -- things tighten up, and it's not long before that old survival-of-the-fittest reflex triggers and springs.

Governments are not so tightly coiled. They can crank up the printing presses, steer monetary policy around in assorted spirals and circles, move pieces around on the Monopoly board, to some degree.

In many ways, I think our country's people, having been starved by maniacal rule for 8 years by Republicans who all but collapsed and brought down the entire country, driving it miles underground, are showing signs of the lack of anticipated spring-back.

Some damages cannot be quickly repaired, no matter how much hope and change we had this would have been the case. We are slowly coming back, and the wait is painful. We are a nation that's seen an elephant finally rise from the aftermath of a long-crushed couch and move on from the mashed mess. We're left, hopeful and cheering, urging on the cushions to go ahead, hurry up, and spring back from being flattened and squashed for 8 years.

Slow recoveries are not very well welcomed in our country's past, but, these are special times.

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We've never before had such a heartless, heinous, well-hungered crew so thoroughly looting and pillaging the nation's treasure house, squandering its riches and people, nor so vehemently pounding the nation's potential way out into the deathly vacuum of space.

Republicans loaded up the national credit card with two unpaid wars. They slapped on bank bailouts as emergency *defib* treatments -- after refusing to insist Wall Street finally take some strong medicine and rein itself in from its superheated greed party. Then, Republicans "financed" the whole sordid bundle via the miracle of slashed government revenues -- letting wrecking balls loose to play among the already-low tax rates of the obscenely rich.

If this had not happened, we would not now be looking at making massive cuts and gouges in social services -- Republicans' goals from the very beginning, drowning government in a bathtub.

If this had not happened, the Tea Party would likely not have come to be, even though it was sponsored and funded by billionaire sugar daddies looking for cheap bodies to protest on their behalf.

How far back do you want to rewind in any search of American intelligence and the beginning of its downfall by ignorance? How much do we linger, for healthy effect, on realizing how much pain and suffering could have been avoided at home and abroad, had there been no Bush, but a Gore instead, as Number 43?

How about if you imagine crazed right-wing media had not been allowed to flourish by spewing sewage and hate for 25 years -- do you want to go back that far? Or, do you just want to go back where the news media shrugged off its constitutional obligations and realized a bigger profit could be had by being obsessive fluff peddlers, not the People's watchdogs?

Maybe, we should go back to the court decision that held media have no legal obligation to tell the truth, a green light to lie...

It's a difficult game to play, the where-do-you-stop game, trying to spot the point where many

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Americans gave up, and stopped caring about any success outside of immediate gratification and titillation, finally surrendering to ignorance and superstition.

We are all of us suffering our absences of our usual successes. We all know what needs to be done to right the ship of state, yet we see all the wrong things being done instead, forcing it to take on more water and remove sections of the bow and superstructure.

Factions splinter off into clusters of hate and greed, condemning the sense of community that helped us work together and helped make us truly great -- not just in the finished products, but in the making of them as well.

That base glue of business morality is long gone, replaced by steroid-enraged greed in business, and by the seldom-practiced morality of religion in people.

Today, none of us feel heard. Anger is not applied toward specific causes, because causes are not known by many -- nor is there a willingness to learn. Instead, anger fractures along the shortest possible lines: Race, Sex, Age, Religion -- the areas we all thought our Constitution protected.

Frustrations rise daily. Patience shortens. Tensions rise. Fights break out at the gas station. Anywhere could be next. Embarrassments travel in packs, and do not live solitary lives. Successes are the same way. We are feeling the lacks of all our successes.

We feel the lack of success in caring enough about ourselves, each other, and our country to keep trying to find our way back to our greatness lost. We are easily duped, easily led, easily angered at groups and people never part of the problem.

We got busy, we had teevee to watch, we had our apathy to attend to -- so, in the vacuum of interest and involvement from people, we stopped succeeding, stopped trying, and we let the true zombies, the mega-rich puppet-masters, and their handmaidens, all Republicans everywhere, take us over and left them our country as their own to devour.

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We will mark with our votes on Tuesday the continuing score and summaries of all our actions.

The choices could not be more clear: Those who wish to bulldoze us into hell, and those who are fighting a desperate delaying action until enough Americans can succeed again, wake from their comas, and throw off their blind and willful ignorance.

Some signs that the People's comas, and the zombie reign continues? As long as liars gather huge, admiring, appreciative crowds. As long as rude, aggressive, nonsensical babbling is seen as wise, assertive leadership. As long as empty, fact-free plans and promises are quoted as hope. As long as empty suits are seen as being filled with heroes.

*Full circle, breakneck speed, careful of whiplash, now:* Is the infamous fear of failure at work here for me, colliding with my small compliment, at this unexpectedly challenging time and onerous cycle in life ?

Is the infamous fear of failure operating full blast within our borders, and within us all, and after so long a string of stout and solid successes in our history?

Or is it something much more cruel -- a final plunge in our confidence, or interest, or caring to try any longer? Or, is it just distracted discomfort from being forced to occasionally pay attention? Or is it just an unwillingness to acknowledge the country is now in the hands of those strangling her in a long, slow, macabre dance of drawn-out death... Or is it we don't notice -- or that we notice, but refuse to get involved and help?

A terrible horror, all these fears of so-called successes, however we choose to define them -- our fears and our successes, both.

- *Tirade mode:*  *Switched off.*
- *Rant mode:*  *Standing by.*