

For Best Success, You Must Succeed - Part 1

Written by Alex Baer

Friday, 02 November 2012 19:44 - Last Updated Friday, 02 November 2012 19:54

To be successful, *be successful*.

Hmmm. That one almost demands a Homeresque "D'oh!" be parked at the end to spike its inscrutable truth. On second thought, the only thing here that's obvious is that this opening thought's going to take a few more tries to fully flesh out.

Here's Sir Arthur Helps, from 1868: "Nothing succeeds like success." Getting warmer.

All right, with apologies, let's start again. This time, we'll go a few laps 'round the ol' philosophical cul-de-sac. After all, if you're going to contemplate the broader Moneygoround, then gathering one's thoughts aboard a conceptual merry-go-round may prove useful.

Ah -- this one might do it: Success feeds on itself, gathering more success as it rolls down success-covered hillsides, like a snowball increasing its size, collecting more and more snow around itself.

OK, one more time: After a bit more polish and elbow grease, the central thought final emerges: The more success one has experienced, the more likely it is that added successes will arrive, and continue to do so with increasing ease.

Success brings abundant confidence -- a secure (but ultimately false) sense that wins will continue to arrive in sequence, metered in neat packets of progression, like waves lapping onshore -- equally spaced and watery metronomes, marking each measure.

It's easy to not give *head-room* to such questions or qualities until -- like most things in life -- they are gone.

Trust me on this one: I do not go looking for such thoughts. They find me, plopping themselves

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down at my feet for consideration, entangling feet and ankles like frisky cats or puppies until noticed, and a response is finally provoked.

Such thoughts are not good or bad, just some clinging flotsam and jetsam along the route of travel in the waters of life: They just are. If you were to listen, you might hear the cold and uncaring universe remark on each newly-coiled brain tangle, "Do with these as you will. It's not as if I did any of this intentionally to anyone, one way or another."

Sometimes, in the surf, a long tail of rubbery kelp will find you and attempt, in the wave action, to become close and intimate friends. Like the puppies and cats on shore playing with passing feet, the kelp winds around you until noticed and a response is provoked, one way or another.

It's possible such reflections are seasonal, wafting around, carried along on the coattails of cider's scent, and the sight of jack-o'-lanterns on porches and stoops. The lumpy, pretend-bumptious Orange Grinners are trying hard to go back into the ground from whence they'd sprung.

There's nothing like taking close note of a carved pumpkin turning into slow-motion mush, collapsing in on itself bit by bit, to provide oneself with a gut-level lecture on the nature of permanence.

Entertaining such notions in your noggin inevitably encompasses loss and the inevitability of time. If you're going to mull over such things, it's best to do so with warm, mulled cider helped along by a *wee bit of the creature*.

Such heady contemplations are also open invitations for the mind to kick around whatever fleeting victory or glory has been yanked from the seemingly-random jaws of defeat, thereby being converted into passing success.

As I say, it's just the season: the cool and crisp of autumn, and leaves turning color, then falling, drying, adding to a walk's crackle and rattle underfoot. Whatever harvest has been managed is now done, and, smoothed with fresh memories of summer, the jagged edges of

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realization crop up: It is nearly time to turn one's face into the hard head winds and work of winter.

It's an ungainly, unwelcoming time of year to be voting, although likely best for most for a host of reasons. It is a time of pause in the year, quick breaths snuck in between blows, if you like. Travel and mobility are usually still easy and snow-free. Our agrarian chores, from which seeds we are ourselves long ago sprung, are completed. The season of indoor pastimes comes around once more, and some comfort is gained by candlelight.

If we are lucky, there is time to sit back and reap the rewards of the hard work of spring and summer. If we are not so fortunate, we are left to ponder the absence of those same rewards and successes.

All of which turns out to be quite a long preface for a few remaining thoughts up ahead. Thank you for trustingly tagging along this far on a trip not well rewarded. I will try to start.

You see, I recently received a nice compliment for something I had done. It was very kindly offered, but was received as a surprisingly odd fit somehow. That got me wondering why a fine, first-rate compliment would be received about as well as news of a ticket in steerage aboard an ocean-crossing luxury craft.

No, that's not quite right. More like being offered a soft cashmere scarf, but finding it about as comfortable as old-fashioned, itchy, long-woolen-underwear. Something was not right. More puzzling still, was it possible that whatever was preoccupying me might also be bothering the country?

(Nothing like attributing the nation's mood to one's own, for some sense of self, one might chuckle, self-deprecatingly.)

The key was in this kernel of an idea sown in the word *Success*.

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For my own part, I had received a compliment -- an expressed confirmation and appreciation, one might say, for having succeeded in some way. The idea was teased out further, and a discovery was reconfirmed: There had not been a great number of successes lately.

Here, as both humor relief and complete honesty, this is now said: I do not intend to drag out the Heartstrings Philharmonic Orchestra to tug at you -- nor drag out even so much as a solo violinist or cellist. But, yes, simply stated as a summation of reality, and nothing more, it *has* been some time between successes here.

The attendant embarrassments have been numerous, and have often felt not just a rank or two deep, but many legions. Sometimes, seen another way, that yard of water in the ocean -- if it is that slight -- seems many leagues deep. It is the opposite of success, that feeling. But, what, exactly, *is* that?

The opposite of success, I have been recently reminded by my reading, is not failure. The opposite of success is doing nothing -- no longer trying.

That explanation was instantly rejected as wistful, well-intentioned, new-age doggerel and helpful-seeming mumbo jumbo. In a few moments, though, I was a sheepish dumbo again, seeing and interpreting more broadly than I had at first.

The answer, without word tricks, was my defining "success" as the world normally does: *victory and glory involving riches and rewards*.

Once the field of view angles out, success can again become many things. All well and good.

But here, in this country, in this era, in these times, the measures are much more immediate and base: in short, *money*. Where some people are magical generators of money, creating baled packets of banded hundred-dollar bills by merely rolling over in their sleep, others of us have no such talents, pursue other interests, and, in doing so, are often caught short by the reality of our own microscopic toehold with money.

I am much closer to Maslow's Bargain Basement in bodily needs, but try to maintain a

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Self-Actualized Penthouse apartment at the very top. The stretch, as you might expect, is always jarring, and my elasticity is not that good.

And, as it is not likely I will snap ahead and vault to the top, ahead of the pack and one step ahead of the competition, perhaps I should prepare to snap back to the bottom, crash, and stay crashed.

It's an option. Just not much of one.

Moneygoround: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lola_Versus_Powerman_and_the_Moneygoround,_Part_One

Success: <http://kimandjason.com/blog/2009-07-30/the-opposite-of-success-is-not-what-you-think.html>