



# It's Your Choice

**Success is not about waiting** for the big moments. It's about making small, positive choices every day.

{ BY DARREN HARDY }

We all come into this world the same: naked, scared and ignorant. After that grand entrance, the life we end up with is simply an accumulation of all the choices we make. Our choices can be our best friend or our worst enemy. They can deliver us to our goals or send us orbiting into a galaxy far, far away.

Think about it. Everything in your life exists because you first made a choice about

day, to say I love you or not. Every choice has an impact on the Compound Effect of your life.

This article is about becoming aware of and making choices that support the expansion of your life. Sounds complicated, but you'll be amazed by its simplicity. No longer will 99 percent of your choices be unconscious. No more will most of your daily routines and traditions come as a reaction to your

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something. Choices are at the root of every one of your results. Each choice starts a behavior that over time becomes a habit. Choose poorly, and you just might find yourself back at the drawing board, forced to make new, often harder choices. Don't choose at all, and you've made the choice to be the passive receiver of whatever comes your way.

In essence, you make your choices, and then your choices make you. Every decision, no matter how slight, alters the trajectory of your life—whether or not to go to college, who to marry, to indulge in gossip or stay silent, to make one more prospecting call or call it a

programming. You'll ask yourself (and be able to answer), "How many of my behaviors have I not 'voted on'? What am I doing that I didn't consciously choose to do, yet continue to do every day?"

By employing the same commonsense strategies I've used to catapult my own life and career, strengthened by the Compound Effect, you'll be able to loosen the mysterious grip of the things that are unwinding your life and pulling you in the wrong direction. You'll experience the ease of making decisions that lead to behaviors and habits that support you, every time.

Your biggest challenge isn't that you've intentionally been making bad choices. Your



biggest challenge is that you've been sleepwalking through your choices. Half the time, you're not even aware you're making them! Our choices are often shaped by our culture and upbringing. They can be so entwined in our routine behaviors and habits that they seem beyond our control. For instance, have you ever been going about your business, enjoying your life, when all of sudden you made a stupid choice or series of small choices

was 18 when I was introduced to the idea of personal responsibility at a seminar, and the concept completely transformed my life. In that seminar, the speaker asked, "What percentage of shared responsibility do you have in making a relationship work?" I was a teenager, so wise in the ways of true love. Of course I had all the answers.

"Fifty/Fifty!" I blurted out. It was so obvious; both people must be willing to

the relationship work will it work. Otherwise, a relationship left to chance will always be vulnerable to disaster."

Whoa. This wasn't what I was expecting! But I quickly understood how this concept could transform every area of my life. If I always took 100 percent responsibility for everything I experienced—completely owning all of my choices and all the ways I responded to whatever happened to me—I held the power.

Everything was up to me. I was responsible for everything I did or didn't do, or how I responded to what was done to me.

I know you think you take responsibility for your life. I've yet to ask anybody who doesn't say, "Of course, I take responsibility for my life." But then you look at how most people operate in the world; there's a lot of finger pointing, victimhood, blaming, and expecting someone else or the government to solve their problems. If you've ever blamed traffic for being late, or decided you are in a bad mood because of something your kid, spouse, or co-worker did, you're not taking



that ultimately sabotaged your hard work and momentum, all for no apparent reason? You didn't intend to sabotage yourself, but by not thinking about your decisions—weighing the risks and potential outcomes—you found yourself facing unintended consequences. Nobody intends to become obese, go through bankruptcy, or get a divorce, but often (if not always) those consequences are the result of a series of small, poor choices.

### **Owning 100 Percent**

We are all self-made men and women, but only the successful take credit for it. I

share the responsibility evenly or someone's getting ripped off.

"Fifty-one/forty-nine," yelled someone else, arguing that you'd have to be willing to do more than the other person. Aren't relationships built on self-sacrifice and generosity?

"Eighty/twenty," yelled another.

The instructor turned to the easel and wrote "100/0" on the paper in big black letters. "You have to be willing to give 100 percent with zero expectation of receiving anything in return," he said. "Only when you're willing to take 100 percent responsibility for making

100 percent personal responsibility.

You alone are responsible for what you do or don't do, or how you respond to what's done to you. This empowering mindset revolutionized my life. Luck, circumstances, or the right situation wasn't what mattered. If it was to be, it was up to me. I was free to fly. No matter who was elected president, how badly the economy tanked, or what anybody said, did, or didn't do, I was still 100 percent in control of me. Through choosing to be officially liberated from past, present and future victimhood, I'd hit the jackpot. I had the unlimited power to control my destiny.



## Getting Lucky

Maybe you believe you're simply unlucky. But really, that's just another excuse. The difference between becoming fabulously rich, happy and healthy, or broke, depressed and unhealthy, is the choices you make throughout life. Nothing else will make the difference. Here's the thing about luck: We're all lucky. If you are on the right side of the dirt, have your health, and a little food in your cupboard, you are incredibly lucky. Everyone has the opportunity to be "lucky," because beyond having the basics of health and sustenance, luck simply comes down to a series of choices.

When I asked Richard Branson if he felt luck played a part in his success, he answered, "Yes, of course, we are all lucky. If you live in a free society, you are lucky. Luck surrounds us every day; we are constantly having lucky things happen to us, whether you recognize it or not. I have not been any more lucky or unlucky than anyone else. The difference is when luck came my way, I took advantage of it."

Ah, spoken like a man knighted with wisdom. While we're on the topic, it's my belief that the old adage we often hear—"Luck is when opportunity meets preparation"—isn't enough. I believe there are two other critical components to "luck."



## The (Complete) Formula for Getting Lucky:

**PREPARATION** (personal growth) +  
**ATTITUDE** (belief/mindset) +  
**OPPORTUNITY** (a good thing coming your way) +  
**ACTION** (doing something about it)  
**= LUCK**

**Preparation:** By consistently improving and preparing yourself—your skills, knowledge, expertise, relationships and resources—you have the wherewithal to take advantage of great opportunities when they arise (when luck "strikes").

**Attitude:** This is where luck evades most people, and where Sir Richard is spot on

**Action:** This is where you come in. However this luck was delivered to you—from the universe, God, the Lucky Charms leprechaun, or whomever or whatever you associate delivering your good fortune—it's now your job to act on it. This is what separates the Richard Bransons from the Joseph Wallingtons. Joseph who? Exactly. You've never heard of him. That's because he failed to take action on all the lucky things that happened to him.

So no more whining about the cards you were dealt, the great defeats you suffered, or any other circumstances. Countless people have more disadvantages and greater obstacles than you, and yet they're wealthier and more fulfilled. Luck is an equal-opportunity

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with his belief that luck is all around us. It's simply a matter of seeing situations, conversations and circumstances as fortuitous. You cannot see what you don't look for, and you cannot look for what you don't believe in.

**Opportunity:** It's possible to make your own luck, but the luck I'm talking about here isn't planned for, or it comes faster or differently than expected. In this stage of the formula, luck isn't forced. It's a natural occurrence, and it often shows up seemingly of its own accord.

distributor. Lady luck shines on all, but rather than having your umbrella drawn, you've got to have your face to the sky. When it comes down to it, it's all you, baby. There's no other way around it.

## Your Secret Weapon—Your Scorecard

I'm about to walk you through one of the single greatest strategies I've ever used in my personal development. This strategy helps me take control of the choices I make throughout the day, causing everything else to fall into place, and leading to behaviors and actions that shepherd my habits into line like dutiful, loyal minions.

Right this moment: Pick an area of your life where you most want to be successful. Do you want more money in the bank? A trimmer waistline? The strength to compete in an Iron Man event? A better relationship with your spouse or kids? Picture where you are in that

area, right now. Now picture where you want to be: richer, thinner, happier, you name it. The first step toward change is awareness. If you want to get from where you are to where you want to be, you have to start by becoming

write it all down. Every day. Without fail. No excuses, no exceptions.

Doesn't sound like much, I know—writing things down on a little piece of paper. But tracking my progress and missteps is one of the reasons I've accumulated the success I have. The process forces you to be conscious of your decisions. But as Jim Rohn would say, "What's

aren't doing it now, right? How do I know? Because your life isn't working as successfully as you'd like. You've gotten derailed. Tracking is the way to get it back on track.

Do you know how the casinos make so much money in Vegas? Because they track every table, every winner, every hour. Why do Olympic trainers get paid top dollar? Because



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aware of the choices that lead you away from your desired destination. Become very conscious of every choice you make today so you can begin to make smarter choices moving forward.

To help you become aware of your choices, I want you to track every action that relates to the area of your life you want to improve. If you've decided you want to get out of debt, you're going to track every penny you pull from your pocket. If you've decided you want to lose weight, you're going to track everything you put into your mouth. If you've decided to train for an athletic event, you're going to track every step you take, every workout you do. Simply carry around a small notebook, something you'll keep in your pocket or purse at all times, and a writing implement. You're going to

simple to do is also simple not to do." The magic is not in the complexity of the task; the magic is in the doing of simple things repeatedly and long enough to ignite the miracle of the Compound Effect. So, beware of neglecting the simple things that make the big things in your life possible. The biggest difference between successful people and unsuccessful people is that successful people are willing to do what unsuccessful people are not.

Remember that; it will come in handy many times throughout life when faced with a difficult, tedious or tough choice.

You may have heard about tracking before. In fact, you've probably done your own version of this exercise. But I also bet you

they track every workout, every calorie, and every micronutrient for their athletes. All winners are trackers. I want you to track your life with the same intention: to bring your goals within sight. **SH**

*Darren Hardy is the publisher of SUCCESS magazine and has been a leader in the personal-development industry for 16 years. He has mentored thousands of entrepreneurs, advised many large corporations, and served on the board of several companies and nonprofit organizations, and is committed to helping others achieve their potential in order to live richer, more fulfilling lives. He is a product of the principles he reveals in his latest book, The Compound Effect.*

