

SUMMARY OUTWITTING THE DEVIL

NAPOLEON HILL



Summary of “Outwitting the Devil” by Napoleon Hill

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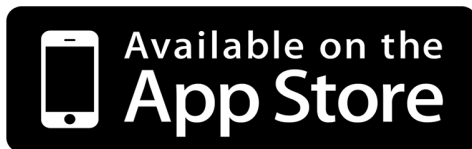


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Introduction

What do you consider to be timeless? Maybe it's something tangible, like the classic taste of Coca-Cola or the vintage beauty of black and white photographs, which we still consider to be classy. But the power of the written word is perhaps one of the most timeless things of all. An idea can live forever once we write it down. It can transcend time and culture to change the lives of generation after generation. And that's exactly the case with the ideology of Napoleon Hill. Although his self-help book, *Outwitting the Devil*, was written in 1938, it wasn't published until 2011. That's because some of Hill's ideas made folks in his Great Depression-era community a little uncomfortable and because they thought censorship was a good idea.

However, in the interest of promoting free speech and the free circulation of ideas, Hill's thoughts have now come to light in the modern day and we're free to read and learn from them, to decide for ourselves whether or not we agree. And because the advice contained in this summary centers around the power of positive thinking and the importance of surrounding yourself with good influences, most contemporary readers will enjoy what Hill has to say.

Fear Over Faith Causes Failure

What do you consider to be the leading motivation in your life? Are you inspired to push boundaries and discover what you can accomplish? Or are you often gripped by fear, afraid to venture out because of the potential risks? If the latter describes you, you're not alone; Hill postulates that 98% of people allow themselves to be controlled by fear. And he also asserts that it's the most destructive habit you can have. That's because fear causes us to drift through life, controlled by our worries instead of taking control of our own futures. Fear also stunts intellectual growth because it cuts off our desire for exploration and prevents us from pursuing critical thought.

Hill also argues that fear is institutionalized and instilled in people from an early age by organizations we associate with having power and authority. Churches, for example, teach children to fear "the Devil" and live conservative lives out of fear of displeasing God. Schools likewise instill fear by teaching students to define their self-worth and intelligence through memorizing a series of formulas and facts. Because children are afraid of not measuring up to their teachers' standards or of being considered "wrong" and "stupid," they come to fear getting the wrong answer. This too inhibits learning and growth, for Hill argues that education should exist to facilitate exploration and knowledge rather than depositing a load of formulas in students' heads.

Hill observed the power of these fears firsthand as he pursued his own goal: the creation of the first philosophy of individual achievement. As an amateur sociologist and philosopher, Hill wanted to observe people and understand their perspectives on the psychology of success and failure. And as he conducted his interviews, he concluded that people were afraid of individuality and hesitant to pursue personal goals. However, he lacked a concrete conclusion or commonality to fuse his findings together and formulate a singular, solid philosophy. Deciding that connecting with nature would help him combat this problem, Hill took a long walk outside, engaging with the scenery around him while he turned the problem over

and over in his mind. And as he contemplated, he experienced an epiphany, a moment of clarity so sharp that it almost felt as if another voice was speaking from inside him, piercing through the fog and frustration of his own mind.

This inner voice pointed out the obvious solution which had evaded him all along: to form a philosophy about individual achievement, he had to break through the fear that was holding him back! Hill recognized the validity of this insight and realized that he was more afraid than he'd admitted to himself; his own fear of failing to get the philosophy right was keeping him from coming up with it! And as he put this inner voice's advice into action, Hill came to the conclusion that we all possess a voice just like it, or what he calls "an Inner Intelligence." This Inner Intelligence is an infinite well of self-belief and positivity which we can draw from throughout our entire lives. However, fear and self-doubt prevent us from accessing it.

So, when we push negative self-talk aside and drink from the well of our Inner Intelligence, we can find the strength and motivation to accomplish our goals. That's exactly what Hill did following his epiphany and it enabled him to become the father of the self-help genre! Self-help books have since gone on to captivate and enrich the lives of millions of readers for generations and Hill's work has done the same.

Get What You Want Out of Life

What do you want from your life? Do you want to be successful? Happy? Famous? Most of us have aspirations very similar to these and the problem is that they're all very generic. "Be happy" could imply everything and nothing; nowhere in this goal do we find a set of actionable steps which lead us to that end goal of being happy. However, if you know your purpose in life or the thing which would bring you the most fulfillment, you can formulate a series of realistic steps you can take to making that happen.

Hill theorized that specificity makes all the difference in success. Because he had a highly specific goal in mind-- to invent a new school of thought and write a book outlining his findings-- he was able to clearly identify the steps he needed to take to accomplish it. So, if you want to get the most out of your life, Hill asserts that the first step is identifying a life goal. He believes that everyone has a purpose for their life; it's simply a matter of finding it on your own. The qualifier "on your own" is especially crucial to Hill, for he argues that the church can't help you find your purpose, and neither can your school or your family and friends. It's vital that you identify your purpose on your own so that it can be uniquely yours.

That ability to choose for ourselves-- or, as Hill terms it, to be "self-determining"-- is one of humanity's greatest gifts. And because we have the privilege to make our own decisions, Hill advocates that we should never waste it, even when it comes to the most minute elements. We get to choose whether to fill our minds with positive or negative thoughts. We choose what we think about. We choose the people we allow to influence us. So, if we have that unlimited freedom of choice, why would we ever waste it on toxic decisions? Hill felt this was especially critical to keep in mind during a time of national crisis like the Great Depression. During a time when everyone was giving hope, the choice to give in to negativity might have seemed unavoidable. But Hill felt that people like Henry Ford were proof of the power of positive thinking.

Instead of succumbing to fear like so many of those around him, Ford persevered in his goal of developing one of the biggest automobile companies in America. Although his circumstances couldn't have been worse, Ford proved that circumstances don't define you; instead, your success is characterized by your determination and positivity. And through his refusal to give up and his insistence on remaining positive, Ford created the first system of assembly-line manufacturing and achieved his goal of producing a high-quality car that every middle-class American could afford to buy. So, in short, if Hill and Ford could accomplish their goals through sheer determination and self-belief, you can do the same!

You Are What You Do

We've all heard the saying, "You are what you eat," but what about the choices you make? What about the people with whom we surround ourselves? We often fail to calculate the full impact of our choices, and yet every choice we make-- every time we privilege one decision over something else-- we're writing both our future and our present. While it's always true that, no matter what bad choices we make, we can reclaim our lives and start again, for better or worse, the choices we make have an unarguable impact on the people we become.

That's especially true when our choices become habits. After all, a habit is the only distinction between someone who tried recreational drugs in college once and someone whose life is dictated by their next fix. Hill calls the formulation of toxic habits "hypnotic rhythm" or a fixed engagement with behaviors that we do over and over again. And because toxic habits can have fatal consequences for our success, Hill implores his readers to make their choices with care, even in the areas we might think are no big deal. For example, eating a Whopper Meal isn't going to kill us or make us a bad person. But eating a Whopper three times a day will destroy our health and make us so sluggish, we can't accomplish our goals no matter how much we want to.

Likewise, the people with whom we surround ourselves have an equally significant impact. We may not think about our friends' influence on our lives, but just take a look at the people with whom you spend most of your time and think about how your life has changed as a result. Do you have healthier habits now because one of your friends encouraged you to improve in some way? Did you read a good book because a friend recommended it? Or do you find yourself being dragged down by the toxic attitudes and habits of your friends? If you feel heavy because your best friend complains you to constantly without ever asking about you, if you stay out all night drinking because your friends pressured you into it, or you

find yourself ignoring healthy habits as a result of peer pressure, it might be time to re-evaluate your circle of friends.

Successful People Learn From Failure

If we chose the route that was most comfortable for us, we'd probably opt to win all the time, wouldn't we? We would never be passed up for that great promotion or lose the race or be rejected when we ask our crush out on a date. That's because failure is never fun and no one ever says, "Ooh, I'd rather lose!" But if each of us got our own way all the time, we wouldn't learn very much or find many opportunities to grow. Because although it isn't pleasant, we need failure. We need the lessons it teaches us. And Hill suggests that the most successful people are the ones who realize that.

By opening ourselves up to failure and learning to handle rejection well, we embrace the opportunity to learn from our mistakes and grow into our most successful selves. After all, that's what Thomas Edison did! Today celebrated as the brilliant inventor of the lightbulb, the phonograph, and a wide array of other inventions that revolutionized the future of technology, Edison went through dozens of failures before he ever generated a successful prototype for any of his inventions. So, if he failed so many times, why do we think he's so clever? Hill suggests that it's because he had a great idea he never gave up on. There might have been a smarter inventor out there who could have done it just as well... but maybe that person gave up. However, because Edison persisted in the face of innumerable setbacks, he is universally admired. And, according to Hill's philosophy, the same can be true for each of us!

He discovered this firsthand in 1937 when he published his book entitled *Think and Grow Rich*. Inviting readers to peer into a bright future beyond the Great Depression, Hill's text inspired readers to embrace the power of positive thinking and work to make their success a reality. And, much like the truths contained in *Outwitting the Devil*, the advice of this book holds true today. In fact, to this day, *Think and Grow Rich* remains on the list of the top ten self-help books of all time! So, as you consider Hill's success, don't forget to consider what you too could accomplish if you used your failures as launch-pads for new opportunities.

Hill also advocates remembering that any failure you ever experience could be the seed that grows into your success. Although it might seem like a tragedy at the time, you have no idea what could blossom from that temporary failure. That's what Julie Krone learned in 1987. After repeated rejection and the constant assertion that she could never be a professional jockey because no horse owners would want a female jockey, Krone became the first woman in American history to win a riding title at a major racetrack. And it's all because of her motto, "Keep showing up!" Because despite overwhelming rejection, Krone kept showing up at the track every day for years until finally, the horse owners let her ride. Following that initial victory, she did go on to become a professional jockey and was even inducted into the National Racing Hall of Fame, along with being listed as one of USA Today's "toughest athletes in history."

It all goes to show what can be accomplished if you hold onto your dream and refuse to be told that it can't be done!

Final Summary

We all have fears. Whether they're introduced by our own self-doubt or the teachings of others, each of us has our own devil to outwit. But we don't have to let that devil win. No matter what desolate circumstances characterize our situation, no matter what struggles we face, we are gifted with the ability to be self-determining and we can choose the thoughts and habits we allow to control our lives.



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