



The number one factor associated with success is this: Do not give up

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A lot of us have heard this phrase. Some of us agree with it. Most of us have no idea what it means to not give up. We think that if we persist a few times and something doesn't work out then it means we need to forget about it. This is one of the reasons why I recommend people read biographies and autobiographies of successful people. Until you know quite a lot about the history of someone you have no idea what it took for them to succeed. And when you do know quite a lot about them you will be astounded at the tenacity of human beings. The human spirit and ability to overcome adversity is quite remarkable. If these were not true stories, we probably wouldn't even believe them. To be successful you do not need to be born rich, or be born to a successful family, or even be privileged. There are many people born in poverty, who suffer adverse circumstances and trauma while growing up, who have succeeded remarkably. It's not about your background. It's about your behaviour. You just need to keep on going.

One of my favourite real life stories is that of Wilma Rudolph. You can read up more about her life story on the internet in many places. Her story is inspiring and testament to what human beings can achieve when they are determined to accomplish something.

Wilma Rudolph was an American sprinter born in 1940. In the 1960 Summer Olympics she won gold medals in the 100m, 200m and 4x100 m relay, becoming the first American woman to win three gold medals in a single Olympic Games. That is an amazing feat. We, quite rightly, laud people who reach such heights of success. Most of us, no matter how healthy we are, could never achieve that. For anyone that is an incredible achievement. And then if you read her story, you will realise even more just how great that achievement was.

She was born on the 23 June 1940. She was born prematurely weighing in at 2 kg. She was born black in the deep South of the USA, before the Civil Rights Movement, in poor circumstances. Segregation was rife, as was poverty, for black families. Her father was a railway porter and her mother worked as a maid. Wilma Rudolph had pneumonia and scarlet fever as a child and by the age of 5 contracted infantile paralysis caused by the polio virus. She recovered from polio but lost her strength in her left foot and leg. Until the age of 12 she wore a brace and was unable to walk properly. Because she was black she was not allowed to attend most of the

nearby hospitals and had to seek treatment about 80 km from home. For two years she and her mother made weekly bus trips of 80 km for treatment for her to regain the use of her weakened leg. She also had at-home treatments daily from family members and wore an orthopaedic shoe for support of her foot for another two years.

As a result of the commitment to the treatment, by the time she was 12 years old she was able to walk without a leg brace and orthopaedic shoe and went on to participate in sports. At school she excelled in basketball and track. While playing for her high school basketball team she was spotted by a college track and field coach who went on to coach her through high school and university in athletics. She tried out for the 1956 Summer Olympics as a teenager, and made the team bringing back a bronze medal in the 4 x 100 m relay. 1960 was her year. That year she made the USA team for the 1960 Summer Olympic games and won three gold medals in the sprint events: the 100 metres sprint, the 200 metres sprint, and the 4x100 m sprint relay. It was the first time any American women had won 3 gold medals at a single Olympic Games. She went from growing up with a weakened leg and foot to earning the title of the fastest woman in the world in 1960.

She competed in the US Track and Field events in 1961 – 1962 and then retired from competition. She continued her studies at Tennessee State University and received a Bachelors degree in education. After her graduation she worked as an elementary school teacher and high school track and basketball coach, and continued to work for Civil Rights. In 1977 she published her autobiography, *Wilma: The Story of Wilma Rudolph*. In 1981 she founded the Wilma Rudolph Foundation, a non-profit organisation helping young athletes.

If you are someone who follows the lives of successful people then you will realise her story, although quite amazing, is not that unusual. Many, many successful people have trod a difficult and even treacherous path to get to where they did. The idea that if this was meant to be, it will be easy, is clearly a fallacy. Nothing in life is easy. Life tests you. If you really want to achieve something or attain some goal, then you have to keep going, when its easy, when it is tough, and when it seems almost impossible.