



## Seven Life Skills to help you get ahead

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The year is still relatively new, so there is plenty of time to learn and put into practice new skills. Below are seven core skills that almost anyone can learn, and which are associated with success in life. And by success I don't just mean career or business success. I mean success in relationships, in your finances, in your social life, and in your health. As you read through each skill, I want you to rate yourself on a scale of 0 – 10 where 0 means I have no skill in this area and 10 means I am brilliant at this skill. Most people are not going to be a ten because we are all human, and when you read through the skills, if you are strong in this area, you probably are not 100% consistent all the time.

The seven skills are:

1. **The ability to master your thoughts.** This is first on the list because how you think and what you think determines your life. Your thoughts influence how you feel. If you are feeling sad it is because you are thinking a thought that makes you sad. If you feel joy then you are thinking something that makes you feel joyful. Our thoughts also influence our actions. How you think influences how you will act. And then the really key part to this all is – you can choose what to think. Although thoughts tend to be automatic for most of us, it is quite possible to consciously choose what we want to think. You can think of yourself as successful. You can think of yourself as someone who can get ahead in life. You can think of yourself as someone who will overcome whatever is in their way. This paves the way for taking actions in alignment with your thoughts.
2. **The ability to persist.** Life is hard. Very hard. No matter how well you plan and prepare for any eventuality something will come along and turn things upside down. The road is not easy. For anyone. If it looks easy, then someone has left out all the hard bits in their story. You simply have to keep going. It will get hard. Then it will get very hard. And throughout all this you need to persist.
3. **The ability to manage time effectively.** Instead of calling this topic time management, some people use the term self-management. We all get the same number of hours in a day. We differ in how effectively we use that time. If you are procrastinating, wasting time

in other ways, not finishing tasks on time, or getting little done during the day, it is worth looking into time management courses. Many techniques are available to manage time. When you know them and apply them, you can save a lot of extra time for yourself to relax or participate in hobbies, or do something else you want to.

4. **The ability to persuade and sell.** A lot of people, unless they are in direct sales roles, believe they don't sell. However, we all sell. Most of the time in fact. If you have a job you had to sell yourself to get the job. If you have clients or customers then the only reason you have them is because they bought what you were selling. If you are persuading your kids to keep their rooms tidy and pick up after themselves, you are persuading, which means getting people to buy what you are saying. If you say you don't need to sell then you are not understanding life. In life, we all, on many occasions, have to sell our services and our ideas, and if you are good at it, you will have a more successful – and yes – a happier life.
5. **The ability to manage your emotions.** This is a tricky one. And in fact managing emotions is hard – especially as most of us have not been brought up knowing how to deal with them. Most of us are at the mercy of our emotions. They get us to do things we don't want to do – whether that be acting emotionally at inappropriate times, or letting our emotions derail us in the achievement of our goals. Managing your emotions means knowing what you feel and being able to express feelings appropriately. It also means not letting your emotions get in the way of your objectives you want to achieve. Many people need some help with learning how to do both of these. Emotional intelligence is a very important factor in getting ahead in life as an adult.
6. **The ability to ask for help.** You simply are not going to do life well if you think you know how to do it all on your own. Companies have boards of directors for a reason. No one can know it all. And it is foolish to think you can. You want to be comfortable asking for help, and you want to have the right people around you who can help you effectively.
7. **The ability to reflect.** When I am working with people to change habits, one of the tools is to reflect at the end of the day on your progress. Most of our behaviour (as well as our thoughts) are automatic. We have learned them well to the extent that we don't even have to think about it. We just go about our day. They are automatic because we do the same things day in and day out. As we repeat activities, so the neural pathways that produce that end result get thicker, the habit gets stronger, and we engage in the behaviour without thinking. If you want to change the behaviour you need to become conscious of it. And that is hard unless you take time to reflect during the day and at the end of the day on how well you are doing in terms of making the changes. Any form of self-growth requires the ability to reflect. You can reflect on your actions during the day and evaluate how helpful they were. You can reflect on your mindset and thoughts during the day and evaluate them as to their usefulness. The practice of reflecting on the day and our actions and thinking and the results of our actions and thinking allow us to identify what works and what doesn't, and consequently to replace unhelpful thoughts and behaviour with helpful ones.

If you did the exercise in the introduction, you will have an idea of what you are strong at, and where you fall short. Select a few areas you want to work on. Even one area is fine. If you work on one objective that is still one more than you would have if you did nothing. You don't have to shoot the

lights out every time. Small steps are often better. The most important thing is that you are going to consciously think about the skill daily and put it into practice. And by doing so repeatedly and consistently, you will eventually make the skill something you do automatically.

And then you reap the rewards.