

7-Day Plan for Developing Your Potential

If I were to wish for anything, I should not wish for wealth and power, but for the passionate sense of potential—for the eye which, ever young and ardent, sees the possible. Pleasure disappoints; possibility never. -- Søren Kierkegaard, Philosopher

Do you look for what is possible? Do you know you have it in you to reach important goals but you're just not sure how to do it? After this 7-Day Plan, you will understand what it takes to achieve your potential and then continue to find new goals for which to strive. This 7-Day Plan is practical, fun and straight to the point—because life is complex enough as it is. Let's get started!

What is Your Potential?

What exactly is your potential? It's that *possibility* that dangles in front of us like the proverbial carrot. For purposes of this plan, it's a hard-earned goal you aim to achieve to reach your potential. Potential can be anything—it can be a business, career, humanitarian or personal goal you want to achieve. You may have many, or you may have one big one.

We all have wistful, fantasy goals, such as “I want to win the lottery and never work again,” or “I want to lose 100 pounds and become a famous actor.” Let's look at those. The lottery win is not really a goal but wishful thinking, and aside from buying a lottery ticket, you have no control in achieving it. The idea of losing weight to become a famous actress is definitely an aggressive goal. Is it achievable?

Before you etch that goal into stone, think about why you want to reach it. You probably need to break it up into at least three parts to really analyze it.

Why do you want to lose 100 pounds? To become healthier? Feel better and more energetic? To be more attractive? Or, do you have this goal solely because you believe only skinny people become famous actors?

Why do you want to be an actor? To exhibit your inborn talent? To hear the applause for a good performance? Or, do you think by becoming an actor, you make lots of money and never have to worry about paying bills.

Why do you want to be famous? To get everyone's attention? To make even more money? To make everyone envious? Or, do you think being famous will prove to everyone how important you are?

Yes, any of these goals can be achieved, but only if you are highly passionate and excited about those goals. And, once you break it down, you realize it was one of those daydreams that haunt you when you are bored at work. You don't really want to act. You would like to lose weight and be rich and famous, but are those what you really want? What's the bottom line?

As we have just demonstrated, it is necessary to put some order into reaching your potential. You may need to break down some big complex goals to identify what you really want. You also need to put enough order in your life to create time to achieve your goals and reach your potential.

In today's materialistic society, your potential is often defined as how much money you can make at something. However, when people really define success in their own lives, it doesn't revolve around a monetary amount, but rather what that money might allow them to do, such as keep their family comfortable, meet all their debts or have ample opportunities for leisure and fun. In some cases, money isn't the primary goal at all; it's the need to create, provide for others and use your experience and talents in a project you believe in.

For example, you could be a mother who wants to spend energy, resources and time on home-schooling your children. So, your potential can be to learn how to become exceptionally equipped to do this effectively.

Keep in mind that potential evolves and gains momentum. One goal may lead to another, or become two or more goals, or change completely. So, while focus is important, don't have tunnel-vision on one major goal to the detriment of living your life and discovering other goals. Remember, John Lennon's insightful quote: "Life is what happens when you're making other plans."

Be open minded as the road of life unwinds ahead. For instance, the mother wanting to home-school her children may end up doing this so well that it evolves to other levels she didn't anticipate at the start, e.g., to start writing books on home-schooling, running workshop sessions or setting up a website to share her success stories and train other mothers. So, don't box yourself in—be flexible and adaptable to how your potential may map out.

Three Fundamental Truths

First things first. Achieving your potential isn't easy—or we would all have everything we want. Let's lay down some crucial foundations to reaching potential. Following are three simple but powerful fundamental truths that will help you reach your goals and avoid the pitfalls that can self-sabotage your potential.

Truth Number One: Don't aim for perfection.

In your potential pursuit, you will make mistakes—some small, some costly and some may even be devastating. Truth number one: Don't aim for perfection or let mistakes stop you in your tracks. Learn from your errors, make amends and move on. A failure is part of the journey. Dust yourself off like a strong, peak performer soldier, rise up strong and try again. Striving to meet your potential means taking experimental steps, finding the ones that work and pushing ahead.

"The idea of perfect closes your mind to new standards," said success author Dr. John Eliot. "When you drive hard toward one ideal, you miss opportunities and paths, not to mention hurting your confidence. Believe in your potential and then go out and explore it; don't limit it."

Remember, great inventors made thousands of mistakes before mastering their great discoveries. Can you imagine where we would be today without electricity, airplanes and all the other great inventions if these inventors had decided to quit after the first couple of failures? If you do not

want to make mistakes, then don't pursue potential. Instead, you may be better sticking with your nice safe job.

Truth Number Two: No person is an island.

Well-known motivation author and speaker Napoleon Hill said, "No individual has ever achieved success without the help and cooperation of others." He coined the concept of a "Mastermind Alliance" in which "you can appropriate and use the full strength of the experience, training, and knowledge of others just as if they were your own."

Don't be reluctant to ask for help on your journey to reach your potential. When you look at very successful people, most of them had help in reaching their goal. Imagine Barack Obama, the first African American U.S. president, trying to achieve success alone. You will need assistance from all sorts of people at varying levels and for different periods. It is up to you to connect with those key people who will support you, create opportunities and show you how to make the most of these opportunities.

Truth Number Three: Be ready for the occasional "pothole."

You will have bag loads of up and down moments. It is part and parcel of the package of working on your potential. That journey toward reaching your potential, just like life itself, has its hills and its potholes. Just don't take those potholes personally.

Former U.S. Vice President Dan Quayle, a master of the malapropism, said: "We are ready for any unforeseen event that may or may not occur." Obviously, that is impossible. No matter how careful and good you are at planning there are external intangibles, e.g., natural disasters, economic downswings, new competition—factors you can't predict or pre-plan against.

Just move with the tide as the unexpected happens and seek professional support and advice from your expert friends or mastermind alliance in making key decisions during this period. It is critical in these times to consider all the options in making important decisions. Whatever you do, do not be hasty to quit on your potential before considering all the facts and seeking external support.

These top three truths are meant to help you as you pursue your potential. Use them to develop the mindset necessary to deal with the ups and downs, the road and the potholes, the ins and outs, and the expected and unexpected. Deal with mistakes, work with others and stay the path during unexpected set-backs. These three concepts will keep you going during this 7-day plan and in any future pursuits.