

UNLOCKED

Finding the
key to practical
leadership



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1. Believe That You Cannot Fail—But Don't Jump Off a Bridge If You Do

“Decision is a sharp knife that cuts clean and straight; indecision, a dull one that hacks and tears and leaves ragged edges behind it.”

— Gordon Graham

No one can tell you that you are not good enough, not smart enough, not whatever enough without your permission. And...nor can anyone tell you that you will fail at something without your permission.

I write and speak a lot about the 97 percent of the leadership population (97 percent of the population in general for that matter) that is, in my opinion, mediocre. Why do I feel that way?

I believe the world is full of people who don't want to see you get ahead, achieve your dreams, or push the boundaries. Why? Because they want you to stay right where you are—with them because they do not have the dreams and desires to grow and move forward. After all, growing means change. And change is scary! So what they are really saying is, “If you stay right where you are, here in the land of mediocrity with me, I won't feel so bad.”

And they accomplish all this (keeping you in “your place,” that is) by telling you that you can't or you don't have a chance. You will fail. They will remind you of “the other times when you tried something new and failed,” and add, “This time will be the same.”

Recognize this advice for what it is: Other people attempting to keep you in the 97 percent land of mediocrity. Tell yourself no one can tell you that “you can't” without your permission. It is only when you believe what others are saying about you that those self-limiting doubts start to form in your head.

Instead, become the person you believe in. Keep telling yourself you are worthy, smart, strong, and capable.

No shortage of people will tell you, “You can't...” Don't be one of them. Develop the “I can!” mantra. When you do, you will discover that things happen. Opportunities unfold in front of you. You will start achieving beyond your wildest expectations.

Let's look at all the people who didn't listen to the long line of people telling them they couldn't, weren't good enough, it's too hard, etc...

Thomas Edison developed over 10,000 failed prototypes for the lightbulb—or as he put it, “I discovered 10,000 ways that a lightbulb would not work.”

Arguably the world's greatest basketball player, **Michael Jordan**, was cut from his high school basketball team.

Steven Spielberg was rejected three times by film schools he applied to.

Beethoven's music teacher once told him he was "hopeless."

Walt Disney was fired from a newspaper job because he lacked "ideas."

Bestselling author **John Grisham** was rejected by twelve publishing houses and sixteen agents.

Oprah Winfrey was replaced as the anchorwoman after only eight months in her first big television job.

Kentucky Fried Chicken founder **Harland "Colonel" Sanders** was told "No" over 1,000 times when he was searching for someone to partner with for his now famous fried chicken recipe.

Abraham Lincoln probably holds the record for persevering in the face of failure. Before becoming President of the United States, he joined the military as a "captain" and left as a "private." He started a number of failed businesses. He lost four different elections.

The list goes on and on. When you are chasing a dream and pushing to be in the 3 percent group of those who make things happen in our world, you will experience setbacks, disappointments, and failure. A long line of people will be saying, "I told you so." There will be people you will lose in your life; friends, maybe even family members, will not talk to you anymore. These are probably the same people who were fighting hard to hold you back.

The key through it all is to develop the mindset that you believe in yourself and your dreams. Be secure in the knowledge that nothing worth accomplishing (nothing I have discovered so far that is) is easy. It requires a vision so clear and compelling you can taste it. It requires focus—laser beam focus. And it takes hard work—lots of it.

Every once in awhile, though, you will have setbacks and disappointments. I like to look at those as learning opportunities. They will happen—it is part of the journey to success. The key during these times is to remember that failure is an event, not a person.

Get back up, dust yourself off, learn, grow, and keep telling yourself you can. Believe that you cannot fail!