

THE BIG IDEAS

21 Steps

Quick trip thru them.

Cutting Thru Fog

Via clear goals.

Self-Trust

= The foundation of greatness.

The Great Question

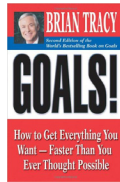
What do you really want in life?

Mindstorming

Great way to tap into genius.

#1 Quality for Success

Is... Persistence. How's yours?



Goals!

How to Get Everything You Want — Faster Than You Ever Thought Possible

BY BRIAN TRACY · BERRETT-KOEHLER PUBLISHERS © 2010 · 288 PAGES

“Success is goals and all else is commentary. All successful people are intensely goal oriented. They know what they want and they are focused single-mindedly on achieving it, every single day.

Your ability to set goals is the master skill of success. Goals unlock your positive mind and release ideas and energy for goal attainment. Without goals, you simply drift and flow in the currents of life. With goals, you fly like an arrow, straight and true to your target. ...

After countless talks on various themes, if I was given only five minutes to speak to you and I could convey only one thought that would help you to be more successful, I would tell you ‘Write down your goals, make plans to achieve them, and work on your plans every single day.’

This advice, if you followed it, would be of more help to you than anything else you could ever learn. Many university graduates have told me that this simple concept has been more valuable to them than four years of study. This idea has changed my life and the lives of millions of other people. It will change yours as well.”

~ Brian Tracy from *Goals!*

Goals. How're yours?

If you believe [Brian Tracy](#), “Success is goals and all else is commentary.”

This book, of course, is all about helping us optimize our goal setting and achievement. I read it years ago and re-read it/created this Note as part of my prep for Goals 101. If you like the Note and you're looking to master the art of goal setting, I think you'll dig it. (Get a copy [here](#).)

As I mentioned in the other Notes on Brian's great books (see [Eat That Frog](#), [No Excuses](#), [Focal Point](#)), his books are incredibly packed with Big Ideas and provocative journal questions. The man is an inspirational *machine.*

In this book, Brian walks us through his twenty-one steps for setting and achieving goals—from Step 1 of “Unlocking Your Potential” to Step 21 “Persist Until You Succeed.”

I'm excited to share some of my favorite Big Ideas so let's jump straight in!

A QUICK TRIP THRU THE 21 STEPS

“The most important quality you can develop for lifelong success is the habit of taking action on your plans, goals, ideas, and insights. The more often you try, the sooner you will triumph. There is a direct relationship between the number of things you attempt and your accomplishments in life. Here are the twenty-one steps for setting and achieving goals and for living a wonderful life.”

21 steps. Each with its own chapter.

*“I have found, over and over,
that a person of average
intelligence with clear goals
will run circles around a
genius who is not sure what
he or she really wants.”*

~ Brian Tracy

Here's a *super* quick look:

"You will find that there are no limits to what you can accomplish except for the limits you place on your own imagination. And since there are no limits to what you can imagine, there are no limits to what you can achieve."

~ Brian Tracy

1. **Unlock Your Potential.** Your potential is bigger than you think. As [Ellen Langer](#) would say, it's unknowable. Brian would say it's unlimited. Let's unlock it! (One of his stretch questions: What would you do if you knew you could not fail?)
2. **Take Charge of Your Life.** We're never going to achieve great things if we're walking around complaining and making excuses. Be Proactive, [Extreme Ownership](#) style.
3. **Create Your Own Future.** If you had no limits, what would you do, be, or have in the months and years and decades ahead. Dare to dream. Then make it happen.
4. **Clarify Your Values.** Who are you? What's important? Successful people have taken the time to know themselves and strive to live in integrity with their deepest values.
5. **Determine Your True Goals.** Key here? More clarity. More on the "The Great Question" in a moment. (Hint: What do you *really* want?)
6. **Decide Upon Your Major Definite Purpose.** What's the #1 one goal that, if you achieved it, would have the most positive impact on all your other goals? That's your major definite purpose.
7. **Analyze Your Beliefs.** What do you believe about yourself and the world? Your self-concept and guiding beliefs have a bigger impact than you might be aware of.
8. **Start at the Beginning.** We have a big dream. Fantastic. Now it's time to be super honest about where we're at. Start at the beginning by embracing reality.
9. **Measure Your Progress.** Set up clear goals and measure yourself against them to see how you're doing. And, as always, celebrate those wins!!
10. **Remove the Roadblocks.** Problems and obstacles are inevitable. Let's get really good at solving them. Step 1: Have a relentless solution focus. Eat the obstacles like energy bars.
11. **Become an Expert in Your Field.** Brian tells us we have the ability to be among the very best in our field—the top 10%. Make that a goal, *"work on it every day, and never stop working at it until you get there."*
12. **Associate with the Right People.** The math goes something like this: We're the average of the five people with whom we spend the most time. Let's spend time with people who inspire us!
13. **Make a Plan of Action.** *"An ordinary person with a well-thought-out-plan will run circles around a genius without one."* Create that plan. Dynamically respond to what arises.
14. **Manage Your Time Well.** What's important? Know it. Do it. Repeat. (Eliminate distractions.)
15. **Review Your Goals Daily.** Brian is a big believer in writing down and reviewing your goals every.single.day until you have absolute belief you'll hit them.
16. **Visualize Your Goals Continually.** "See" your ideal future in your mind's eye. Feel it. All the time.
17. **Activate Your Superconscious Mind.** Your conscious mind is like a postage stamp relative to that NASA supercomputer of your subconscious mind. Program it well.
18. **Remain Flexible at All Times.** The hallmark of flourishing people is their psychological flexibility—their ability to respond freshly to life as new information comes in. You flexible?
19. **Unlock Your Inborn Creativity.** Brian tells us we are each a potential genius. And gives us ways to tap into that. We'll explore one of my favorites in a moment.

"We greatly overestimate what we can accomplish in one year. But we greatly underestimate what we can accomplish in five years."

~ Peter Drucker

"Unsuccessful people always wonder whether or not a particular goal is possible. High achievers, on the other hand ask only the question, 'How?' They then work to find ways to turn their visions and goals into realities."

~ Brian Tracy

20. Do Something Every Day. We want to invite Mr. Mo to the party and then take good care of him! Best way? Work on your goal every day.

21. Persist Until You Succeed. We're going to talk about this one more in a moment as well. Ultimately, "*Persistence is self-discipline in action and the true measure of your belief in yourself. Resolve in advance that you will never, never give up!*"

CUTTING THROUGH THE FOG

"Living without clear goals is like driving in a thick fog. No matter how powerful or well engineered your car, you drive slowly, hesitantly, making little progress on even the smoothest road. Deciding upon your goals clears the fog immediately and allows you to focus and channel your energies and abilities. Clear goals enable you to step on the accelerator of your own life and race ahead rapidly toward achieving more of what you really want."

Have you driven through a thick fog lately? (Literally or emotionally?)

Not quite as easy as driving on a clear day, eh?

If you're feeling less than jumbo-inspired, check in on whether or not you have goals that fire you up. Do you have your compelling Purpose 101 *ikigai*—your reason for getting up in the morning?!

If not and you want to vacuum up that fog: Set clear goals.

P.S. When I read this metaphor of fog, I think of [Earl Nightingale's](#) gem from *The Essence of Success*: "*According to the Bureau of Standards, 'A dense fog covering seven city blocks, to a depth of 100 feet, is composed of something less than one glass of water.'* That is, all the fog covering seven city blocks, at 100 feet deep could be, if it were gotten all together, held in a single drinking glass. It would not quite fill it. And this could be compared to our worries. If we can see into the future and if we could see our problems in their true light, they wouldn't tend to blind us to the world, to living itself, but instead could be relegated to their true size and place. And if all the things most people worry about were reduced to their true size, you could probably put them all into a water glass, too."

Interesting. So, a city (or head) full of fog is essentially no more than one glass of water. And, the best way to bust through that fog of worry is to have a clear goal.

What are YOUR goals?

SELF-TRUST = THE FOUNDATION OF GREATNESS

"Self-trust is the foundation of greatness. Self-trust comes from listening to your intuition, to your 'still, small voice' within. Men and women begin to become great when they begin to listen to their inner voices and absolutely trust that they are being guided by a higher power each step of the way."

Living in alignment with your true values is the royal road to self-confidence, self-respect, and personal pride. In fact, almost every human problem can be resolved by returning to values. Whenever you experience stress of any kind, look into yourself and ask, 'In what way am I compromising my innermost values in this situation?'"

That's from Step #4: Clarify Your Values.

Greatness starts with, as Emerson would say, trusting thyself—remembering that "*every heart vibrates to that iron string.*" And... In order to trust ourselves we must know ourselves.

So, who are you? What do you *really* want in your life?

Reflection tools to clarify your values:

"Failure is merely an opportunity to more intelligently begin again."

~ Henry Ford

- What are your top 5 values? What do you really stand for?
- Describe your vision of an ideal person, the person you would most want to be.
- Write your own obituary to be read by your friends and family at your own funeral. For what qualities do you want to be remembered?

P.S. [Nathaniel Brandon](#) makes this distinction in *The Six Pillars of Self-Esteem*: “Integrity is the integration of ideals, convictions, standards, beliefs—and behavior. When our behavior is congruent with our professed values, when ideals and practice match up, we have integrity.

Observe that before the issue of integrity can even be raised we need principles of behavior—moral convictions about what is and is not appropriate—judgments about right and wrong action. If we do not yet hold standards, we are on too low a developmental rung even to be accused of hypocrisy. In such a case, our problems are too severe to be described merely as lack of integrity.”

“Whenever you find something getting done, you find a monomaniac with a mission.”

~ Peter Drucker

THE GREAT QUESTION OF GOAL SETTING

“My favorite word in goal setting, and in success in general, is ‘clarity.’ There is a direct relationship between the level of clarity you have about who you are and what you want and virtually everything you accomplish in life.

Successful men and women invest the time necessary to develop absolute clarity about themselves and what they really want, like designing a detailed blueprint for a building before they begin construction. ...

One of the most important questions in goal setting is this: **What do I really want to do with my life?** If you could do or be or have anything at all in life, what would it be? You should return to this question over and over again in the months and years ahead.”

First, Brian is not alone in his love of clarity. In the most popular blog post in *Harvard Business Review*’s history (called [9 Things Successful People Do Differently](#)), Heidi Grant Halvorson tells us that successful people have SPECIFIC goals.

Successful people have invested the time necessary to develop a *very* clear sense of who they are and what they *really* want. So, what do YOU want? Here’s “The Great Question”:

Q: What do you *really* want to do with your life?

A: This is what I *really* want to do with my life: _____

Fantastic. Now, let’s drill down into what Brian calls your “major definite purpose”: what’s the one goal that is most important to you at the moment? What goal, if you achieved it, would have the most positive impact on all your other goals?

Noodle that one for a moment... What is it?

(For me? It’s getting to 1,000 PhilosophersNotes by Jan 1, 2020. You?)

P.S. Another great step that closely follows that clarity? —> “Determine the price you will have to pay in additional work, time, and commitment to achieve your goal, and then get busy paying that price.”

“The plans were useless but the planning was indispensable.”

~ General Dwight D. Eisenhower

READY TO MINDSTORM?

“The most powerful technique for improving your intelligence and increasing your creativity is what I call ‘mindstorming.’ The way it works is simple. The results that you get will be so amazing as to be life changing.

"Determine never to be idle. No person will have occasion to complain of the want of time, who never loses any. It is wonderful how much may be done, if we are always doing."

~ Thomas Jefferson

You begin the mindstorming process by first getting a clean sheet of paper. At the top of this page you write your goal or problem in the form of a question. The simpler and more specific the question, the better will be the quality of the answers that you generate in response to it. ...

Each of your answers should be written using the 'Three P Formula.' It should be personal, positive, and in the present tense. In other words, your answers should be written as affirmations or instructions from your conscious mind to your subconscious mind."

That's from a chapter on how to "Unlock Your Inborn Creativity." This is a fun little creative tool I've used many times.

Start with your #1 goal. Grab a piece of paper. Write your goal in the form of a question. Simple. Specific. (For example, he tells us that "How can I double my income in the next 24 months?" is better than "How can I make more money?" When I did the exercise I wrote: "How can I have fun getting to 1,000 Notes by January 1, 2020?")

What's your goal? What's your simple question? Write it down. Then, for the fun part: Come up with at least TWENTY answers to your question.

Brian likes to say that the first few will come easily. Then it gets a little tougher. Then, as you approach 20, sometimes it feels like you're, in his words, "squeezing water from a rock." (Hah.) I'm not sure I've ever had the sense I was needing to squeeze water from a rock to get 20 good ideas, but I HAVE found that some of my best ideas come near the end.

If you're looking for a little creative burst, I *highly* recommend the exercise.

Remember to practice The Three Ps as well. So, you're answers are personal, positive, and in the present tense as mini-affirmations for your subconscious mind to chew on.

Don't stop till you get to twenty. And, most importantly (!), pick one of your ideas and TAKE ACTION ON IT IMMEDIATELY!!

THE SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT QUALITY FOR SUCCESS

"Determine the price you will have to pay in additional work, time, and commitment to achieve your goal, and then get busy paying that price."

~ Brian Tracy

"The single most important quality for success is self-discipline. Self-discipline means that you have the ability, within yourself, based on your strength of character and willpower, to do what you should do, when you should do it, whether you feel like it or not.

Character is the ability to follow through on a resolution after the enthusiasm with which the resolution was made has passed. It is not what you learn that is decisive for your future. It is whether or not you can discipline yourself to pay the price, over and over, until you finally obtain your objective."

That's from the final step: "Persist Until You Succeed." So much goodness in there.

First, self-discipline is the engine of persistence. And, as Brian says, "*The single most important quality for success.*"

As we discuss in [Willpower 101](#) + [Habits 101](#), science agrees. Our ability to get ourselves to do what we need to do, whether we feel like it or not, is the hallmark of great achievement.

I love this line as well: "*Character is the ability to follow through on a resolution after the enthusiasm with which the resolution was made has passed.*"

I'm laughing as I type that. Ever been super (duper!) fired up, clear on who you are and what you're here to do, committed to paying the price to make it happen and... then... the moment it gets a little tough and the enthusiasm wanes you find yourself tip-toeing out the back door, pretending like and wishing that you never made the commitment?

Hah. Me, too. We all have. It's such an ancient issue that [Eknath Easwaran](#) tells us there's actually a word for it in Sanskrit: *arambhashura*. "*To be a hero in the beginning.*"

"Here is the most important rule of goals: 'Be clear about your goal but be flexible about the process of achieving it.'"

~ Brian Tracy

We need to know the enthusiasm will inevitably wane, train ourselves to rub our hands together when it does, love the plateau [Mastery-style](#), [be a Pro](#), and KEEP DOING WHAT NEEDS TO GET DONE.

I love the way ultraendurance athlete [Travis Macy](#) puts it in [The Ultra Mindset](#) (a manual on persistence): *"The reason I finish is commitment: before every race, during my training, I have committed to finishing. I have removed the option of not reaching the finish line. If you make a similar, wholehearted commitment—in your racing, your career, your life—you will reach your goals, too."*

What is your #1 most important goal right now—the challenging (yet doable), meaningful goal that you've decided is truly worthy of you? Have you categorically removed the option of quitting? If so, all you need to do is just keep on going until you finish. If not, well, hmmm... Then step back and see if you're truly committed to a given goal. (We talk about when to quit and when to keep rockin' it more in the Notes on [The Ultra Mindset](#).)

If you go through the analysis and find that you're not truly committed to a particular goal, that's all good. Quit. Create another one worthy of you and your precious life force. Then COMMIT. Categorically remove the option of quitting and go finish!

As Calvin Coolidge so memorably puts it: *"Press on. Nothing in the world can take the place of persistence. Talent will not; nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent. Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education alone will not; the world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent."*

Here's to your omnipotence. Press on. Achieve your goals. Give us what you've got!

B

Brian Johnson,
Chief Philosopher

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[Focal Point](#)

[No Excuses](#)

[The Success Principles](#)

[The Essence of Success](#)

[The Six Pillars of Self-Esteem](#)

About the Author of "Goals!"

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Brian Johnson loves helping people optimize their lives as he studies, embodies and teaches the fundamentals of optimal living—integrating ancient wisdom + modern science + common sense + virtue + mastery + fun. Learn more and optimize your life at brianjohnson.me.