

THE BIG IDEAS

The Keys to the System

1 + 2 + 3.

Reduce It to a Formula

What works?

I Decided

To conquer this fear.

The Right Thing

Try to do it.

Dissatisfaction

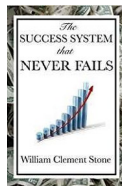
Inspirational is good. Use it.

Making Waves

W. Clement Stone style.

Go Power

50x: Conceive. Believe. Achieve.



The Success System That Never Fails

BY W. CLEMENT STONE · WILDER PUBLICATIONS © 2009 · 168 PAGES

“An old Hindu legend states that when the gods were making the world, they said: ‘Where can we hide the most valuable of treasures so that they will not be lost? How can we hide them so that the lust and greed of men will not steal or destroy them? What can we do to be assured that these riches will be carried on from generation to generation for the benefit of all mankind?’

So in their wisdom they selected a hiding place that was so obvious it would not be seen. And there they placed the true riches of life, endowed with the magic power of perpetual self-replenishment. In this hiding place these treasures can be found by every living person in every land who follows the success system that never fails.

And as you read this book, read it as if I were your personal friend writing to you, and you alone. For this book is dedicated to you, and all who seek the true riches of life.”

~ W. Clement Stone from *The Success System That Never Fails*

W. Clement Stone is an old school, early 20th century businessman, philanthropist, and self-help author. (He built a huge insurance company and gave away over \$275 million to charities over the course of his lifetime.)

He was inspired by and then wrote a book with [Napoleon Hill](#). (We’ll be covering the book they wrote together called *Success Through a Positive Mental Attitude* soon.)

He’s also the guy who helped [Og Mandino](#) overcome his alcoholism and go on to run *Success Magazine* and become one of the best-selling author’s of his generation.

His style is reminiscent of others of his era—like Hill and Mandino, [Earl Nightingale](#) and some other, earlier old-school guys like [Orison Swett Marden](#) and [Samuel Smiles](#). I love the classic, super-fired up, “Let’s do this!!” energy. :)

The book was originally published in 1962. Stone lived through the Great Depression and tells stories about when you could get by on a dime in your pocket. (Get a copy of the book [here](#).)

It’s packed with Big Ideas and I’m excited to share some of my favorites so let’s jump straight in!

THE KEYS TO THE SYSTEM

“A small drop of ink makes thousands, perhaps millions think,” wrote Byron in *Don Juan*.

And that’s what I thought as I began to write the manuscript for this book. For its purpose is to motivate the reader:

To learn and use three simple, easily understood concepts that must be used by any person for continuous success in any human activity. Herein lies the essence of this work. For the person who uses these three ingredients in combination in any specific activity cannot fail.

“For now, just remember those three phrases: inspiration to action, know-how, and activity knowledge. They are the keys to the system.”

~ W. Clement Stone

"The good decisions must be followed through with action. Without action, a good decision becomes meaningless, for the desire itself can die through lack of an attempt to achieve its fulfillment. That's why you should act immediately on a good decision."

~ W. Clement Stone

Inspiration to action: that which motivates you to act because you want to.

Know-how: the particular techniques and skills that consistently get results for you when applied. It is the proper application of knowledge. *Know-how* becomes *habit* through actual repetitive experience.

Activity knowledge: knowledge of the activity, service, product, methods, techniques, and skills with which you are particularly concerned."

Want the Success System That Never Fails?

Here it is. Three parts that Stone comes back to again and again.

Step 1: You've gotta be inspired to take action. Your "Inspiration to action" comes from that deep, authentic desire to do something great.

Step 2: You need to Optimize your "Know-how"—which is basically figuring out what you're doing that works and then +1-ing it day in and day out as you install great habits.

Step 3: You need to become a master craftsman and develop your "Activity knowledge" so you can become so good at whatever it is you do that they can't ignore you.

The language around that is a little weird. Here's another way to look at:

REDUCE IT TO A FORMULA

"What is important to you is that you reduce to a formula, preferably in writing, the principles you learn from your successful experiences and failures, in whatever activities you may be interested."

Alright. Now we're talking. The Success System That Never Fails is, ultimately a FORMULA of what you know works for you. It's your protocol.

(Note: It's not "THE" System. It's YOUR system. The question is: What works for YOU?!)

We talk about it all the time, of course. But Stone is *all about* slowing down and doing the work to identify (and write down!) what little things lead to good results and then (Captain Obvious here!) DOING THEM ALL THE TIME!

So... What do YOU do when you have a great day?

Make a list of the things you KNOW work for you. Distill your Masterpiece Days into a formula.

When do you go to sleep? When do you shut down the night before? What do you eat? When do you train your mind (aka meditate)? When and how do you move your body and exercise? When do you do your Deep Work? How often and when and for how long do you check your email and social sites? Etc. Etc. Etc.

Get clarity on what works. Reduce it to a formula. Do it again and again.

As Josh Waitzkin says in [The Art of Learning](#), make your best your new baseline. (I am ABSOLUTELY certain that Stone would LOVE that idea. It's basically the theme of the book.)

And... Life happens. Sometimes those formulas don't flow quite the way you'd like.

For example, I'm writing this Note a week after the huge fires in Southern California that nearly burned down our home and engulfed our little town. A week ago, we evacuated our house and we've basically been living out of a hotel since. (Silver lining: Thank you to the Ritz Carlton in Santa Barbara for your super-generous rates for Ojai evacuees. Staying in such a beautiful environment created a surreal setting as we waited out the fires with other evacuees.)

Although my sleep and AM1 Deep Work slot took a hit and the rest of my days necessarily changed, there was NO WAY I was compromising my basic fundamentals.

"Regardless of who you are or what you have been, you can be what you want to be."

~ W. Clement Stone

"Success is achieved by those who try. Where there is nothing to lose by trying and a great deal to gain if successful, by all means try!"

~ W. Clement Stone

Meditation first thing on rising? Of course. (In the bathroom while the family slept.) 1 sun salutation? Yep. 10 pull-ups? Yep. 100 burpees? You know it. (Technically, I now do 11 sets of 11 because Champions do more. lol) 1,000 meters of rowing? Yes, ma'am. The gym had a rowing machine and I hit it with Emerson every morning. And, when we left that hotel and stayed somewhere without a rowing machine I found a gym that had one and hit it. No way I'm breaking that streak. 10,000 steps? Yep. One night I had to hop up and down for 1,500 steps before reading to Emerson but there was no way my pedometer wasn't crossing 10,000 steps.

Eat well? Yep. Emerson and I made an adventure out of going to Whole Foods and grabbing some salad and fat and protein. Not too hard to eat well when your diet is super simple.

Of course, those things are *super* basic. But they're also super powerful for creating stability and equanimity. And, of course, when we're MOST stressed is when we need to be MOST committed to our protocol, eh? Unfortunately, most people do the exact opposite. Right when they need the support of their fundamentals, they drop them.

So... What's your success formula?

Write it down. Work it. *Especially* when life throws a fire at you.

P.S. Here's another way Stone puts it: "The most potent tool you can have in the steady pursuit of success is a written record of your daily habits. Correctly kept, this record will be a mirror of every effort and every action of your day-to-day living. It will, with amazing vitality, enable you to re-direct yourself."

I DECIDED TO CONQUER THIS FEAR

"I remember that as a boy I was so timid that when we had company I would go into another room, and during a thunderstorm I would hide under the bed. But one day I reasoned, 'If lightning is going to strike, it will be just as dangerous whether I am under the bed or in any other part of the room.' I decided to conquer this fear. My opportunity came, and I took advantage of it. During a thunderstorm, I forced myself to go to the window and look at the lightning. An amazing thing happened. I began to enjoy the beauty of the flashes of lightning through the sky. Today, there is no one who enjoys a thunderstorm more than I do."

I love that image of a boy conquering his fear of lightning and learning to love it. Stone tells a bunch of other stories about how afraid he was as a young boy trying to make money to support his family by selling newspapers. And he tells us about how he conquered his fears when he started out as a young insurance salesman—MAKING himself do the thing he was afraid to do.

Reminds me of Eleanor Roosevelt who was a contemporary of Stone. Here's how she puts it in [You Learn by Living](#): "The encouraging thing is that every time you meet a situation, though you may think at the time it is an impossibility and you go through the tortures of the damned, once you have met it and lived through it you find that forever after you are freer than you were before. If you can live through that you can live through anything. You gain strength, courage, and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face.

You are able to say to yourself, 'I lived through this horror. I can take the next thing that comes along.' The danger lies in refusing to face the fear, in not daring to come to grips with it. If you fail anywhere along the line it will take away your confidence. You must make yourself succeed every time. You must do the thing you think you cannot do."

This is worth repeating: "The danger lies in refusing to face the fear, in not daring to come to grips with it. If you fail anywhere along the line it will take away your confidence. You must make yourself succeed every time. You must do the thing you think you cannot do."

Afraid of anything these days? Let's "Bring it on!" and enjoy the beauty of thunderstorms!

"Do what you're afraid to do . . . go where you're afraid to go . . . when you run away because you are afraid to do something big, you pass opportunity by."

~ W. Clement Stone

TRY TO DO THE RIGHT THING

"William James, American's great psychologist, wrote: 'As we become drunkards by so many separate drinks, so we become saints and authorities and experts by so many separate acts and hours of work.' And he emphasized an important principle for breaking any habit: Break off abruptly. Let everyone know about it. And never let an exception occur."

~ W. Clement Stone

"Each time I say to you, 'Try to do the right thing because it is right,' that's a suggestion from me to you. Each time you think or say to yourself *Try to do the right thing because it is right*, that's self-suggestion. Each time your subconscious mind flashes to your conscious mind, *Try to do the right thing because it is right*, that's autosuggestion.

It is important to know:

1. Suggestion comes from the outside (your environment).
2. Self-suggestion is automatic or purposefully controlled from within.
3. Autosuggestion acts by itself, unconsciously, like a machine that reacts in the same way from the same stimulus. ...

During the coming week, every morning and every evening—and frequently throughout the day—repeat: *Try to do the right thing because it is right*. Then, when you are faced with temptation, this self-motivator will flash from your subconscious to your conscious mind. When it does—*immediately act. Do the right thing*.

In this way, through repetition, you will form a habit—a good habit—that will help make your future. For your future depends upon character—and character depends on successfully overcoming temptations."

Two parts to this Idea.

First, we have suggestion + self-suggestion + autosuggestion. Stone comes back to this sequence often in the book. Then we have the actual "Try to do the right thing because it is right" suggestion-seed we want to plant in our subconscious.

We'll start with a quick recap of the suggestion sequence. When you hear something from your environment, that's a suggestion. When you consciously repeat that suggestion to yourself, that's a self-suggestion. When you repeat that suggestion enough times to yourself such that it automatically pops in your head when you need it, that's an autosuggestion.

Of course, this type of practice has been around for thousands of the years. The Sanskrit word *mantra* literally means "tool of the mind." When we repeat something to ourselves (good or bad!) enough times, it'll automatically pop up. Therefore, let's focus on repeating the good stuff and shaping our minds in the shape we want.

Since reading the book, I've been having fun with this one:

"Every great man, every successful man, no matter what the field of endeavor, has known the magic that lies in these words: Every Adversity Has the Seed of an Equivalent or Greater Benefit."

~ W. Clement Stone

*Do the right thing because it's the right thing.
Do the right thing because it's the right thing.
Do the right thing because it's the right thing.*

That simple little "suggestion" is a REALLY powerful way to operationalize areté. It's also a really powerful way to operationalize one of the key themes of my work with Phil Stutz.

Phil is ALL (!!!) about what he calls "micro transactions"—bringing your full presence and best self to the smallest things. In [Coming Alive](#) he puts it this way: *"Most people focus on the bigger, more challenging events in life, but the forces that drive the universe function on a much smaller level. We call this the world of small things—'things' in the sense of minor, seemingly inconsequential acts. Just the way modern physics studies matter at the level of the smallest particles, the best way to understand human behavior is at the level of the most common actions and events. Rudolf Steiner, the great European philosopher, put it this way: the most important things enter the world through the smallest things. The commonplace is crucial because most of our time is spent doing commonplace things."*

Repeat after me: *Do the right thing because it's the right thing.*

<— May that suggestion become a self-suggestion and mature into a full-grown autosuggestion on which we act immediately and consistently! :)

INSPIRATIONAL DISSATISFACTION

"Because the fire of enthusiasm can become extinguished unless it is refueled, try to read some self-help material for at least five minutes a day."

~ W. Clement Stone

"The book, *Success Through a Positive Mental Attitude*, says: The right mental attitude is most often comprised of the 'plus' characteristics symbolized by such words as *integrity, faith, hope, optimism, courage, initiative, generosity, tolerance, tact, kindness, and good common sense*. On this, you and I can agree.

Yet the most wonderful person in the world will not make progress until he is dissatisfied—wholesomely dissatisfied. For it is *inspirational dissatisfaction* that converts the magic of desire into reality.

Every growing organism grows into maturity—levels off and dies unless there is new life—new blood—new activity—new ideas, says Edward R. Dewey.

All the world's progress in every field of activity has been the result of *action* by men and women who experienced *inspirational dissatisfaction*—never by those who were satisfied. For dissatisfaction is man's driving force. *Inspirational dissatisfaction* is the result of RMA—the right mental attitude. With the wrong mental attitude, the driving force of dissatisfaction can be injurious.

To be dissatisfied, you must *want* something. And if you want something badly enough, you'll do something. You'll *try* to get it."

Inspirational dissatisfaction.

That's the first ingredient to our success formula that never fails.

Want to flourish and do great things you've never done before?

Well then, guess what? You need to be dissatisfied with your current situation.

Grateful about the fact that you're alive, life is good, etc. AND... *Inspirationally dissatisfied* to go out and create something better.

So... Got any dissatisfaction in your life? How can you alchemize that into inspired action?

MAKING WAVES WITH STONE

"The use of energy is work. When you or I engage in *any activity whatsoever*, energy is used. To concentrate your energy on a given task, focus your attention on it, and don't waste your efforts needlessly.

Simple as this may seem, that's how you acquire *activity knowledge, know-how, and inspiration to action*. And that's how I developed my success system that never fails. When you do something, put your heart into it. Give it everything you've got—then relax! Concentrated attention and effort, then relaxing became a habit with me shortly after I started to sell accident insurance. First, I'd get a good night's sleep. Selling door to door in stores and offices and desk to desk in banks and other large institutions used up physical energy. And as a young man I needed lots of sleep.

Next, I made it a practice to make my first business call at a specific time—9:00 A.M. But before making that call, I would condition my mind. I would concentrate. And I would ask for divine guidance and help. I would allow nothing to disturb me. I'd get *keyed up*. Then, I moved fast every working hour of the day. I tried to make every minute count.

At noon, I'd relax with a light lunch and start all over again. If I were working in a city away from home, I would go back to my hotel, have lunch, sleep for a half-hour, and then figuratively start a new day. When I was through working at 5:00 or 5:30, I was through working. I relaxed and got my mind off selling."

There we have W. Clement Stone's formula for making waves and oscillating between INTENSE on and INTENSE off. What's yours?

GO POWER

"Go power is the mystical motor of your spirit. It is the inner urge that can drive you to success. Its fuel is emotion, desire, or impulse.

To develop go power, every night for ten days repeat at least 50 times: *What the mind can conceive and believe, the mind can achieve.*

When *go power* impels you to some good action, consciously react by performing. Each time you do, you add to your ability to start *go-power* at will."

Go power.

It's the mystical motor of your spirit. The inner urge that drives you to success. How's yours?

One way to ramp it up? Get your self-suggestion on with 50 reps of this gem: "*What the mind can conceive and believe, the mind can achieve.*"

What do you want to achieve? Can you conceive it and believe it? Run it through your WOOP process and go make it happen one success-system baby step and masterpiece day at a time!

B

Brian Johnson,
Chief Philosopher

"Your potential is unlimited.
It depends on you. How far
do you want to go?"

~ W. Clement Stone

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About the Author of "The Success System That Never Fails"

W. CLEMENT STONE



William Clement Stone was a businessman, philanthropist and New Thought self-help book author. [From [Wikipedia](#) where you can learn more.]

About the Author of This Note

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Brian Johnson loves helping people optimize their lives so they can actualize their potential as he studies, embodies and teaches the fundamentals of optimal living—integrating ancient wisdom + modern science + practical tools. Learn more and optimize your life at [optimize.me](#).