

## Eliminate “if only” from your vocabulary

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In the game of poker, I have used the alibi “If only I had gotten better cards...” to explain why I didn’t win. I would sometimes blame bad luck in the draw of cards as the reason I lost my chips, but in reality, it was typically due to my inability to properly read other players at the table. As the famous Kenny Rogers song lyric went: “You’ve got to know when to hold ‘em, know when to fold ‘em...”-- I apparently didn’t know when to do either at times.

People who do not succeed have one distinguishing trait in common. They know all the reasons for failure, and have what they believe to be airtight alibis to explain away their own lack of achievement.

Some of these alibis are clever and a few of them are justifiable by the facts. A character analyst who worked with Napoleon Hill, who wrote the iconic self-help book *Think and Grow Rich* (first published in 1937), compiled the following list of the most commonly used alibis. As you read the list, you will notice they all still apply today. Examine yourself carefully and determine how many of these alibis, if any, you have used:

1. If only I didn’t have a spouse and family...
2. If only I had enough “pull”...
3. If only I had money...
4. If only I had a good education...
5. If only I could get a job...
6. If only I had good health...
7. If only I had time...
8. If only times were better...
9. If only other people understood me...
10. If only conditions around me were different...

11. If only I could live my life over again...
12. If only I did not fear what “they” would say...
13. If only I had been given a chance...
14. If only I now had a chance...
15. If only other people didn’t “have it in for me”...
16. If only nothing happened to stop me...
17. If only I were younger...
18. If only I could do what I want...
19. If only I had been born rich...
20. If only I could meet “the right person”...
21. If only I had the talent some people have...
22. If only I dared assert myself...
23. If only I had embraced past opportunities...
24. If only people didn’t get on my nerves...
25. If only I didn’t have to keep house and look after the children...
26. If only I could save some money...
27. If only the boss appreciated me...
28. If only I had somebody to help me...
29. If only my family understood me...
30. If only I lived in a big city...
31. If only I could just get started...
32. If only I were free...
33. If only I had the personality of some people...
34. If only I were not so fat...
35. If only my talents were known...
36. If only I could just get a “break”...
37. If only I could get out of debt...
38. If only I hadn’t failed...
39. If only I knew how...
40. If only other people didn’t oppose me...
41. If only I didn’t have so many worries...
42. If only I could marry the right

person...

43. If only people weren’t so dumb...
44. If only my family were not so extravagant...
45. If only I were sure of myself...
46. If only luck were not against me...
47. If only I had not been born under the wrong star...
48. If only it were not true that “what is to be will be”...
49. If only I did not have to work so hard...
50. If only I hadn’t lost my money...
51. If only I lived in a different neighborhood...
52. If only I didn’t have a “past”...
53. If only I had a business of my own...
54. If only other people would listen to me...
55. If only--and this is the greatest of them all--I had the courage to see myself as I really am, I would find out what is wrong with me and correct it. Then I might have a chance to profit by my mistakes or shortcomings rather than wasting time to build alibis to cover them.

Building alibis with which to explain away failure is a habit as old as the human race, and is fatal to success. And habits are difficult to break, especially when they provide justification for something we do. Plato had this truth in mind when he said, “The first and best victory is to conquer self. To be conquered by self is, of all things, the most shameful and vile.”

When it comes to alibis, try your best to not succumb to them. Discard them. Eliminate “if only” from your vocabulary. Use initiative, creativity, and perseverance to get moving and stay moving.

~ The End ~