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Many of us have charted a course at some point in our lives that didn't quite work. It failed for one reason or another. I never like to label anyone as a failure but there are causes that lead to one's failure. According to Napoleon Hill, who spent 25 years studying why some people succeeded and others did not, there are 30 major causes of failure that can hold a person back from being successful. Read through these and determine which ones may apply to you.

1) *Unfavorable hereditary background.* Little, if anything, can be done for people who are born with a deficiency in brainpower. One method of bridging this weakness is to seek the aid of a Master Mind (a small group of people or consultants who have the brain power or expertise required for a given situation). It is important to note that this major failure may not be easily corrected by any individual.

2) *Lack of well-defined purpose in life.* There is no hope of success for the person who does not have a central purpose or defined goal at which to aim. In Napoleon Hill's research, he concluded 98% of people had no such aim. Devise a list of goals and write them down.

3) *Lack of ambition to aim above mediocrity.* There isn't much hope for the person who is so indifferent as to not want to get ahead in life, and who is not willing to pay the price. Excellence and high reward require desire, risk, and courage.

4) *Insufficient education.* This is a handicap that may be overcome with comparative ease. Anyone can go to college if they truly want to. Resources and programs are available to make that a reality. Experience has also proven that the best-educated people are often those who are known as self-made or self-educated. It takes more than a university degree to be considered an educated person. An educated person is someone who has learned to get whatever they want in life without violating the rights of others. Education consists not so much of knowledge, but of knowledge effectively and persistently applied. People are paid not merely for what they know, but more particularly for what they do with what they know.

5) *Lack of self-discipline.* Discipline comes through self-control. This means

that you must control all negative qualities. Before you can control conditions, you must first control yourself. Self-mastery is the hardest job you will ever tackle. If you do not conquer "self," you will be conquered by "self." By stepping in front of a mirror, you will be able to see both your best friend and your greatest enemy.

6) *Ill health.* It is extremely difficult to achieve outstanding results if you're battling ill health. There may be nothing you can do at a certain point, but during the course of your life, causes of ill health are subject to your mastery and control. Things like unhealthy eating, dangerous habits, and lack of proper exercise can be voluntarily reversed, preventing some types of ill health from ever forming.

7) *Unfavorable environmental influences during childhood.* Most people who have criminal tendencies acquire them as the result of bad environment and improper associates during childhood. The sooner one can get out of that environment and find new associates, the better.

8) *Procrastination.* Many people go through life waiting for the time to be right to start doing something worthwhile. Do not wait. The time will never be "just right." Start where you stand, work with whatever tools you have, and eventually better tools and progress will come your way.

9) *Lack of persistence.* Most of us are good "starters" but poor "finishers" of everything we begin. Moreover, people are prone to give up at the first signs of defeat. Do not give up. Follow through if the reward remains great.

10) *Negative personality.* There is no hope of success for the person who repels people through a negative personality. Success comes through the application of power, and power is attained through the cooperative efforts of other people. A negative personality will not induce cooperation. Strive to be a positive person with positive outlooks.

11) *Lack of controlled sexual urge.* Sex energy is the most powerful of all the stimuli that move people into action. Because it is such a powerful emotion, it must be controlled and channeled appropriately to prevent misuse or abuse. Many leaders have not only fallen from the mountaintop because of this, but have ruined their personal lives and family structures.

12) *Uncontrolled desire for "something for nothing."* The gambling instinct drives millions of people to failure. The get-rich-quick schemes or the desire for high reward for little effort are always tempting. Don't succumb to these temptations. Have a plan to keep yourself under control. Always take time to think something over before enlisting into action.

13) *Lack of well-defined power of decision.* People who succeed reach decisions promptly, and change them--if at all--very slowly. People who don't succeed reach decisions--if at all--very slowly, and change them frequently and quickly. You don't need every piece of information before making a decision. Discernment can fill in the gaps and a decision can be made in a timely manner.

14) *Letting one or more of the six basic fears consume you.* The six basic fears are poverty, criticism, ill health, loss of love of someone, old age, and death. These fears can paralyze you if you let them overwhelm you. Seek counseling or advice from a qualified person if struggling with one of these fears.

15) *Wrong selection of a mate in marriage.* Misery and unhappiness associated with a bad marriage destroy all signs of ambition. Select your mate wisely.

16) *Over-caution.* The person who takes no chances generally has to take whatever is left when others have finished choosing. This doesn't mean one should be careless, but eventually one has to act or it becomes too late.

17) *Wrong selection of associates in business.* This has proven to be a major setback that can take years to overcome. There is no universal advice that fits every situation because associates in business are always necessary for some ventures. Be sure to have reasonable and legal measures in place to protect yourself from associate exploitation.

18) *Superstition and prejudice.* These are signs of ignorance that often displace energy. People who succeed keep open minds and are afraid of nothing. Wearing a "lucky" shirt won't really contribute to your success--only your dedication and effort will.

19) *Wrong selection of a vocation.* It is more difficult to succeed in a line of endeavor you do not like. Collecting a paycheck to make ends meet may work for now but not forever.

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20) *Lack of concentration of effort.*

Doing too many other things typically results in completing no big things. There will be occasions when all efforts and resources must converge on a single point for the sake of a single outcome.

21) *The habit of indiscriminate spending.* Money wasted away means less money in the bank. Less money in the bank equates to less freedom and less opportunity. Furthermore, money in the bank gives you a very safe foundation of courage when bargaining for the sale of your services. Without money, you must take what you are offered, and be glad to get it.

22) *Lack of enthusiasm.* Without enthusiasm one cannot be convincing. Moreover, enthusiasm is contagious, and the person who has it is generally welcome in any group of people.

23) *Intolerance.* The person with a “closed” mind on any subject seldom gets ahead. Intolerance means that one has stopped acquiring knowledge. The most damaging forms of intolerance are those connected with religious, racial, and political differences of opinion. It is also important to know when to and when not to talk about these topics.

24) *Intemperance.* Over-eating, over indulgence in alcohol/drugs, and uncontrolled desires or habits acted out are often fatal to success. Intemperance gets in a person’s way of productivity and effectiveness.

25) *Inability to cooperate with others.*

More people lose their positions and big opportunities in life because of this fault than for all other reasons combined. It is a fault which no well-informed business executive or leader will tolerate.

26) *Possession of power not acquired through self-effort.* Power in the hands of one who did not acquire it gradually is often fatal to success. Sons and daughters of wealthy families, and others who inherit money that they did not earn can also be victims of this. Quick riches can be more dangerous than poverty. Should you be lucky to have money drop in your lap for little-to-no effort on your behalf, be humble and be thrifty with it.

27) *Intentional dishonesty.* One may be temporarily dishonest by force of circumstances over which one has no control, without permanent damage. But there is no hope for people who are dishonest by choice. Sooner or later, their deeds will catch up with them, and they will pay by loss of reputation, and perhaps loss of liberty.

28) *Egotism and vanity.* These qualities should serve as red lights that warn others to keep away. They are fatal to success. Know the difference between one’s light-hearted humor and their baseline attitude.

29) *Guessing instead of thinking.* Most people are too indifferent or lazy to acquire facts with which to think accurately. They prefer to act

on “opinions” created by guesswork or snap-judgments. Think things through and exercise due diligence before forming an opinion.

30) *Lack of capital.* This is a common cause of failure among those who start in business for the first time without sufficient reserve of capital to absorb the shock of their mistakes, and to carry them over until they have established a reputation.

After reviewing this list of 30 major causes of failure, are any of them having an impact on you? It can be helpful to ask someone who knows you well to also go over the list as it applies to you. Most people cannot see themselves as others see them. You may be one who cannot.

No one can break the clench of failure if they can’t identify the cause. Knowing is half the battle. Hopefully, at this point you can identify some causes the led to or are leading to failure. And if you’re doing pretty good in life, then use the information contained herein to help someone else struggling with failure. Share this column.

If you have stumbled at this point in your career or life, then now is the time to redeem yourself. What you do moving forward, realizing what you have learned, will and should empower you to make the necessary changes to succeed. You deserve life’s riches as much as anyone else!

~ The End ~