

10 Actions to Make Your 2012 a Year of Authentic Success

-- Marcia Hughes and James Terrell



Does this picture reflect a conversation between your ideal self (how you would most like to live) and your real self (how you really live)? Authentic success integrates these two parts into a happier and more successful you. Our article was so successful as a way to frame moving into the new year, that it's back by popular demand.

Authentic success begets peace of mind because you are living and working in accordance with your values, strengths, and your sense of purpose instead of living in conflict. Reaching this highly desired state requires personal awareness. Without it you will be missing the joy from your current wealth by only focusing on what hasn't happened. Happiness and optimism, both components of emotional intelligence, are vital to experiencing authentic success. The following 10 Actions are based on years of research in the fields of emotional intelligence and positive psychology and set forth choices you can make to change the quality of your life in 2012.

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1. Define happiness. Know what you are looking for when you are seeking happiness. True happiness isn't the quick food fix; even Belgian chocolates bring a temporary response. As an article by Carlin Flora, "The Pursuit of Happiness" in *Psychology Today* states, "The most useful definition – and it's one agreed upon by neuroscientists, psychiatrists, behavioral economists, positive psychologists, and Buddhist monks – is more like satisfied or content than 'happy' in its strict bursting-with-glee sense. It has depth and deliberation to it. It encompasses living a meaningful life, utilizing your gifts and your time, living with thought and purpose. It's maximized when you also feel part of a community. And when you confront annoyances and crises with grace. It involves a willingness to learn and stretch and grow, which sometimes involves discomfort. It requires acting on life, not merely taking it in. It's not joy, a temporary exhilaration, or even pleasure, that sensual rush – though a steady supply of those feelings course through those who seize each day."
Action: Happiness is closely tied to being aware of what success truly means for you. Write your own definition of what Authentic Success means to you and intend to live in synch with your truth about Authentic Success in 2012.



2. Practice mindfulness. While defined in a variety of ways, mindfulness simply means paying attention. Notice how you are feeling and why and then make a choice to stick with your current path or take a breath and intentionally shift. Action: Set a time each day when you will review your day with intention to notice and expand your mindfulness. Even a short review will make a difference.
3. Be you. Embrace yourself. Know your good points and that which you don't consider so favorably. Know your styles and preferences and trust you are a good and resilient person. We received the following quote awhile ago and we give profound credit to whoever first said it though we don't know the original source. Action: Print this out and tape it around your environment:

There is nothing wrong with me that
what is right with me can't fix!

4. Practice your 2% Solution. As Marcia describes in *Life's 2% Solution*, the 2% Solution requires just half an hour a day (3 ½ hours a week if it works better to cluster your time). Spend that time doing something that's deeply nurturing, meaningful, fulfilling to you. It may be what you've vowed to do later when you are free to explore long-delayed purposeful pursuits. This seemingly small expenditure of time is even more critical in today's harried world, where work deadlines loom, the carpool to soccer awaits, the dry cleaning is piling up, and a dinner party fills up whatever free time is left. We get it all done, yet feel incomplete. This stress-filled existence leaches away our creativity, passion and sense of fulfillment. We sacrifice the long-view of our lives for short-term results, to check something off a list. No doubt, that scenario leads to burnout. Action: Integrate your enhanced awareness from taking some of the above steps with your own 2% project. Investing 2% of your time in an unusual way on yourself will make a world of difference. It's an achievable way of creating more work/life balance without having to turn your life upside down by radical change. You can learn more and follow the 10 step process found in my book *Life's 2% Solution*.
5. Relationships matter. Take time for friends and choose friends who support the values you wish to live with. Action: Notice who your friends are. Ask yourself if you are giving the time it takes to cultivate valuable relationships. If not make a change. Keep your expectations of time with friends manageable.



6. Carpe diem! Seize the day.
Action: Today is the only version of this day you'll ever have. Take advantage of it!
7. Know your values. It's easy to get caught up in the multitude of options that expand daily from numbers of cereals to forms of entertainment to interesting books. We all have twenty-four hours in a day. Take advantage of your day by knowing what is truly important so you don't get distracted with the job of making too many unimportant choices.
Action: Make a list of your top values – somewhere between five and ten items at the most. Then practice connecting your values with your choices.
8. Create. It feels good! Humans are amazingly creative beings. You probably create much more than you realize and miss giving yourself credit for your gifts.
Action: Intentionally make a soup, draw a picture, write a letter. Whatever feels simply good to you and then stop and acknowledge the act of creating and give yourself time to enjoy.
9. Express gratitude. This is a big one. Anytime you want to build happiness, be grateful for what you do have and go find a way to give. So much of authentic happiness is based in giving your gifts and in being a good and compassionate human being. Don't make it hard; find easy and natural ways to give with no strings attached. Pay it forward is a great strategy.
Action: Take time to stop and say thank you. Notice how you feel and how the recipient feels. Keep a gratitude journal. Notice five to ten events that occur each day for which you are grateful. Be specific. Feel the gratitude in your heart as you write your list and as you read it over.
10. Smile. It's impossible to be grumpy and smile at the same time.
Action: If you are willing to change your emotional state, you will. Breathe, notice what is going on, notice any tension you are holding in your body, and be willing to let it go. Be quiet and smile for a full minute.

Authentic success combines your inner and outer strengths, though integrating these two is not always so easy. Good luck on your journey. We're always interested in learning from you about how this works. Comment on our blog.