



NAPOLEON HILL

Principle 17: Use Cosmic Habitforce

The Three Essentials of Cosmic Habitforce

You are where you are and what you are because of your established habits. The aim of this book has been to force you to examine those habits and to teach you ways to change them. To do this, you need to understand and apply a universal principle I call cosmic habitforce. Cosmic habitforce is the law which makes every living creature, every particle of matter subject to the influence of its environment. It can work for you or against you. The choice is yours.

Using Natural Forces

The grandest example of cosmic habitforce is the operation of the heavens. Stars and planets move with clocklike precision. They don't collide; they don't suddenly veer off course (at least, not without some major change in the forces at work, like a supernova or a black hole, which are themselves just another example of matter behaving according to established patterns). A complex system of gravity and inertia, attraction and repulsion keeps things moving so precisely that for millennia human beings have been able to predict the position of the stars and planets, the timing of eclipses, and the regularity of meteor showers.

Sunflowers don't grow from turnip seeds; giraffes don't give birth to tadpoles; clouds don't release milk. Everything does that which is its nature to do. All this is a reflection of universal order, which makes so much of the physical operation of the world understandable. Certainly we are still working to understand more than we already do, but science is based on the faith that there is universal order. All actions and reactions are fixed on the basis of this order. In the science of personal achievement you seek to take control of this order by taking control of your habits. You recognize that your thoughts and actions will become as much a part of your nature as Pluto's orbit is a part of its nature. If your habits are positive, the seeds that they plant will be, too.

But you have to realize that cosmic habitforce always operates. If your habits are negative, their results will also be negative. This is why you must take control of your habits through self-discipline. Habits become a part of your nature by repetition. If you create thought habits by repeating certain ideas in your mind, cosmic habitforce will take over those patterns of thought, make them more or less permanent (depending on your intensity of repetition and practice), and put them to work. The same thing will happen with physical habits. If you follow the same route to and from work every day, you make that route a habit. You probably aren't even aware that it is a habit until you need to alter your route to go to a store or visit a friend. If you aren't paying attention when you start your trip, you will probably find yourself missing the turn or forgetting your task altogether. This is an example of why you need to be aware of and in control of all your habits.

If your dominating mental habits are thoughts of poverty, then cosmic habitforce will bring about poverty in your life. If your dominating mental habits are of prosperity and peace, cosmic habitforce will bring them about. There is an endless cycle here. Repetition of a habit intensifies it until it becomes an obsession. You can become obsessed with poverty or with achievement. This is why I have repeatedly stressed that *your thoughts are the only thing you can completely control if you decide to do so*. You must control your thoughts to control your habits. Cosmic habitforce doesn't leave you any room to complain that opportunity never came your way. You will know that as long as you have the power to form and express your thoughts, you have the power to change the circumstances of your life into whatever you want them to be. If your life isn't already what you want it to be, it is because you have drifted into your present circumstances by virtue of cosmic habitforce. You can change that.

Definiteness of purpose, backed by the power of cosmic habitforce and enforced by self-discipline and personal initiative, can bring you to the circumstances you want.

Moneymaking Habits

So the circumstances you want include making more money, do they? Here's how to go about using cosmic habitforce to do just that.

Step one. Create a clear mental image of just how much money you want to make. "A lot" is not a good answer. You need a concrete figure or a percentage above your current income.

Step two. Imagine some of the results of having that money: a new home, sending your daughter to medical school, a comfortable retirement. Doing this clarifies which of the ten basic motives are driving you (see page 18 for the list). The more motives you can associate with making more money, the stronger your push to achieve it.

Step three. Decide how you will earn this extra money. I've emphasized again and again that you can't get something for nothing. You must have a plan.

Step four. Write out your goal and your plan. Include your motives for making more money. Instead of a statement like "I want to retire in security," write something like "I want to own my home free and clear of debt; I want to be able to travel and visit my family three times a year." Set a date for starting and achieving this goal. Sign your plan; make it a contract with yourself.

Step five. Go back to your plan, and underline all the things that you need to do to make it happen that you aren't doing now. Make a separate list of these things.

Step six. Start doing the things on this list. Some of them will be daily tasks, such as spending less money on dining out and putting more money into your savings account. Others will be longer-range but will require daily progress, such as going the extra mile in your job. You have to bend all your efforts and thoughts to doing these things.

Step seven. Every day read your goal aloud to yourself until you have it memorized.

Repeat it in your mind when you get out of bed, when you start your job, when you come back from lunch, when your workday is finished, and before you go to sleep. Yes, this is just what you should be doing anyway in connection with your definite major purpose. You are giving cosmic habitforce a pattern to follow. The length of time you need to start conditioning your mind to get positive results depends almost entirely on the amount of faith and enthusiasm you place behind your words and actions. All voluntary positive habits are the products of willpower directed toward the attainment of definite goals.

If you say to yourself, "Sometime in my life I want a hundred thousand dollars," you are saying, "I am uncertain about my goals." Here cosmic habitforce cannot come into play because there is no definite pattern for it to follow. If you say instead, "Six months from now I want a hundred thousand dollars, and I will do X, Y, and Z to get it," cosmic habitforce has a pattern to follow. But it will follow that pattern only when your thoughts and actions lead it there. If you don't do X, Y, and Z, you won't develop cosmic habitforce.

Flexible Habits

Be sure to make your plan sufficiently flexible so that you can change it when you are so inspired. The key word here is "inspired." As you put your plan into action and develop applied faith, Infinite Intelligence may hand you a better plan than the one you have made. Treat such inspiration respectfully, for it will help you strengthen your plan where it is weak.

Don't express contempt for your hunches. If you repeatedly say to yourself, "I had the most foolish idea today," soon you will be having only foolish ideas. Instead write down your hunches as soon as they occur to you. Examine them carefully, and be sure you are not rejecting them simply because they involve something that hasn't been done before or because they don't conform to your current habits. The purpose of cosmic habitforce is to make

your habits serve you, not the other way around. Don't let your habits become so ingrained that whatever useful purpose they once served, they now limit your opportunity, tolerance, faith, and enthusiasm.

American Express enjoyed huge success with its charge card in the 1980s. It became a symbol of prestige, and millions of new members signed on. More businesses than ever accepted the card because they wanted to attract card members' dollars. Then the economy changed, but American Express's habits didn't. As it became necessary to stretch every penny and to watch every percentage of margin, cardholders began switching from the high-fee American Express card to no-fee cards from Visa and MasterCard that offered almost the same benefits. Merchants became angry because American Express claimed a higher percentage of each charge than other cards; worse, it was slow to credit merchants' accounts.

The number of cardholders began to fall dramatically. In Boston a group of restaurants even organized a boycott of American Express to protest its policies toward merchants. Profits disappeared, and losses mounted. Cosmic habitforce was at work. American Express kept doing business the way it always had until a crisis hit it right between the eyes. The habits that had made it the premier charge card were not the habits that would *keep* it the premier charge card. Its habits ruled them, not the other way around. Whatever your habits, comic habitforce will carry them out. It isn't enough merely to develop good habits and leave it at that. You must remain alert to the effect of your habits and be willing on a moment's notice to change them when new ones will serve you better.

Beware of These Habits

The good news is, ironically, if you have any of these habits, they will eventually cause some sort of defeat that will inspire you to eliminate them. Of course, you can spare yourself that trouble if you're willing to examine yourself, identify your negative habits, and resolve to replace them with positive ones.

- Poverty
- Imaginary illness
- Laziness
- Envy
- Greed
- Vanity
- Cynicism
- Drifting without aim or purpose
- Irritability
- Revenge
- Jealousy
- Dishonesty
- Arrogance
- Sadism

Embrace These Habits

You can replace any of the above with one of the following and profit by doing it.

- Definiteness of purpose. This is the primary good habit. It makes you more alert, more imaginative, more enthusiastic, and it increases your willpower.
- Faith. Let your mind dwell on positive ideas and on clearing away all negative influences and fears. This takes self-discipline.
- Personal initiative. You may have to force yourself at first to do things without being told to do them. But persistence will make it easier.

- Enthusiasm. Remember that *controlled* enthusiasm is your goal. You'll want to be able to summon it at will or shut it off when it isn't appropriate or might actually be dangerous.
- Self-discipline. This is a circular process; the more you exercise it, the more you have it.
- Going the extra mile. Start right now by doing something for which you don't expect to do be paid directly. Go the extra mile every day by sheer effort if necessary, and soon the effort will be replaced by habit.

Controlling Your Willpower

In the chapter on self-discipline you learned about your ego, the source of your willpower. Developing positive habits which can be taken over by cosmic habitforce depends heavily on strong willpower. Here's a review of the steps to strengthen your will:

1. *Step one.* Actively ally yourself with other people who can help you attain your major purpose. A mastermind alliance creates multiple patterns for cosmic habitforce to work on.
2. *Step two.* Develop your plan, drawing on all the members of your alliance for knowledge, ability, and the power of their faith.
3. *Step three.* Distance yourself from anyone and any circumstance that make you feel inferior. A positive ego does not grow in a negative environment. Remember that cosmic habitforce cause every living thing to partake of the dominating influence of its environment.
4. *Step four.* Close the door on the unpleasant experiences of the past. A strong will doesn't dwell on the past; a vital ego thrives on hopes and desires of an as-yet-unattained objective. If you keep your mind in a state of hope and desire, cosmic habitforce goes to work changing your hopes and desires into their material equivalent.
5. *Step five.* Surround yourself with every possible means of impressing your mind with the nature of your definite purpose. Hang mottoes on your walls; put up pictures of people doing what you want to do. You want to make it easier to create a mental image of yourself realizing your objective. The more you create this image, the sooner it will be taken over by cosmic habitforce and impressed on your subconscious.
6. *Step six.* Watch out that you don't overinflate your ego. One small prick with a pin and the escaping hot air will be like a runaway rocket, carrying you far away from where you want to be.

The Three Essentials of Cosmic Habitforce

Three qualities underlie the process of voluntary establishment of a habit.

Plasticity

This is the capability to change. It also implies that once a change has been made, your new form will hold until a subsequent change is made; you won't revert to your old status. Consider the difference between modeling clay, which is malleable but holds the shape it is given, and mercury, which can take any shape for a moment but will never keep it. You can be changed by environmental influences or by your own decisions.

Frequency of Impression

Repetition is the mother of habit. One of the factors affecting the speed with which a habit can be adopted is how often it is consciously repeated. Your ability to do this may vary with circumstances. Your job may require enough concentration on the task at hand that you have to pay attention only to it and develop your habits is your spare

time. Personal initiative also comes into play; if you're lazy, you won't knock yourself out developing a habit. This can definitely slow down the process of acquiring it.

Intensity of Impression

You can go through the motions of an activity, or you can concentrate on doing it; concentration builds the habit quickly. You impress the habit on your subconscious mind, and it becomes a part of everything you do.

Here's an example of these three essentials at work. A woman working the swing shift at an electronics assembly plant was allowed two ten-minute breaks, one at 6:00 P.M. and one at 10:30. Most of her coworkers used these breaks for cigarettes. She didn't want to cultivate a bad habit that would affect her health and make her a less pleasing personality, so she decided instead to have a snack. Her garden was in full bloom, so she would have a carrot, an apple, or something else she had grown herself.

Being human, she already had plasticity; it's part of everyone's nature. Every day, throughout the summer and fall, precisely at 6:00 and at 10:30, she would have her snack. This gave a definite frequency of impression. The element of intensity varied according to her relative hunger. Sometimes she ate with relish because her meal at home had been small. Sometimes she skipped a meal before coming to work, and the intensity of her hunger was even greater. But whenever the break came, she ate, no matter how hungry she was. As the months passed, she realized that regardless of what she had eaten, she got hungry before her breaks. She watched the clock, waiting for a chance to eat. Sometimes it seemed the time would never come. And when her garden was no longer producing good, fresh food, she switched to anything else she had at home: a candy bar, a doughnut, cookies.

This is a clear example of the voluntary establishment of a habit. But it wasn't really a good habit. She began to put on weight and found she was distracted from her work for half an hour before her breaks. So she decided to break her habit and stopped bringing food. This wasn't the answer because there was food in the vending machines at the plant, and she just started buying that. Not only was she still eating, but she was now spending more money to do it. At this point she really had to seize possession of her mind, inspire it with a strong motive, and take definite action. She set a definite minor purpose to break her habit. She did this by reading, substituting the desire for knowledge and inspiration for the desire for food. When her break came, she reached for a book instead of a candy bar. The same frequency of impression was there, of course. The only thing different was the intensity. At first the feeling of hunger persisted, but after a few days she acquired an appetite for reading which overwhelmed the old physical desire. She established a new habit to supplant the old.

Any worthless, superfluous, or harmful habit can be broken and replaced with a more desirable one if you want it to be so. The nucleus of the entire science of personal achievement lies in this concept. Cosmic habitforce is the means for incorporating every one of the Seventeen Principles of Success into your life. Control your mental attitude, keep it positive by exercising self-discipline, and prepare your mental soil so that any worthwhile plan, purpose, or desire may be planted by repeated, intense impression. Know that it will germinate, grow, and find expression, bringing you whatever it is you want from life.

**WHATEVER YOUR MIND CAN CONCEIVE AND BELIEVE,
YOUR MIND CAN ACHIEVE.**

From the Streets to the Operating Room

"Go down to the fish market and look in the crab barrel. They never have to put a lid on it because if one crab starts to crawl out, the others will grab him and pull him back down. That's what negative peer pressure does."

The speaker is Dr. Benjamin Carson, the 42 year old director of pediatric neurosurgery at the prestigious Johns Hopkins University and Hospital. He peppers his talk to one of the hundreds of youth groups he regularly addresses with stories of how he made it from the mean streets of Detroit to his position today as one of America's most respected neurosurgeons.

A Pathological Temper

Raised by a mother with a third grade education, he overcame grinding poverty and a pathological temper that once drove him to attempt to stab a friend in a dispute over which station to listen to on a transistor radio.

The blade of the cheap camping knife snapped when it hit the other boy's belt buckle, saving young Carson from prison or worse. "The other boy fled in terror," Dr. Carson recalled in a telephone interview, "but at that moment, I was more horrified than he was, because I suddenly realized that I had tried to kill someone over nothing.

"I raced home; locked myself in the bathroom and started thinking. Over the next three hours, I concluded that one of the reasons I got angry was because I always had to be the center of attention. I realized that if you don't allow yourself to become angry, others cannot get the upper hand with you. No external influence can do that to me any longer. I have power over it."

Dr. Carson believes that the secret desire of most young people is to find what Ralph Waldo Emerson labeled "the chief wants of young lives: to find someone who will make us do what we can." His mother provided that influence in his own life.

Despite the fact that she was uneducated and suffered frequent bouts of severe depression, she had high expectations for her sons. "She was my Emerson," Dr. Carson said. "She demanded that I do all I could. She required me and my brother to read two books a week and give her a report on them.

A New World

Books opened a whole new world to young Carson. Knowledge became his escape, and allowed him to transform himself from the one others regarded as the class dummy into the smartest kid in the fifth grade.

He graduated at the top of his class at Detroit's Southwestern High School and was recruited by a number of leading universities, but his options were limited. All required a \$10 fee to take the entrance exam; he had only one ten dollar bill. He could apply to only one college. He chose Yale and won a 90 percent academic scholarship.

Plagued by money problems and insecurity, near the end of the first semester, he was failing in chemistry and overcome by self-doubt. What am I doing at Yale anyway? He asked himself. Who do I think I am? Just a dumb Black kid from the poor side of Detroit who has no business trying to make it through Yale with all these intelligent, affluent students.

As he considered his options, Mr. Carson realized that business or teaching held little appeal for him. He has always wanted to be a doctor, and the opportunity was slipping from his grasp.

His only hope was to score well on the final exam in chemistry. As he crammed for the test, he knew it was hopeless. He was simply too far behind. He fell exhausted into bed and whispered a prayer: "God I'm sorry: Please forgive me for failing You and for failing myself."

Saved By A Miracle

As he slept, he dreamed that he was the only person in the chemistry lecture hall, watching as an odd ethereal figure worked chemistry problems on the blackboard. When he awoke. Mr. Carson vividly remembered the problems and quickly wrote them down before they faded from memory.

He knew enough about psychology to assume that his subconscious was attempting to work out resolving problems, but what followed could be explained only as miraculous. When the professor handed out the test booklet, it contained the exact problems the shadowy figure had solved in his dream. When the final chemistry grades were posted, Mr. Carson had scored 97 percent.

"For whatever reason," Dr. Carson said, "the God of the universe had a reason to reach down to a campus room on Planet Earth and send a dream to discouraged ghetto kid who wanted to become a doctor."

From that day forward, he had no doubt that he was on the right path, that great things were going to happen in his life, and he had better be ready for the. He graduated from Yale University and the University of Michigan Medical School and completed his internship and advanced surgical training at Johns Hopkins. After a year at a neurosurgery post in Western Australia, in 1984 he returned to John Hopkins where at the age of 33, he was named assistant professor of neurological surgery and director of pediatric neurosurgery.

Working Miracles For Others

Today, Dr. Carson works miracles in the lives of others, often accepting cases considered hopeless. He gained worldwide recognition in 1987 for his role as the primary surgeon in a successful operation to separate Siamese twins joined at the neck of the head. Five months in planning and 22 hours in execution, the surgery marked the first time such an operation was performed with both twins surviving.

The soft-spoken surgeon has pioneered a number of medical techniques, earning him the respect of the medical community and the eternal gratitude of his patients and their parents. He holds eight honorary doctorates, he is the subject of numerous articles and interviews, and there is a movie and television show based on his life in the works.

Asked when it's all over for Dr. Ben Carson how he would like to be remembered, he replied simply: "He used his God-given talents to try to make a better life for himself and everyone around him.

Preserving The Spark of Greatness

Although he has performed hundreds of operations on the human brain, Dr. Benjamin Carson is still in awe of its wondrous potential.

He is fond of using analogies to describe the incredible power of the mind. Even though the brain is small enough to hold in one hand, for example, a mechanical computer with the same capacity would cover the state of Texas and be 100 stories high.

Dr. Carson believes that Americans are too focused on athletics and entertainment and do little to recognize our academic achievers. He's doing something about it through a "USA Scholarship Program" that he established to provide immediate positive reinforcement to outstanding students.

The program offers cash incentives to kids. Beginning in first grade with the money going into an escrow account which if they continue to perform at an exceptional level will accumulate enough funds to pay for college by the time they graduate high school.

"We need to recognize and reward our academic heroes," he said. "We have to preserve that spark of Einstein or Mozart, that lives within us all."

Contributions and information requests should be directed to USA Scholarship Program, 12568 Cloverhill Drive, West Friendship, MD 21794.

Science Now Studying Effects of "Mindpower"

Common sense and common experience have told us through the centuries that it's true.

Today, research reported by respected mental health and medical professionals is beginning to confirm it: What you think determines what you become, both emotionally and physically.

The concept isn't new. The idea of mind over matter has always been a crucial ingredient of folk medicine, but the attempt to prove it clinically is one of the hottest new areas in health research.

Research being done today on the way we think and how it affects our emotional and physical well-being falls into several categories. Among them: Cognition studies, which delve into the ways we think.

Cognitive therapy, which helps us change our thought patterns to rid ourselves of self-defeating beliefs. Psycho-immunology, which attempts to understand how the mind can help the body resist illness and disease.

This new clinical research tells us that individuals' thoughts about life -- optimistic or pessimistic -- have more impact on their future than science has ever before been ready to concede.

Optimism Vs. Pessimism

Dr. Aaron Beck and others working at the University of Pennsylvania during the 1970s focused attention on how people can be taught to alter their moods and get rid of depression by changing the way they think.

The technique they introduced, called cognitive therapy, has since been used widely to change pessimistic mindsets into optimistic ones. Understanding how people think about themselves and how they explain in their "internal dialogue" the things that happen to them -- "explanatory style" is the term used by Dr. Martin Seligman, also at Pennsylvania -- is another area of study that defines the differences in thought patterns of optimists and pessimists.

Optimists respond to disappointments by developing a plan for overcoming them. Pessimists try to forget the experience or assume prematurely there's nothing they can do about it.

Seligman's work indicates that a person's explanatory style may be influenced in early childhood by the way a mother or other primary caregiver explains bad things.

His studies show that even third and fourth graders' achievement test scores are influenced by their pessimistic or optimistic expectations.

Some of Seligman's research has reached into the realm of physical health. In a long-range study of Harvard men who were graduated between 1939 and 1944, he and fellow researchers found that a positive or negative mental attitude at age 25 was a good predictor of health at 65.

The ground-breaking new field called psycho-immunology attempts to understand how our minds may help us resist migraine headaches, ulcers, viruses, bacteria and even life threatening diseases.

Psycho-immunology combines two heretofore distinct fields, psychology and immunology. In simplest terms, it's the study of how a Positive Mental Attitude -- the PMA of Napoleon Hill and Clement Stone -- can serve as a defense against disease.

Although many immunologists just a few years ago tended to view the field as just short of snake oil peddling, recent research findings have brought skeptics into the fold -- at least to the degree that they're willing to be persuaded by hard evidence.

Does Misery Love Company?

Despite all the evidence in favor of optimism, psychologist Richard Wenzlaff at the University of Texas San Antonio finds that pessimism is alive and well in the give-and-take of everyday life. He is conducting research on the social preferences of depressed, or pessimistic, people.

His research points either to the fact that pessimistic people seek each other out in social situations or that depression is contagious.

"We find that depressed people tend to choose other unhappy people to talk to," he says. "And they ask more negative leading questions when they start a conversation."

The bad news is that pessimism is easy to transmit. The good news is that optimism is, too.

Further studies by Wenzlaff, Seligman and their colleagues might tell us how to spread scientifically the benefits of Positive Mental Attitude to our associates -- and our descendants. *by Dot Yandle*

Points to Ponder

1. It takes a habit to replace a habit.
2. All of your successes and failures are results of habits you have formed.
3. The orderliness of the world of natural laws gives evidence that they are under control of universal plan.
4. Cosmic habitforce is the use of universal law, whether it is known or unknown to you.
5. For every result there is a cause, and results are brought about through the use of cosmic habitforce.
6. First, you get a habit, then it gets you.
7. Any "bad" habit can be broken and replaced with a "good" one.

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