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Principle 8: Control Your Enthusiasm

Enthusiasm Changes Lives

Enthusiasm bears the same relationship to your PMA and your progress toward success as gasoline to a car's engine; it is the fuel that drives things forward. In working on your PMA, you will learn to control your mind. The same control can be used on your enthusiasm, so that it is continually fed into the cylinders of your mental engine, where it is ignited by the spark of your definite purpose and explodes, pushing the pistons of applied faith and personal initiative. Enthusiasm is power. With faith, it can transform adversity, failure, and temporary defeat into action. This Transmutation depends on your control of your thoughts, for they can just as easily be expressed negatively as positively. By controlling your enthusiasm, you can change any negative expressions and experiences into positive ones. The next chapter on self-discipline will further strengthen your ability to do this.

The Benefits of Controlled Enthusiasm

Controlled enthusiasm has many positive effects. As you develop it, you will:

1. Increase the intensity of your thinking and imagination
2. Acquire a pleasing and convincing tone of voice
3. Reduce the drudgery in your work
4. Have a more attractive personality
5. Gain self-confidence
6. Strengthen your mental and physical health
7. Build your personal initiative
8. Overcome physical and mental fatigue more easily
9. Spread your enthusiasm to others

Enthusiasm stimulates your subconscious mind in much the same way that PMA does. By filling your conscious mind with enthusiasm, you impress upon your subconscious that your burning obsession and your plan for obtaining it are certain things. When your conscious enthusiasm dims, your subconscious will be there, full of images of your success to help you stoke your conscious fires of enthusiasm once again.

The Dangers of Uncontrolled Enthusiasm

Enthusiasm, as I've said, is like gasoline. Properly employed, it can do magnificent things. But if you spill it about carelessly, you run the risk of a catastrophe. One danger is that your enthusiasm can lead you to monopolize conversation. If you do nothing but talk about yourself, people will tune you out, forget anything worthwhile that you have to say, and refuse to offer you aid and advice when you seek it. How gladly do you suffer bores? You must also take care that your enthusiasm does not cloud your judgment. Don't reveal your plan to competitors because you think it's so good. If you can see its value, so will others. Don't rush ahead when your plans for your definite purpose call for resources or circumstances that have not appeared.

And don't let your enthusiasm find expression in the wrong things, like roulette wheels or the racetrack. It's fine to enjoy diversions which bring other benefits, like relaxing fishing trips or mind-broadening reading. But if you pour

all your enthusiasm into these things, you won't have any left for your definite major purpose, and soon you won't have the resources for your diversions either.

How to Develop Controlled Enthusiasm

Here are the steps to building your enthusiasm:

1. Adopt a definite major purpose.
2. Write out a clear statement of that purpose and your plan for attaining it. Include a statement of what you intend to give in return for its realization.
3. Back your purpose with a burning desire. Fan that desire; coax it; let it become the dominating thought in your mind.
4. Set to work immediately in carrying out your plan.
5. Follow your plan accurately and persistently.
6. If you are overtaken by defeat, study your plan carefully, and change it if necessary. Do not change it simply because you have met defeat.
7. Ally yourself with others whose aid you need.
8. Keep away from joy-killers and naysayers. Stick with the optimists.
9. *Never let a day pass without devoting some time to furthering your plan.* You are developing enthusiasm as a habit, and habits require reinforcement.
10. Keep yourself sold on the idea that you will obtain your definite major purpose, no matter how far away that moment seems. Autosuggestion is a powerful force in developing enthusiasm.
11. Keep your mind positive at all times. Enthusiasm will not thrive in a field full of fear, envy, greed, jealousy, doubt, revenge, hatred, intolerance, and procrastination, it needs positive thought and action.

Does this list sound like things you are already doing? It should. Enthusiasm is the natural outgrowth of all your efforts toward success. What is important is that you now recognize that every appropriate move you make is building your enthusiasm as well.

Examine each move for the presence of enthusiasm. Understand how it has helped you, and you will be in a better position to apply this tool consciously when you need it.

Enthusiasm Boosters

If you think that your enthusiasm needs work, that it hasn't been growing apace with your progress on the other principles, you can stimulate it with some simple exercises.

To Be Enthusiastic, Act Enthusiastically

Does this advice seem redundant? It isn't. If you enter a meeting with your enthusiasm low, ignore it. Shake hands confidently; reply definitively to questions; assert the value of your ideas and proposals. Ideally, enthusiasm makes these things automatic, but if you consciously perform the actions, you will begin to see their positive results. This stokes the fires of enthusiasm.

Keep an Enthusiasm Log

When your enthusiasm runs high, make a note of it in a notebook. Write down the circumstances that inspired you and the manifestations of that enthusiasm. Were you spurred to action? Did you solve a problem? Did you persuade someone of something? Also, keep a written copy of your definite major purpose and your plan for it inside your notebook. Then, whenever your enthusiasm is ebbing, pick up your valuable book. Not only will it remind you of the reason you should be enthusiastic, but it will also review for you the benefits of that enthusiasm. Enthusiasm is a spiral, turning inward or outward, rising or falling. To give your enthusiasm a push in the right direction, refer to your notebook when the spiral is collapsing in on itself.

Complete a Can-do Task

In a way, can-do tasks are like crutches, but when you aren't moving the way you should be, you're not helping yourself by not using them. These are things that you know you can complete quickly and well. They should be somehow related to your definite major purpose, so that they help direct and control your enthusiasm. For instance, suppose that you own a hardware store. Your responsibilities may not have you on the floor very often; instead you're in the back office. But you remember how much you enjoyed working on the sales floor. Go back to that floor; make a few sales; renew your enthusiasm by returning to its roots.

A word of warning: If you have to resort to enthusiasm boosters frequently, something is wrong. You have strayed from the definite purpose you were pursuing. You will need to take a serious look at your plan for that purpose and think about realigning it so that it reflects your ambitions more closely.

Enthusiasm and the Mastermind Alliance

One of the most important places where your enthusiasm will go to work is in your mastermind alliance. If you share your enthusiasm with the other members, you will increase theirs. They, in turn, will be able to feed and support your enthusiasm. Sometimes all members of the group benefit equally from this process. But it is more likely that you, as the leader, will benefit most. The Law of Increasing Returns will reward you for your initial, originating enthusiasm in a way that far exceeds either your own contributions or the dividends paid to the other members.

Increased enthusiasm in your alliance will mean increased faith as well. With that additional faith will come more insight into Infinite Intelligence and thus more creativity.

Criticizing Without Destroying Enthusiasm

Sometimes it will be necessary to criticize members of your mastermind alliance or the people working for you who are not carrying their share of the load. You can do this without destroying their enthusiasm if you use a careful process. You must lead your "black sheep" to admit their mistakes on their own. Here's an example of that process, taught me by Andrew Carnegie:

My personal secretary was a young man who had been with me for several years. He was efficient, dependable and had a pleasing personality. He became associated with a group of people who had the bad habit of getting their enthusiasm out of a whiskey bottle. The first thing I knew he began to show up late on Monday mornings. Then he became irritable, and I knew the time had come for me to do a little friendly analysis on his behalf. So I prepared the way by inviting him to my home for dinner.

During the meal we chatted pleasantly about everything except the subject I had in mind discussing with him. After dinner we went to the library and lighted our cigars. The stage was then set, so I began by asking him a few questions.

First I asked him if he believed a man who was a regular drinker should be considered for a promotion, and he replied that he thought not. Then I asked him what he would do if he had in his employ a man so addicted to drink that he could not get to work on time, and he replied that he would probably fire him.

By this time he had begun to squirm in his chair, and I waited a while to give him the chance to do some serious thinking. Then I asked him if he thought it might be possible for a sensible man to change his habits in time to save himself from ruin.

He waited for a couple of minutes before answering, then straightened up, looked me squarely in the eyes and said:

“You needn’t go any further. I have known for a long time that this hour was coming, and I deeply appreciate your kindness in making it as easy as possible. All I can say is that I have been a fool, but I can change, and I will do so if you bear with me long enough to let me prove it.”

So he was disciplined, but it was with self-discipline. He took hold of his job with renewed enthusiasm and promoted himself from one position to another until he became manager of one of our largest steel plants. You can see the value and importance of this kind of approach. If Carnegie had angrily confronted this man, no doubt the fellow would have been so ashamed he would have denied any problem. Carnegie would have lost a valuable employee, and the man would have been driven only deeper into his destructive habits. Instead both men came out ahead.

Respect and nurture the enthusiasm others have. It can overcome powerful problems, and from those problems it will extract benefits beyond your imagination.

Enthusiasm Changes Lives

Another person’s enthusiasm was what set me moving toward the success I have attained. That person was my stepmother. I was nine years old when she entered our home. We lived in poverty in rural Virginia, but she had come from better circumstances, and she would not accept our circumstances without protest. My father introduced me to her with these words: “I would like you to meet the fellow who is distinguished for being the worst boy in this county and will probably start throwing rocks at you no later than tomorrow morning.” My stepmother walked over to me, tilted my head upward, and looked me right in the eye. Then she looked at my father and replied, “You are wrong. This is not the worst boy in the county, but the smartest one who hasn’t yet found an outlet for his enthusiasm.”

That statement began a friendship between us which was destined to produce these Seventeen Principles of Success and to carry their influence around the world. No one had ever called me smart. My family and neighbors had built me up in my own mind as being a bad boy, and I had done nothing to disappoint them. My stepmother, in one brief statement, changed all that. She changed many things. She persuaded my father to go to dental school, from which he was graduated with honors. She moved our family into the country seat, where my father’s practice could flourish and my brothers and I could be better educated. My father resisted these efforts at first, but her enthusiasm always won him over. When I turned fourteen, she bought me a secondhand typewriter and told me that she believed that I could become a writer. I knew her enthusiasm, I relished it, and I saw how it had already improved our lives. I accepted her belief and began to write for local newspapers. I was doing the same kind of writing that fateful day I went to interview Andrew Carnegie and received the charge that became my life’s work. My stepmother’s enthusiasm had not just put me in a position to grasp such an opportunity but given me the self-confidence and enthusiasm of my own to succeed at it.

I wasn’t the only benefactor. My father became the most prosperous man in town. My brothers and stepbrothers became a physician, a dentist, a lawyer, and a college president. What power enthusiasm has! When that power is released to support definiteness of purpose and is constantly renewed by faith, it becomes an irresistible force for which poverty and temporary defeat are no match. You can communicate that power to anyone who needs it. This is probably the greatest work you can do with your enthusiasm. Excite the imaginations of others; inspire their creative vision; help them connect with Infinite Intelligence.

Building, demonstrating, and sharing enthusiasm are a perfect manifestation of the moral principles behind the science of success. When you deliver your work with enthusiasm, you are already going the extra mile. You create

a success consciousness around you that inevitably affects others for the better. The more enthusiasm you direct into the world, the better you are preparing yourself to attain exactly what you want.

Living Life with Enthusiasm

The Young Winston Churchill was a profound under achiever in academics. This is interesting, because in many ways he was a genius; for instance, as an adult he could quote verbatim whole pages of material he had read 50 years previously. Even as a youth, he was able to memorize a ten thousand-stanza poem.

Churchill later grew into a world class author and historian, a truly excellent amateur painter, arguably the best orator, of his age, a cunning fox of a politician and a visionary leader of the free world-all different passions. He embodied enthusiasm.

There is a key to understanding his academic failure. He once said, "They kept asking me questions about what I didn't know as opposed to what I did know."

Really, we all only get enthusiastic about our own agendas. Once Churchill was free to write, speak and act upon what he did, know and had a passion for, he went non-stop for the rest of his life. But when he was forced to respond to what others imposed, he was lackluster.

What do you passionately care about?

I am quite frequently boondoggled by the number of people I run into who are apathetic and bored. In a universe of great books, magazines, things, people, loves, work, food, music, film, to art, philosophy, politics, religion, children, and Hubble telescopes -- people are bored?

How in the name of God -- literally -- can people be bored? There isn't enough time to study and understand, let alone do what life has to offer. Your task is to identify ten things that turn you on. Then prioritize them. Write them down.

Twist the agenda imposed on you so that you get to study, communicate and do what you passionately care about. I am not suggesting that you should never compromise. Life is a compromise. But you must have a base from which you are compromising.

It's like the poor soul who says, "All I want is a friend." The response is, Well, what do you want to be friends about? People who have friends have music friends, another set of political friends and a different set they go fishing with.

I don't fish. Yet I enjoy being in the company of somebody who can enthusiastically tell me the beauties of it. I know he is a kindred spirit because he intuitively understands joy. And I know that anyone who is passionate about fishing could get interested in my passion even if just for a moment.

Grasp your dreams and twist the world's agenda to fit your passions and share your enthusiasm. It's infectious. Boredom is a killer, but the world will buy joy gladly.

Napoleon Hill Revisited: On Enthusiasm

Enthusiasm is a state of mind that inspires and arouses a person to action for the task at hand. It is contagious, and vitally affects not only the enthusiast, but all with whom he comes in contact.

Enthusiasm bears the same relationship to a human being that an engine does to an automobile- it is the vital moving force. It enables great leaders to inspire enthusiasm in their followers; it is the most important factor of salesmanship; and it is, by far, the most vital factor of public speaking.

Mix enthusiasm with your work, and your work will not seem hard or monotonous. Enthusiasm will so energize your entire body that you can get along with half your usual amount of sleep and, at the same time, perform two to three times as much work without fatigue.

Enthusiasm is the vital force with which you recharge your body and develop a dynamic personality.

Some people are blessed with natural enthusiasm, while others must acquire it-which fortunately is a relatively simple process. Begin by doing the work or providing a service that you like best. Money or circumstances may temporarily force you to engage in work you don't like, but no one can stop you from determining in your own mind what your Definite Chief Aim in life will be. No one can stop you from planning ways and means for translating this aim into reality. Nor can anyone stop you from mixing enthusiasm with your plans.

Other simple elements in building enthusiasm are:

- An environment where one comes in contact with others who are enthusiastic and optimistic Financial success
- Complete mastery and application, in one's daily life, of the Laws of Success
- Good health
- Knowledge that one has served others in some helpful manner

All of these sources of stimuli are self-explanatory. An additional element is good personal appearance. The psychology of dress is often misunderstood, but appropriate dress for a given situation is the most important part of the embellishment every person must have in order to feel self-reliant, hopeful, and enthusiastic.

To develop enthusiasm, you must remember that it is not so much what you say as the tone and manner in which you say it that makes a lasting impression.

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No one can afford to express, through words or acts, that which is not in harmony with his own belief. If he does, he must pay the penalty of loss of his ability to influence others.

I do not believe I can afford to try to deceive anyone about anything, but I know I cannot afford to try to deceive myself. To do so would destroy the power of my pen and render my words ineffective. It is only when I write with the fire of enthusiasm burning in my heart that my writing impresses others favorably; it is only when I speak from a heart that is bursting with belief in my message that I can move my audience to accept that message.

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Points to Ponder: Principle 8

1. To be enthusiastic, act enthusiastically!
2. Enthusiasm is to progress toward success as gasoline is to a car's engine. It is the fuel that drives things forward.
3. You can develop controlled enthusiasm by taking the eleven steps to building your enthusiasm.
4. Enthusiasm stimulates your subconscious mind. By feeding your conscious mind with enthusiasm, you impress upon your subconscious that your burning desire and your plan for attaining it are certain.
5. Enthusiasm changes lives, as evidenced by the entrance of Napoleon Hill's stepmother into his life.
6. Enthusiasm is a state of mind. It inspires action and is the most contagious of all emotions.
7. Enthusiasm is more powerful than logic, reason, or rhetoric in getting your ideas across and in winning over others to your viewpoint.
8. No one is born enthusiastic; it is an acquired trait.
9. Enthusiasm is the radio wave that transmits your personality to others.
10. Enthusiasm begins and ends in your mind.