

"SUCCESS REQUIRES EFFORT"

By Jacob J. Gamet

I'm submitting my
essay again, but with
your signed form.
Thank you again.
Gratefully,
Jacob J. Gamet

What is *success*? To some, it's Hollywood lights, to others, a humble and moral life, and others, financial security. Regardless of what people perceive success to be, there is one thing that successful people know about it—it requires effort. You can't wish success into existence. Neither can you wave a magic wand and expect piles of cash to appear at your feet. If it were up to me, I'd characterize 'success' as a verb because it requires action from anyone who desires it... unless you win the lottery or inherit riches.

During an in-prison group meeting, a young man once said that he wants to change because he's been to prison three times. He wanted to learn how to break his cycle of imprisonment, at least for his children and loved ones who depend on him being physically in their lives. I believed he was sincere. But like success, sincerity, too, requires action, an effort to back up your heartfelt desires with action. You can't say you're serious about success if you don't make any meaningful effort to advance toward your goal(s).

Goals—all of us have them, yet few of us actually accomplish the greater ones. "Why?" we ask ourselves when our dreams seem as difficult as catching butterflies in the wind without a net. With an ambitious gleam in our eye, we embark on a bright-eyed journey (with little foresight as to the cost) that routinely ends in disappointment. Had we tallied the cost of success with a dollop of reality prior to the journey, the endeavor may have been more promising. Hence, theoretically, the prisoner should have proactively sought counseling for his alcohol problems, a vice that ultimately massaged his criminal tendencies. He failed to 'walk the talk' that was necessary for him not to recidivate.

This morning I read an e-mail from April, my sister-in-law, in which she said (and I'm paraphrasing) that all of her success didn't come easy. It requires a lot of dedication and sacrifice. As a divorced single mother of two, by any estimation the odds of her succeeding were slim. But she persevered. And as the proud owner of a booming catering company (Angel's Best Catering), April was invited to an event honoring successful businesswomen in the community.

And weeks ago I received a letter from my 18-year-old son telling me about his dreams to be successful. He said he wants to prove his critics and skeptics wrong. His first step toward that goal was getting his driver's license. He passed his written and driving test in the first try. I let him know how proud I was of him. He's full of ambition. And although he didn't do well in school, he yet expressed a desire to get his GED. I reminded him that desire is merely the hope for success, not the destination. He has to plan, execute, revise, and reexecute that plan—many times in the face of difficulty and distraction.

If success was easy (I say to myself), my son would have graduated from high school with honors. Nevertheless, he's still dedicated to attaining success; he's merely resigned himself to reaching it by another path. Whichever path he chooses, I'll support (and guide) his efforts as best I can. My hope is that I can convince him to move to Seattle so he could escape his neighborhood distractions and focus wholly on getting his GED, working for his aunt (April), and in that process learning all the hard work that success requires—in large part, from April.

In spirit, I'll be there to celebrate April's success, and that of her fellow businesswomen. So I raise my glass to you who've dared to venture forth unto your dreams through the daunting Valley of Doubt and Failure. Be fearless. Be awesome. And most importantly, no matter the obstacle in your way, don't ever forget that... *success requires effort*.