



# How Success Thinks

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An insightful new six-session course from the Rohr Jewish Learning Institute

## ■ COURSE RATIONALE

Scientists were curious: Why are some people much more successful than others? They studied successful people and compared them to the others. What did they find? The main difference is *how they think*. So, how does success think?

Countless books, subject-matter experts, seminars, and workshops have long promised to reveal the secret to success. The recent development of the Positive Psychology movement, however, responds to the need for the empirical, scientific study of how to cultivate a satisfactory and fulfilling life.

At the core of *How Success Thinks* are six key productivity concepts—from motivation and goal setting to creativity and relationship building—that are the building blocks to success. Drawing on the latest findings in Positive Psychology and other social science research, as well as from classic Jewish thought, this eye-opening course suggests that the most productive people on earth don't merely act differently; they view the world, and their choices, differently.

The course discusses how we all can cultivate our signature strengths, adopt a growth mind-set, access our inner well of creativity, deal with weaknesses, and overcome procrastination and other obstacles to success.

Clinicians seeking to help clients/patients to succeed—professionally, at home, and in their relationships—will gain much from the course. Framing psychological models within the context of the Jewish worldview can help psychologists and other mental health providers better understand and respond to Jewish clients'/patients' spiritual and religious beliefs and cultural norms.<sup>1</sup>

## ■ COURSE OBJECTIVES

- A. Learn to identify and cultivate a mind-set for success in achieving goals.
- B. Learn to create a personalized strategy to achieve success.
- C. Learn to overcome outside, mental, or emotional barriers to implementing a plan for success.



## ■ LESSON ONE

# Defining Success

Knowing what we want is the first step to getting it. So, what really matters most to you in your life? A great resume? An inspiring memoir? Perhaps, a blend of the two?

Talking about success can be problematic when the word itself connotes dual, and potentially conflicting, meanings.<sup>2</sup> In this lesson we ask: What do we mean when we talk about success? To what extent are personal goals shaped by external factors and pressures? How can we develop definitions of success that reflect our core desires, values, and principles? How do competing motivations impact our performance?

This lesson draws on research literature on Internal Motivation (often called "intrinsic motives") and Success<sup>3</sup> as well as the Jewish mystical practice of *hishtatvut*—equanimity, a state in which one is not dependent on external influence or validation but in which one lives from within.



## ■ LESSON TWO

# Mind-Set

Do you believe you have what it takes to succeed? Or do you wonder whether perhaps success is not in your destiny? One thing is certain: to achieve success we must convince ourselves that we can.

How should we address persistent doubts that certain goals might be beyond our capabilities, or that success is even possible? What does science say about our ability to substantially change and grow?

This lesson explores underlying mind-sets and self-beliefs that are foundational to success. The lesson reviews the theories of Learned Helplessness,<sup>4</sup> Self-Efficacy,<sup>5</sup> and Entity vs. Incremental Mind-Sets<sup>6</sup> on how thought patterns can impact success. We will

also explore Jewish theological insights into fundamental questions such as: Why are we here? What were we designed to achieve?



### ■ LESSON THREE

## Signature Strengths

There are secret weapons in everyone's arsenal: maps that point the way to success. They are our signature strengths.

Martin Seligman,<sup>7</sup> and Marcus Buckingham and Donald O. Clifton<sup>8</sup> argue that while it is important to strengthen character weaknesses, to maximize the chances of success, goals should be approached from individual signature strengths.

This lesson explores these theories and also integrates the Jewish mystical tradition of *sefirot* to analyze the basic traits and patterns that form an individual's character and personality.

When we identify our signature strengths, what we are passionate about, and what we are most resistant to, we can uncover our personal life mission and unique path to success.



### ■ LESSON FOUR

## Creativity

Success in relationships is key to success in every area of life. Not only because almost all achievements involve another person. Social-emotional skills matter for non-social tasks and projects as well.

Studies of data from the Fast Track Project<sup>9</sup> indicate that there is a relationship between social competence and wellness.<sup>10</sup>

How do we develop characteristics that win friends, resolve conflicts, and build deep and lasting relationships? How do we overcome negative traits, such as arrogance, jealousy, and anger, which are obstacles to successful relationships?

The lesson explores interventions that can improve social and emotional skills, as well as classic Jewish works on character refinement.<sup>11</sup>



## ■ LESSON FIVE

# *Interpersonal*

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## ■ LESSON SIX

# *Failure to Execute*

What happens if, after we've learned all the secrets, we still seem to be stuck in old patterns? There is often a gap between establishing goals and resolutions, and then executing them. What are the obstacles to being able to follow through and persist?

The lesson explores the phenomenon of procrastination,<sup>15</sup> and suggests several solutions, including the theory of Grit<sup>16</sup> to provide insight for individual persistence. It integrates the Jewish mystical concept of *seder histalshelut*—a model from Jewish mystical teachings that explores how we develop our desires into ideas, feelings, and actions; and how we can get unstuck.

## ■ END NOTES

1. "Clearly, many clients, especially the highly spiritual, believe that religious and spiritual issues not only are acceptable and preferable for discussion in therapy but also are important therapeutic factors, central to the formation of worldview and personality and impacting human behavior. Psychologists who provide psychotherapeutic services need to be sensitive to clients' needs to address religious and spiritual issues; those who provide training to future counseling psychologists need to prepare students to deal with these issues; and researchers need to identify the therapeutic aspects of religion and spirituality in counseling."

(Rose, E. M., J. S. Westefeld, and T. N. Ansley, (2001). "Spiritual issues in counseling: Clients' beliefs and preferences," *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 48, 61–71.)

2. Success: 1. the accomplishment of an aim or purpose. 2. the attainment of popularity or profit. —Merriam Webster Online

3. Wrzesniewski, Amy, Barry Schwartz, Xiangyu Cong, Michael Kane, Audrey Omar, and Thomas Kolditz, "Multiple Types of Motives Don't Multiply the Motivation of West Point Cadets." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 111, no. 30 (2014): 10990–10995, and elaborated on in this review, and others: Deci, Edward L., Richard Koestner, and Richard M., "A Meta-Analytic Review of Experiments Examining the Effects of Extrinsic Rewards on Intrinsic Motivation," *Psychological Bulletin* 125, no. 6 (1999):627–668.

4. Seligman, M.E.P. (2006), *Learned Optimism: How to Change Your Mind and Your Life*. New York: Vintage Books.

5. Bandura, A. "Self-efficacy," In Ramachandran, V. S. (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Human Behavior*. (Vol. 4, pp. 71-81). New York: Academic Press. (Reprinted in Friedman, H. (Ed.) (1998) *Encyclopedia of Mental Health*. San Diego: Academic Press.)

6. Dweck, C. S. & H. Grant, (2008), "Self-theories, goals, and meaning," In Shah, J.Y. and W.L. Gardner (Eds.), *Handbook of Motivation Science* New York: Guilford, (pp. 405–16.

7. Seligman, M. E. P. (2002). *Authentic Happiness*. New York: Free Press.

8. Buckingham, M., and D. O. Clifton (2005), *Now, Discover Your Strengths: How to Develop Your Talents and Those of the People You Manage*, New York: HarperBusiness.

9. The Fast Track Project, led by Drs. K.L. Bierman, K.A. Dodge, M.T. Greenberg, J.E. Lochman, R.J. McMahon, and E.E. Pinderhughes, is based on the hypothesis that improving child competencies, parenting effectiveness, and school context and school-home communications will, over time, contribute to preventing certain behaviors across the period from early childhood through adolescence. The initial sample of kindergarten students was selected in 1991 through 1993, with the study's researchers following the children for twenty years. [www.thefastrackproject.org](http://www.thefastrackproject.org)

10. Jones, D.E., M. Greenberg, and M. Crowley (2015), "Early social-emotional functioning and public health: The relationship between kindergarten social competence and future wellness," *American Journal of Public Health*, 105(11), 2283–2290.

11. Jewish theology suggests that the human ability to be social is a culmination of all our unique talents over the animal kingdom, including our ability to exercise self-control, delay gratification, prioritize the needs of others before ourselves, and be forgiving and compassionate.

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- 13.** Jones, D.E., M. Greenberg, and M. Crowley (2015), "Early social-emotional functioning and public health: The relationship between kindergarten social competence and future wellness," *American Journal of Public Health*, 105(11), 2283–2290.
- 14.** Jewish theology suggests that the human ability to be social is a culmination of all our unique talents over the animal kingdom, including our ability to exercise self-control, delay gratification, prioritize the needs of others before ourselves, and be forgiving and compassionate.
- 15.** Fuschia Sirois and Timothy Pychyl, "Procrastination and the Priority of Short-Term Mood Regulation: Consequences for Future Self," *Social and Personality Psychology Compass* 7/2 (2013): 115–127.  
Joseph R. Ferrari, Ph.D., *Still Procrastinating: The No-Regrets Guide to Getting It Done*: John Wiley & Sons, Inc. (2010).  
Pychyl, Timothy A., and Gordon L. Flett, "Procrastination and Self-Regulatory Failure: An Introduction to the Special Issue." *Journal of Rational-Emotive & Cognitive-Behavior Therapy* 30.4 (2012): 203–204.
- 16.** Duckworth, Angela L., Christopher Peterson, Michael D. Matthews, and Dennis R. Kelly. "Grit: Perseverance and Passion for Long-Term Goals," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 92.6 (2007): 1087-101.