

Seven Pillars of Success

And now, what's going to happen to us without the barbarians? They were, those people, a kind of solution.

– Constantine Cavafy

Introduction

As Constantine Cavafy points out in the passage above, changing your life brings on a brand new set of problems. Incarceration has this effect. Not only is there a new set of problems waiting for you on your way to prison, there is also a new set of problems waiting for you on your way home. Deciding which problems to deal with establishes the stakes and determines what the impact of your successes and failures will be. Take on the right problems and your life could change dramatically for the good. Too often, however, people retreat to the old, familiar problems from their former life because they are confounded by the ones that come along with their plans for something different. They would rather stick to what they know and can count on than work their way to solutions that take their life in a bold, new direction.

Before you give up on your plans, however, keep in mind: The key to success is falling six times and getting up seven.

Prochaska's Stages of Change

Individuals don't just change. They move through a series of stages over a period of time...which can include frequent delays, apparent procrastination, false starts, and relapses. That's just part of the process of change.

It doesn't indicate failure and should not be used as an excuse to stop.

For the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want.

– Saint Paul

Saint Paul reminds us that no matter how important your calling is to the world or how determined your will is to follow your purpose, you are still prone to do what you despise and not what you want. No one said it would be easy!

For those that want to get closer to their purpose, they need to understand the following stages of change:

Pre-Contemplation – Lack of awareness that life can be improved by a change in behavior or a lack of believe that change is possible. Pre-contemplators have no intent to change in the near future (6 months). They are resistant or unmotivated and tend to avoid information, discussion, or thought of a necessary change.

Contemplation – Recognition of the problem, initial consideration of behavior change, and information gathering about possible solutions and actions. Contemplators intend to change in the near future. They are more aware of the benefits of changing, but remain keenly aware of the costs and are often seen by others as ambivalent to change or as procrastinators

Preparation – Introspection about the decision, reaffirmation of the need and desire to change behavior, and completion of final pre-action steps. Preparers are

in transition toward action and intend to take steps to change within the next month.

Action – Implementation of the practices needed for successful behavior change (e.g. exercise class attendance) People in the Action stage make overt, perceptible lifestyle modifications for fewer than 6 months.

Maintenance – Consolidation of the behaviors initiated during the action stage. Maintainers are working to prevent relapse and consolidate gains secured. They are distinguishable from those in the Action stage in that they report the highest levels of self-efficacy and are less frequently tempted to relapse.

Termination - Former problem behaviors are no longer perceived as desirable (e.g. skipping a run results in frustration rather than pleasure).

Seven Pillars of Success

Our Seven Pillars of Success focus on the seven areas that have the strongest influence on your ability to live a fulfilling life. As you think of what success means to you in each of these areas, make a note about what you can do *right now* to achieve it. We refer to these as “Simple Steps” for two reasons: First, the more you complicate a goal, the less likely you are to achieve it; and second, in order to achieve anything you have to take action...or, as an Irish saying puts it:

You'll never plow a field by turning it over in your mind.

As you make gains in these seven areas, you will also gain a deeper experience of freedom that stimulates new plans and better opportunities for even greater successes. Success breeds success. On the other hand, as you lose ground in these areas, you will feel increasingly trapped by your circumstances and find it more and more difficult to take beneficial action. Failure breeds failure.

Simple Steps

In writing down your Simple Steps, start with three things that you can do right now. No more! It is impossible to do a good job on more than three things at a time. Therefore taking on more than three things will ensure that you do less than your best on some of the most important things in your life. But make sure that one is related to Pillar One (Employment). We're not suggesting that employment is more important than the others – just that being an unemployed former offender brings about a whole host of problems that can make success after prison impossible to achieve. Your other Simple Steps can be related to whatever seems most pressing to you.

In selecting your Simple Steps, look for small efforts with big rewards, where you need as little outside help as possible, that you can do immediately, and that will set the stage for other Simple Steps. Some examples are picking a sponsor, finding a mentor, connecting with a church, filling a prescription, and joining a community health club.

Note: Only add a simple step when you have completed a simple step.

Inhibitors and Accelerators

In deciding what Steps to take, consider not only adding things to your life that move you toward your goals but getting rid of things that are slowing you down.

We call the things that move you toward your goals “accelerators” and the things that keep you from them “inhibitors.” Both are important but it is sometime best to address the inhibitors first.

Pillar One – Employment A Job That Warms Your Soul

It's unlikely that your first job will "warm your soul." In fact, it may not even pay all your bills. The trick is to keep your first job in perspective. Stay on the lookout for assignments that are consistent with your interests.

We call your first job a "Right Now" job because it takes care of your needs – at least some of them – right now. Right Now jobs take the pressure off, giving you time to focus on your bigger plans. Unfortunately, many people only change under pressure. They shelve their plans as soon as the pressure is bearable. If you make this mistake you are very likely to find yourself in a disappointing and unfulfilling cycle of low-wage jobs where you are unable to make ends meet.

Always move in the direction of your interests and you will discover the job you love to do.

Simple Steps (Accelerators)

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Simple Steps (Inhibitors)

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Pillar Two – Health A Body That Works For You

In order to perform well on the job and in your life you have to be physically and mentally fit. Being fit not only makes you more attractive, it increases your energy, and it allows you to be more generous to others – both in your social circles and on the job.

The most common health concerns in the world of crime and corrections are substance abuse disorders and mental illness. If recovery is part of your life, you have to make this a centerpiece of your daily activities – whether that means managing your medication, attending support groups, or taking time for daily reflections. There are., however, many other health related concerns that can dull your efforts and keep you from achieving your goals.

Taking care of your health will benefit everyone and improve the overall quality of your life.

Simple Steps (Accelerators)

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Simple Steps (Inhibitors)

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Pillar Three – Peers Life Giving Relationships

Perhaps the most important factor in the fight to stay out of prison is the relationships you keep with friends and family. It is hard to emphasize this enough. These relationships can be destructive or they can be uplifting. And if you want to succeed in life after prison, you have to be able to distinguish the two. You have to be skilled at cutting ties with unproductive people that undermine social values and establishing ties with successful people that uphold social values.

This is tough with friends and especially tough with family.

Nevertheless, imagine what would be possible in your life if all your relationship were uplifting and life giving?

Simple Steps (Accelerators)

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Simple Steps (Inhibitors)

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Pillar Four – Housing A Home That Nourishes You

Inside and outside. You don't just move into a neighborhood, a neighborhood also moves into you. Look around and ask if you want to be like the people you see. Unless you take deliberate and thoughtful action, your neighbors' dominant lifestyle will wear on you and work its way into your life – for good or for bad. Can you move into a stable neighborhood with responsible neighbors? One that lures you away from the things that lead to crime?

Many people have!

Even in a chaotic environment, there are people doing positive, uplifting things...find those people and make them part of your life – they are your ticket up (and out).

Simple Steps (Accelerators)

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Simple Steps (Inhibitors)

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Pillar Five – Volunteering A Bigger and Better Community

Good volunteering builds relationships and good relationships can help you in a whole host of ways. From making friends and feeling a sense of personal satisfaction, to learning from the experiences of others and gaining more efficient access to community information. Volunteering can also provide opportunities to work with a diverse and changing group of knowledgeable people that can expand your skills and deepen your resume.

It is easy, however, to isolate yourself in small social circles that – although comfortable – don't improve your life. Think of volunteering as an investment of your time. And like any investment – if done thoughtfully – your volunteering should return more to you than you originally put in it.

Simple Steps (Accelerators)

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Simple Steps (Inhibitors)

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Pillar Six – Education A Well Exercised Brain

Your brain is like a muscle in the sense that the more you use it the stronger it becomes. But not everyone likes to learn the same thing and not everyone is able to learn in the same way. Ted Turner, Sir Richard Branson, Charles Schwab, Winston Churchill – even our own O.D. McKee who could barely read a word – struggled with formal education but were exceptionally successful in the world. They were able to learn and develop themselves in ways that fit their unique learning styles...and they never stopped.

Whatever you are interested in and however you are able to learn best, you should be working constantly at it! Don't let a day go by without expanding what you know and pushing the limit of what you want to learn. Knowledge – whatever its form – is power.

Simple Steps (Accelerators)

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Simple Steps (Inhibitors)

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Pillar Seven – Purpose A Personal Ruling Thought

They say a junkie chasing a fix is “on a mission.” He has one thought that rules every decision and puts every ounce of his energy into getting what he wants. Imagine putting that same focus and drive into something positive....something creative and life-giving? Think of what your life would be like if you were as certain as a junkie of what you have been called to do and as dedicated to fulfilling this calling.

When you do something that fills you with enthusiasm, you are moving in the right direction. Follow that enthusiasm and you will find your ruling thought. Find your ruling thought and you will discover yourself. Discover yourself and you will fulfill your calling.

Simple Steps (Accelerators)

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Simple Steps (Inhibitors)

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Waiting for the Barbarians

What are we waiting for, assembled in the forum?

The barbarians are due here today.

Why isn't anything happening in the senate?

Why do the senators sit there without legislating?

Because the barbarians are coming today.

What laws can the senators make now?

Once the barbarians are here, they'll do the legislating.

Why did our emperor get up so early,

and why is he sitting at the city's main gate

on his throne, in state, wearing the crown?

Because the barbarians are coming today

and the emperor is waiting to receive their leader.

He has even prepared a scroll to give him,

replete with titles, with imposing names.

Why have our two consuls and praetors come out today

wearing their embroidered, their scarlet togas?

Why have they put on bracelets with so many amethysts,
and rings sparkling with magnificent emeralds?

Why are they carrying elegant canes

beautifully worked in silver and gold?

Because the barbarians are coming today

and things like that dazzle the barbarians.

Why don't our distinguished orators come forward as usual
to make their speeches, say what they have to say?

Because the barbarians are coming today

and they're bored by rhetoric and public speaking.

Why this sudden restlessness, this confusion?

(How serious people's faces have become.)

Why are the streets and squares emptying so rapidly,
everyone going home so lost in thought?

Because night has fallen and the barbarians have not come.

And some who have just returned from the border say
there are no barbarians any longer.

And now, what's going to happen to us without barbarians?

They were, those people, a kind of solution.

Accountability Group

*Iron sharpens iron
So one man sharpens another.
– Proverbs 27:17*

It's one thing to say you're going to do something and a very different thing to actually do it. During periods of significant change, we all need sincere encouragement, respectful feedback, fresh perspectives, and accountability. CEi provides this positive support by conducting regular Accountability Groups for WRC recipients..

As soon as you qualify for a WRC, you should begin participating in weekly Accountability Groups at CEi. You are expected to participate in these Groups for at least three months; however, you may continue as long as you like provided you are contributing in a meaningful way.

If you are experiencing trouble in any area of your life – especially if you have lost your job – we expect you to renew participation in the group.

Structure

Relational time. There should be a few minutes at the beginning of the Group for members to speak with one another casually. For this reason the Group will never begin on time. When it appears that everyone has had adequate time to meet and greet each other, the facilitator calls the Group to order.

Opening remarks. The facilitator opens the meeting by welcoming everyone, introducing any newcomers and commenting very briefly on the reading.

Pillars. The facilitator calls on a member to lead the group in a recitation of the Seven Pillars of Success.

At CEi we build on the Seven Pillars of Success. As we gain successes in these seven areas, we also gain a deeper experience of freedom. In this way, success

breeds success. On the other hand, without successes in these areas, we feel increasingly trapped by our circumstances. Such that, failure breeds failure.

These Pillars are

Leader All	Pillar One – Employment A Job That Warms Your Soul
Leader All	Pillar Two – Health A Body That Works For You
Leader All	Pillar Three – Peers Life Giving Relationships
Leader All	Pillar Four – Housing A Home That Nourishes You
Leader All	Pillar Five – Volunteering A Bigger and Better Community
Leader All	Pillar Six – Education A Well Exercised Brain
Leader All	Pillar Seven – Purpose A Personal Ruling Thought:

Rules. The facilitator calls on a member off the Group to read the following rules:

1. Be courteous of the Group's time.
2. Say your name before you speak.
3. Speak personally and specifically using I-statements .
4. Don't teach, preach, judge or take sides..
5. Speak when moved to speak and don't speak when not.
6. Be emotionally present.
7. Preserve confidentiality...what you hear here, who you see here, when you leave here, let it stay here.

Reading. The facilitator reads a pre-selected passage that relates, in some way, to one of the Pillars. The reading should be relatively short, thereby permitting it to be read a second time comfortably.

Silence. Following the reading, the facilitator calls for three minutes of silence.

Discussion. When the silence is ended, members are free to comment on the reading and provide their experiences and insights on the related Pillar.

Accountability. Members take turns briefly commenting on their past week and discussing the two simple steps they are working on. Other members are free to comment if they have had relevant experiences or helpful information.

Feedback from the World of Work. When all members have discussed their simple steps, the facilitator provides both positive and negative feedback from staffing customers and student workers received during the past week. This feedback is intended to help members improve their work habits.

Announcements. The facilitator reads from a prepared list of announcements and invites members to make relevant announcements of their own.

Closing. The facilitator acknowledges the progress that members have made on the Seven Pillars, thanks them for their support, and reminds them that we are always available to talk with them if they have the need.

Silence. Following the closing, the facilitator calls for three minutes of silence in respect or everyone that has been impacted by the criminal justice system.

Job Search

Following Accountability Group meetings at CEI, members conducting a job search are provided transportation to one or two pre-selected companies to submit employment applications. Companies will be consistent with our general profile of a friendly employer, operate on a bus line, and need workers like you.

Trading Up

People are born into unequal circumstances, with unequal abilities, and unequal resources. No matter how much or how little they start with, however, some people always seem to end up with more – more leisure, more friends, more joy, more energy, more recognition, more money. So how is this?

Successful people have a knack for trading up, never accepting less for what they give. In this way, way they are steadily improving their circumstances. To make the most of what you have, consider the following principles of trading: (a) everything is a trade; (b) every trade is related; (c) if you don't know what you want, you risk trading down; (d) value is personal; (e) not everything has value; (f) the mark of a good trade is that both sides win.