

10 steps to BUILDING A POSITIVE SELF-IMAGE by Bill Sanders

Now that we've looked at the need for improvement, let's see what we can do about building a self-image that really works. I'd like to share with you ten steps to becoming your own best friend.

Step 1: Don't Compare Yourself With Others. Compare you with you. Do you realize that if you were the only person in the world, you might feel lonely, but you would probably have a healthy self-esteem? If you didn't look around at others in school and see kids who seemed better looking, richer, happier, more coordinated, you wouldn't *see* yourself in a negative light. Picture this: Three sisters who are triplets. All three are the prettiest in the entire school. All the other girls envy their beauty, but all three are the most unhappy girls in their class. Why? Because they compare themselves with each other. Each one thinks the other two look better, so they all feel miserable. What a shame!

If you compare yourself with others, try this. Engage in *positive comparison*. Look at positive qualities, characteristics, or learned skills in others and use them to challenge yourself. Only look at areas in your life that you can change. You can't compare looks; we can't do much to change our looks. You can't compare family background or height; we can't change those, either. But you can desire another's dedication to practice, his honesty and respect for others, or her developed memory (by the way, each of us has a great memory. It is either trained or untrained. So if you forget something just say, "It's my memory-it's untrained").

Even though we just spent all of last chapter talking about the harm of comparing yourself against others, write down you plan for not doing it any more in your life:

Step 2: Become Really Good at Something. Find your "thing," do it, and do it well. People who believe in themselves and can hold their heads high and look others in the eye almost always have their "specialty." They've become really good at something, and-it *doesn't matter what it is!* Ask yourself, *What am I good at? What skills seem to come naturally? What am I willing to work hard at and practice over and over? What would I like to excel in?* Find your song and sing it. Please believe me when I say this. *Greatness lives in you!* I absolutely believe it. Say it to yourself over and over again: *"There is greatness in me. I will become really good at _____."*

You see, the real winners of a marathon are those who gave it their best-their all. A friend of mine came in 124 out of over 300 runners in a marathon. That means 123 people can in before him, but he felt like a winner. He stood at the finish line and congratulated the rest of the runners who came after him. He says, "I compete against me, no one else. I ran my race today, and I'm proud that I finished and did my best

My nephew Andy wasn't muscular and athletic like his cousins, whom he was very close to. For the first years of his life this bothered him, and he really didn't think much of himself. When he entered high school, he became interested in two hobbies. By practicing and spending many hours he became the best he could. Today he plays the trumpet better than anyone one else in his entire school. He is also an accomplished bird watcher. He has made positive identification of more birds in his state of Ohio than 95 percent of the people his age. Andy now has self-esteem. He believes in himself. He didn't worry about what he couldn't do, but went ahead and became really good at two things that lie within his interests. You can find your areas also.

Make a list of five things that you would like to become good at and are willing to put the time and effort forth:

Step 3: Develop a Well-Rounded Life. Life is made up of main areas: family, spiritual, mental, social, physical and financial.

Do you spend most of your time in the social area of your life? Do you totally neglect your family? It is very important that you look over where you spend most of your time (because that is where your love and interests usually lie) and see if you are being fair to yourself and the other important people in your life.

In what areas could you be more rounded in?

Step 4: Learn How to Be Motivated From Within. What you tell yourself about yourself has a lot to do with how well motivated you'll feel. Without even realizing it, you give yourself messages about how you're doing-whether you're a winner or a loser. Psychologists call this unconscious conversation with yourself "self-talk".

You can control the thoughts you feed yourself-what you think about *is* up to you. Instead of focusing on the negative, turn to the positive.

NEGATIVE SELF-TALK

I can't do it.

I knew I'd flunk that test

I'll never get picked for the lead part in the play. .

That's just my luck. Things never go right for me.

Why is everyone looking at me? I bet my pants are unzipped.

POSITIVE SELF-TALK

I can do it. I know I can .

That test score wasn't like me. I'm a winner. I'll do better next time.

I can see it now: Opening night I'm the lead part, and it goes great

I didn't do as well as I can, but I'll do better next time.

People always look at me. It must be my new haircut. I knew they would like it.

Don't listen to the negative voices of the world around you.

IF THE WORLD SAYS

(A student in the hall) "Another lousy Monday." You say, "Monday is just a day. It is not lousy or good. We make it good. I think I will have a super,

fantastic, good day today."

(The weatherperson) There is a sixty percent chance of rain today." You say, "There is a forty percent chance of sunshine today."

(Your friend) "If I don't get asked out for that date, I'll just die." You say, "I think I know your problem. You've been saying that for so long-he thinks you're dead!"

"Look at that stop light." You say, "It's a 'go light.' "

"I love the weekend." You say, "Not me-I love the 'strong end'"

(A kid in the cafeteria) "I don't want the 'end' of that bread." You say, "Every loaf of bread I see has two 'beginnings.' "

(Your brother) "I've got a 'cold.' " You say, "I don't believe in colds. I did catch a slight 'warm' last winter."

(A teacher) "This is the toughest test you'll have all year." You say, "I like challenges. I will study extra hard and make it easy."

(A smart aleck at school) "I'm going to make more money than you this summer." You say, "Not unless you get a job in a mint. That's the only place people 'make' money. The rest of us earn it."

"Where do you live?" You say, "The corner of walk and don't walk."

"Is it a long walk?" You say, "If the light gets stuck."

"How far is it from your house to my house?" You say, "The same distance it is from my house to your house."

This week try noticing how most people respond with negative actions, words, and expectations. But don't let yourself get caught up with the rest of these negatrons. Remember: Words are motivators moving us toward success or failure. If you let other people's negativisms affect you, you'll fall back into failure.

Go ahead and feel sorry for them, but don't follow their example.

Most of all, don't let yourself be caught up in such senseless negative attitudes and actions as I did in my junior year of high school .

One day as I walked down the hall in school, minding my own business, the unexpected happened: a Mack truck hit me,

I fell to the ground with the laughter of my classmates ringing in my ears. Well, it wasn't really a Mack truck, but another student. Because he had been running behind me, I had no clue of what would happen until his large hand hit me with great force.

Extending his arm and putting his full weight behind the shove, he had toppled me over effortlessly. Picking myself up, I felt embarrassed and angry, yet I didn't have enough nerve to fight back. That didn't mean I forgot him, though; for the next two years I made it my goal to get even with him. Preferably, in front of the entire student body-on video for the entire world to see.

In preparation I began to get in shape. I ordered a muscleman outfit with giant horse pills, a book on becoming another Atlas, and two dumbbells. Guess who was really the dumbbell? I also enrolled in a karate class and worked for almost a year and a half to attain new heights of glory. No one ever knew about my secret goal of beating him up in front of everyone, but it kept burning inside me just the same. (I still can't believe that I spent a year and a half of my life with one consuming aim-to get even. It was probably the biggest waste of time, and the most senseless ambition I've had. Getting even: puts you on the same wavelength and level as the person I feel angry at. It also shows you cannot control your own emotions. I let someone else totally control me, what I thought about, and how I acted. He had forgotten the incident five minutes later, but with me it lasted a year and a half. How stupid.)

List some of the ways you see yourself talking negative instead of positive:

Write down the positive thing to say instead of what comes naturally:

Step 5: Look Your Best at All Times. People who are "dressed up" feel up. You don't have to have the most expensive clothes. Just be clean and neat. Your attitude changes when people say, "You look nice," or, "I like that shirt."

When could you dress up to feel better about yourself?

Step 6: Read Good Books and Listen to Motivating CD's. Good biographies and autobiographies can help you learn from other's successes. Read about famous leaders in all areas of life, especially those who had well-rounded lives. Notice how some famous people never did well in one area. By studying others, you can see where you want to be strong and not make the same mistakes. Listen to cassettes that will motivate you and help you believe in yourself and set new goals. Listen to teachers and speakers with positive, uplifting messages. Even boring speakers have good points if you will listen for them and pick them out.

After my junior year in college I read my first book, cover to cover. That's right. All through school I never read an entire book. I associated reading books with bookworms, and I didn't want to be a bookworm. One day I picked up a book by Dale Carnegie called *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, and for the first time in my life I began to hear the same type of things that I am sharing with you now: that life is a cause and-effect situation. What we do causes an effect. What we give out comes back. I read that if you smile, most people will smile back. I learned that if you plant corn, you can't get beans. If you plant good thoughts in your mind, bad actions for the most part will not come out. In the same way, when you plant bad thoughts over and over, good actions will not come out.

I got so excited that I called the local Dale Carnegie people, and a salesman came and signed me up for the next course. Though it cost several hundred dollars, and I didn't know anything about it, I felt very excited.

In this fourteen-week, public-speaking class, they get people on their feet to give short talks in front of the other classmates, to

help build self-confidence. During the fifth session, I received the best-speech award of the night. I even received a standing ovation. Two days later, from the man who signed me up, Don Davies, I received a card. It said, "In all my years with Dale Carnegie, I have never seen a standing ovation at anything other than a graduation ceremony. You have some kind of speaking talent in you. Keep it up. You will go a long ways."

The next week I felt afraid to go back, because now I had an image of being a good speaker to live up to, so I quit the class. That's right-I quit! I didn't have a fear of *failure*. Like many people, I had a fear of success. How *can* I *outdo what I did before*? I asked myself. *If I do well, they will expect more from me. If I try my best now, they will think I can always do it.*

Do you know what? Mr. Davies kept calling me for almost a year and convinced me to go back and take the course again. He kept telling me I had a speaking talent. Even though I didn't believe him, I started the course in, a year later, just to get him off my back. This time I showed him that he had someone to believe in. I proved to him that all his effort had a purpose and a reason, because this time I didn't quit the course until the seventh session. That's right. After the seventh session I felt so afraid to get up there and speak that I quit again. The days I had a class I became nervous. I couldn't eat all day, because I was so afraid of that one minute speech. But do you know what he had the nerve to do?

He called me up the very next day and said, "You're going to take it again. You are going to finish this thing."

Well, about three weeks later, in a neighboring town, because of his persistence and his belief in me, I took the class. I finished the course this time. I even ended up being an assistant in several other classes, and I sold the Dale Carnegie course for two years. It turned into one of the greatest, self confidence builders in my life.

A year or so later I got a hold of some motivational cassette tapes. The first one was called *The Strangest Secret*, by Earl Nightingale. He simply states that the strangest thing in the world is that we become what we think about. Solomon says,

'As a man thinks in his heart, he becomes". If I think about success, I will become successful. If I think about failure, I will become a failure. If I think I will get good grades and picture in my mind getting good grades, most likely I will work hard and fulfill that vision.

I shared these cassettes with some friends, and before I knew it, several people were getting together on a regular basis to hear them. One day a friend of mine named Bill had an idea. He said, "Wouldn't it be something if we could have fifty or sixty people get together and listen to these and all grow and become more positive and successful?" We rented a large hockey stadium and hired seven other speakers. The greatest salesman in the world, Joe Girard, spoke. One of the most exciting female speakers ever to grace the platform, Marilyn Van Derbur, was there. Robert Schuller from the Crystal Cathedral, Wayne Dyer, who wrote *Your Erroneous Zones*, Earl Nightingale himself, Art Fettig (called Mr. Lucky), Dr. Denis Waitley, the psychology of winning expert, my friend Bill, and myself.

Bill acted as MC that day, and I spoke on the platform with everyone else. I felt scared to death. Of course, the real amazing thing came in the fact that we sold over 6,000 tickets in our little town for this marvelous event. We found out a month later that a large rally like this had never been attempted in a town with smaller than 1 million population. Our town only has 100,000 in it, but you *see* what happened. We became what we thought about. We pictured success, and we went after it, and we just happened to get it.

We were like the bumblebee. It does not know that it cannot fly-it just flies. Do you know that scientists have it proven scientifically and aerodynamically that it is impossible for the bumblebee to fly? Guess why it can do it? It doesn't bother reading their books; it just flies.

About halfway through the promotion of that rally, we met a man named Dale Maloney. He showed us that we could do it, because he had done it before. He showed us creative ways of selling tickets, of knocking on doors and talking to people and using enthusiasm. He got my younger brother, Dale, so excited that he went for a Guinness world record. He wanted to make the most telephone calls in a one-month period. Even though he didn't get the record, he personally sold over 2,000 tickets.

My talk that day was entitled, "Find Your Song and Sing It." I wanted everyone to know that life was meant to be lived. There is a song in each one of us that needs to be sung. We need to shout it to the highest treetops

Since that time, I have had the opportunity and blessing of sharing the platform with such notable speakers as Paul Harvey, Art Linkletter, Zig Ziglar, Dr. Norman Vincent Peale, President Ford and President Reagan. Many thousands of young people all

across the country have delighted me as I have shared the message that meant so much to me. I have since written 13 books, spoken to more than a million high school students, and personally answered over 10,000 teen letters and emails.

It all started when I read one book and listened to one cassette.

Make a plan right now for putting good uplifting stuff in your brain:

Step 7: Try Something New Each Week! Each week step out of your "comfort zone." Once you get into the habit of trying new things, your confidence level will grow by leaps and bounds.

Try one of these each week:

- A. Introduce yourself to someone new.
- B. Write someone a thank-you or I-was-just-thinking-of-you note.
- C. Ask at least one question per class. (Make sure it's a question that is on your mind. Don't just ask a nonsense question because I've suggested it.)
- D. If the opportunity arises, give an oral book report instead of a written one.
- E. Always look for opportunities to give a report, help take attendance, give a short speech, and so on. (The greatest single confidence-building activity I know of is public speaking. You won't be perfect, but you will be one of the top 5 per cent in your class when you give it a try! Others will admire your courage. Don't say you feel nervous, and no one will know.)
- F. Stop to help another student (if he has just dropped his books, can't get his locker opened needs help carrying something, or needs someone to talk to).
- G. Sit next to different people in the cafeteria:

Others will start to notice you have more courage than they do. This will give you courage to keep growing.

- H. Ask the teacher for extra work to do in an area you enjoy. (By the way, this is not apple polishing. You are developing the attitude of doing more than expected. When you get in the job market, you will earn more than expected also.)
- I. Look for a frown on another student's face and be her friend. (Find a frown and turn it upside down.)
- J. Help a lower class person, or just be nice to him (Remember: What you give away to others comes back to you also.)
- K. Tell your mom and dad you love them and need to have some time alone with them to talk.
- L. This one may give you heart failure, but try anyway. Be nice to your younger brother or sister. Specifically ask if you can help on a project or with homework. (I told you it may cause serious health problems.)
- M. Organize a homework night for three or four students who don't know the material as well as you do. This will be good leadership practice for you.
- N. If you're old enough to take on a job, write a letter to a local business, asking to have an interview concerning summer employment.

The summer I was seventeen, I tried something new: My friend Steve and I painted our way to California and back. We did the yellow lines on parking lots the whole way. We set a goal of \$200.00 a day-or we wouldn't sleep. We would knock on doors, ask for the job, and then we would open the trunk, get out the materials, and paint the lines on the parking lot.

For the next three summers I painted parking lots. It helped pay for a lot of my college education. Most of all, it gave me an identity. I came back to school with a new car. People didn't notice my car so much, but they did notice me walking taller. For the first time in my life I could do something that other kids couldn't do. I learned how to earn money. That is why I encourage you to find something that you can do and do well. Discover your burning desire inside.

Now make a list of your own. The important thing is not *how well you* do in these activities but that you give them a try. You probably will find some unexpected things you really do well at. Go ahead; no one will develop your self-confidence for you.

Winners and positive people pay the price by doing the things most others hate to do. Make that list.

Is it frightening for you to think of doing something new and different?

Who could you talk about this that seems to be at trying new things?

What are you going to do this week to step out of your comfort zone?

Step 8: Save Money! Save at least 10 percent of every dollar you earn-preferably 20 percent. Living at home, you can do it. A friend of mine saved several thousand dollars from his paper route, in about five years. After high school he bought a house with his money. He had a better self-image just knowing he was able to save money while all his friends "blew" the money they had. I know, I always spent my money on the first thing that came along.

Do you have a way of making money?

When are you going to start saving?

Step 9: Make a Thankful List and a Success List. A thankful list describes the abilities and talents and things you have been given without hard work and effort. A success list shows achievements you have accomplished because of hard work and effort.

Step A: Take a three-by-five card.

Step B: Put twenty things in each column. For example:

MY THANKFUL LIST

A great family

A loving dad

A dedicated mom

My church

My eyesight

My legs

My ability to hear

My heart

My overall health

Living in America

Freedom of choice

My school

My many freedoms

Wise authorities in my life

My sports ability

My good looks

My singing talent

Sense of humor

Love for people

God's love for me

MY SUCCESS LIST

I learned to talk

I learned to walk

I can tie my shoes

Hop

Ride a bike

Read

Read *Treasure Island*

Boy/Girl Scouts (all accomplishments)

Learned to drive

Built a model airplane

Baked a cake

Ate the cake [just kidding]

Good friendship with Mary

Quit complaining about getting up early

Stopped smoking

Lost five pounds

Got an A in English

Said no to drugs

Came home on time all last year [okay, one month]

My savings account

In short: this one little activity will help you become more confident, raise your self-esteem, believe in yourself, say no to peer pressure, rise above the crowd, become your best and try harder to be better. Go to it! I know you can.

Write down 20 things you are thankful for? (Remember, these are things you did not earn or work for, they were simply given to you)

Now write out 20 things that you put effort towards and worked for:

Step 10: Smile, Look People in the Eyes, Be a Great Listener and Learn to Say Thank You! These four simple yet seldom used activities will automatically put you on the trail toward a healthier self-esteem and more confidence.

When you smile, you look happy. Others think you're happy, so they act happy around you. This chain reaction gives you even more reasons to smile.

By looking people in the eyes you will feel better about yourself and tuned into them as well. It's easier to trust those who have the confidence to look you in the eye, plus only when you have nothing to hide do you usually look others in the eye.

By becoming a great listener, you will be the person people like to be around. More people equals more friends and more friends equals being able to influence more lives thus making a larger contribution to the world we live in.

By being a person who says, "Thank you." You will be one of the few people around who are developing the character quality of being grateful and thankful. Do you know that it has been said that it is almost impossible to be grateful and depressed at the same time. I know from personal experience that when I am not thankful and am feeling sorry for myself it is much easier to become depressed and have a feeling of hopelessness.

These 10 steps are like hidden gems of wisdom that many people overlook or think they are too simplistic to actually try or live out on a regular basis. If you will give them a try and do your best to incorporate them into your life, maybe one each week, you will be living out the theme of this book. Every decision counts and everyone matters. Keep it up. You are well on your way to becoming the person you were meant to be, living out your potential instead of hiding it under a rock. I am very proud of you for all of the effort it takes to read this book and apply the principles in it. You should be proud of yourself as well.

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