

SERIES H: Topic 1

Use Your Full Potential

Everything you think and do, moment by moment, increases or decreases your potential. Your lifetime potential is the total of all your thoughts and deeds, plus the value of all the good that results from them. It is the most you can achieve using your best thinking and all your energy all the time.

Few people come close to knowing and using all they are capable of. Since you can never know the future, you can never know the outer limits of what you can do.

Even if you seem to be getting through life quite well, you can still be falling far short of your potential.

While others may judge you by what you accomplish, what really counts is the quality of your efforts, more than the results of your efforts.

As you approach your potential in any area of your life, you experience an increase in pride, self-satisfaction and options. Just as your view of the world expands as you approach the horizon, the world of possibilities expands ahead of you. The possibilities that come into view create the excitement that takes the work out of getting ahead. The more you strive to reach your potential, the more likely you are to have moments that will take your breath away.

No matter what has held you back in your past, nothing is keeping you from becoming all you can be in the future.

Very small decisions can change your direction in life. A change of one degree can get a hiker lost by 100 feet for every mile he travels. You need a compass you can check with often. Your compass is your Plan.

You check your Plan by asking good questions. "How can I make the most important contribution?" "How can I position myself so I can be discovered?" "How can I observe experts doing what I want to be able to do?" "How can I improve my Plan for life?" "How can I keep from getting lost?"

Ways to use more of your potential:

- Use your time on the tasks that will produce the most lasting benefits and advantages for your future.
- Stop doing what doesn't work or is of little value.
- Work with others to accomplish tasks beyond what you could accomplish alone.
- Reduce the number of mistakes you make by learning more before you make important decisions.
- Maintain good relationships and seek new ones with those who inspire you, share your values or can help you become all you want to be.
- Put distance between those who don't have your best interests at heart or who cause you to be less than your best.
- Maintain balance in your life. A history of correct decisions in one area of your life is rarely enough to offset failure in another.
- Make sure your efforts and behavior work to the good of all concerned.

- Learn from experts up front before you develop bad habits or damage the project you are attempting to master.

> **A person who appears to be doing poorly may be performing closer to the top of his potential than a highly successful person.**

With the statement that follows, you can turn your experiences, even bad ones, into assets. It changes the way you look at them.

> **Everything that has happened to me, good and bad, and everything I am or am not capable of doing, make me perfectly suited to accomplish something very important. When I find that, I will find contentment, fulfillment, and happiness.**

Remember you can never get to the point where you have nothing to give. Former drug dealers are often the only ones who can reach those who are still "using." Former gang members are often the only ones who can convince some kids to get off the street. Fathers who weren't there for their kids can be there for other people's kids who have been neglected. GIs who have had to kill enemy soldiers and are haunted by their memories may find comfort in helping other "wounded warriors." Star Parker was a notorious prostitute and welfare cheat who became a celebrity by using her experience to get the welfare laws changed. It is the job of all those on their death beds to encourage their caregivers, so they will be happy working with others who need care.

With the exception of our living descendants, what you produced with your life will be gone soon after you die. If you take anything with you, it will be the value of what you did for others. Many people will be completely unaware of whom, how, and how many people they have helped.

Givers earn a stake in the lives of those they help.

Soldiers' lives can be brief, but their lifetime potential includes the benefits of freedom enjoyed by every person they have defended.

Parents' lifetime potential includes some part of the successes and quality of life of each child they have raised.

Doctors get a stake in the lives of their patients, the residents they teach to become doctors, and everyone who enters the hospital they helped build.

Teachers who have taught their students to strive and believe in themselves continue to reap benefits from students they have taught, long after the teachers have forgotten their students' names.

Caregivers ease the lives of others, often with little thanks, and at the cost of their own freedom. By being on hand at critical moments, they have the potential to change the direction of a soul, rehabilitate, witness, encourage or convey thoughts that are very helpful to their patients and their families.



ASK YOURSELF

Where will my life end up if I continue to do what I am doing?

What percentage of my potential have I been using?

What is the greatest gift I can make with my life?

Do I now see my life as being more valuable than I did?

What can I do that will keep giving after I am gone?