

Introduction

PART ONE is directed towards the student. To get the most from the guidance provided in the book, look through the Table of Contents (if you have not already done so) and the “Overview” of PARTS ONE and TWO following this part of the Introduction.

Don’t feel like you must read all the chapters in a few sittings. In fact, I do not recommend it. When you see a subject that is of interest, turn to that chapter and read through it. Hi-light points that you feel can be of help. Read a few pages at a time. Think about what you read! Ask yourself how you are currently applying the principles described and how you might better use them in your daily life. Older students might discuss topics with parents, adults or friends. Sections A and B should be read in their entirety. I say this because they provide essential tools for building a solid foundation for success in life. I recognize that many young people today prefer to listen to podcasts or watch videos. Unfortunately, this is a book, so it must be read. Sorry about that.

Throughout the chapters, I present many TIPS on the topics presented in each section. When the guidelines are followed conscientiously and consistently, students will significantly increase the odds of academic, social, life, and professional success. Please accept my sincere best wishes for a very successful and enjoyable educational experience.

PART TWO is for parents. When I use the terms “parents” I am referring to any adult who has responsibility for the raising, caring, and influence of a child or children. The guidance can also be of use to adults who can influence a child’s psychological and emotional development, even though they may not be the primary caregiver.

Overview of PART ONE

Students' Guide

SECTION A. Chapter 1 defines the concerns and questions that many adolescents have and asks, “Can they be successful and happy and do so with less stress?” Chapters 2 and 3 provide the answer as to why we have difficulty changing the factors that contribute to stress and increase the chances of not achieving what we want out of life.

SECTIONS B and C provide dynamic life strategies that, if conscientiously followed, will virtually guarantee success and happiness.

SECTION D, Chapters 11 through 19, describe established, time-proven study and learning strategies that make honor students. Chapter 20 explains the highly effective study and learning strategies that are not commonly taught in our school system.

SECTION E presents strategies that many students do not use, yet those that do find extremely useful not just in making good grades, but in becoming honor students.

SECTION F addresses potential emotional and social issues that can sabotage a young person's desires for success and happiness in life. Guidance is provided on what can be done to respond to these challenges.

SECTION G addresses options that students must consider after graduation from high school. Included are: “Choosing a Career,” “College or Not?” the “Pros and Cons of a Gap Year,” and guidance on “The College Search and Admission Process.” Chapter 26 provides some final words on what it takes to lead a successful and happy life.

Overview of PART TWO

Parents' Guide

SECTION H provides suggestions for parents/guardians and how they can best help the students in their lives to maximize opportunities for success in and out of school. Subjects include self-discipline, family harmony, and assisting with time management and homework.

SECTION I addresses learning disabilities and differences and offers guidance on how to access school special-needs programs.

SECTION J provides guidance on how parents can help their children make informed decisions, to include making career choices, and considerations whether a college education is in their best interest. For the college search and admission process, Chapter 34C. complements Chapter 25 D. in the “Students’ Guide.” Chapter 35 describes options on how to help pay for college.

SECTION K examines our current education system and why it is failing our students. Tony Wagner and Ted Dintersmith, who authored *Most Likely to Succeed* (2015), reported that “Despite our enormous investment in education, the majority of our students lack the skills necessary to get a good job, be an informed citizen; or, in some way that defies crisp definition, be a good and happy person.” They go on to reference a Gallop poll that found many business leaders think that students are ill-prepared for success in the workplace. This was reported in *American Call for Higher Education*, the Lumina Foundation Study of American Public Opinion on Higher Education (February 2013). Chapter 39 reviews what we can learn from the education systems in other countries, the relationship of academic and social philosophies today and the effects those philosophies are having on a student’s achievements, attitudes, and mental health. Alternative programs are also briefly described. Suggestions are provided as to what parents, school officials, and legislatures can do to address our educational challenges.

If what you're doing as a parent/guardian is working for you, then keep doing it! If on the other hand, you are seeking new or additional strategies to help achieve what you want for your student, then read on—and my sincere wishes for a pleasurable experience in mentoring your student.

Four appendices provide many principles for success in summarized form:

Appendix A lists the personal attitudes, interpersonal skills, and work habits that are typical of students who are not only honor students but also successful in other endeavors.

Appendix B is a chart titled “Drive Your Car (and Life) to Success.” Many of the analogies presented in this book compare success principles to driving a car. This chart is a summary of the parallels, plus a few more.

Appendix C lists affirmations that supplement the guidance presented in Chapter 20. Affirmations impress upon the subconscious mind positive statements that, when correctly used, can be a powerful tool for achieving success and for improving one's life.

Appendix D lists the success principles from one of the most successful persons that ever lived in America, Benjamin Franklin.

Although I have tried hard to provide the essential components necessary for school and life success, it would be impossible to address everything. When more detail is desired than is presented in this book, readers can consult the References and Resources section.

What Do You Want?

satisfy the expectations of parents, coaches, and teachers. Limited amounts of stress are not severe and do not last long. If they do, self-doubt and fear can result, leading to more severe conditions termed “anxiety disorders.”

The American Psychological Association (APA) describes stress as a “feeling of being overwhelmed, worried, or run down,” which is caused by minor or major situations. Stress is a completely normal emotional response to life’s most difficult and minor situations. Anxiety, on the other hand, is a serious mental health issue that goes beyond feeling stressed. The APA explains that “people with anxiety disorders usually have recurring intrusive thoughts or concerns.” In other words, your stress is getting to the point that it is interfering with your daily life, which often becomes evident to others. Anxiety can elicit feelings of fear, worry, unease, frustration, irritability, and anger. Anxiety disorders can have severe psychological and physical responses, which have negative consequences on success in school and in life. If such feelings last for weeks, it may be time to seek professional help.

According to WebMD, half of the people who are depressed exhibit symptoms of anxiety. Symptoms associated with both anxiety and depression are low self-esteem, not being able to sleep, either losing or gaining weight, loss of interest in general activities, and physical symptoms like headaches, or digestion problems that have no apparent explanation or cause. The Anxiety and Depression Association of America states that depression can include those symptoms of anxiety plus extreme sadness, pessimism, hopelessness, and constant fatigue. The risk of suicide is higher for those experiencing prolonged anxiety or depression.

According to the Mayo Clinic, treatment can involve any one or more of several therapies, to include medication, psychotherapy, lifestyle changes, and/or relaxing strategies. Do not try to self-diagnose or treat yourself! Doing so is not productive and can often make things worse.

So, the bottom line is, we want to be happy and successful, and do so with minimal stress. Is this possible? Yes. The following chapters

will provide guidelines, if practiced and faithfully followed, that that will ensure a foundation for success (with less stress), not just in school, but in life outside of school as well.

Before one begins a journey, a destination must be determined. If we do not know where we are going, how are we going to get there? People will often plan a vacation yet will not plan their lives. Can you imagine packing your bags, loading up the car, then heading out and not knowing where you are going, much less not knowing what route you will be taking? Maybe not even checking their vehicle to make sure it is tuned up and has fuel? When it comes to our lives, that is often what we do. If you manage school, your personal life, and career without a clear picture in your mind of where you are going, then how can you get “there”? So, to avoid wasted time, failures, and disappointments, ask yourself, “What do I want?” Of course, you may not yet know what you want as a career, but you can identify what grade you want on your next test or paper, grade point average goal, class standing, athletic or extracurricular desires, social wants, family, and peer relations, etc.

Since this book is primarily about school success, start by asking yourself what you want out of school. What do you want to learn? Why? Do you want good grades? How good? Why? Do you have a career goal in mind? School is but a small part of a person’s life. Learning, on the other hand, is a lifelong process. To address just classroom strategies would be falling short of a “how to” book on making good grades. Therefore, this book goes beyond helping you answer concerns only about school. After all, young people have other interests besides just school.

What are some questions young people ask themselves that cause them concern and stress or anxiety?

Am I OK?

How do I make friends?

How can I be happy?

How do I overcome problems?

How can I deal with my stress?

What is life all about, and what do I want out of life?

What Do You Want?

What are my goals, and how do I achieve them?

To the above, add your own questions that you feel contribute to your concerns and stress. Your parents/guardians try to respond to these questions and concerns by providing counsel, comfort, and encouragement. Knowing that we live in a competitive world, they strive to provide their children with the tools to help them not only to cope but also to excel. This is understandable, as the parent's desire is for their children to be successful, and to be successful, they know their child must learn to be competitive. We cannot change the fact that we live in a competitive world. To be competitive is OK, but not to the point that it creates unhealthy stress, that would be counter-productive.

Our education system promotes competition. We pit student against student with class ranks, comparing them with one another through class performance, test scores, and competitive extracurricular activities. Does such competitiveness result in stress? Certainly. But that's not all bad unless it becomes too stressful. Too much tension causes unhappiness and can result in the lack of achievement. Is it possible for young people to deal with the expectations placed on them, yet do well in school and with minimal stress and ultimately maximize the opportunity for happiness? This book strives to put things in perspective. It will not only answer questions students have for improved learning and better grades, it will also provide guidance that can increase happiness and success with reduced chances of unhealthy stress. As stated in the Introduction, the book is divided in to two parts. Part I is directed to students and Part II for parents and guardians. This does not mean you cannot read, or at least skim through both parts focusing on the sections that most pertain to you at the time. I encourage you to discuss with your parent's subjects that you may have questions or concern. Open, trusting dialogue with parents, guardians, and other adults in your life can greatly help you navigate the challenges of school and life.