

THE SECRETS OF MY SUCCESS

There's a lot more to success than fame and fortune – it's about feeling good about yourself and learning to overcome setbacks

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SUCCESS IS NOT about riches, fame, celebrity or good looks. It took a long time, but at some point in my late twenties, this is what I discovered. Thank goodness, as my chances of acquiring any of these were looking increasingly unlikely. I made this discovery because I stumbled upon *7 Habits Of Highly Effective People* by Stephen R Covey (Simon & Schuster, £13.99). This opened up a world where people had setbacks and not only survived but thrived; a world where people seek to understand before being understood.

Over the next few years, I read every book I could on personal and organisational effectiveness. Every author was saying exactly the same thing: success is not a hand that is dealt. We can all learn to be successful people, especially if we think of success as a personal accomplishment, feeling happy with who we are and having choices in our lives. For me, as a primary school

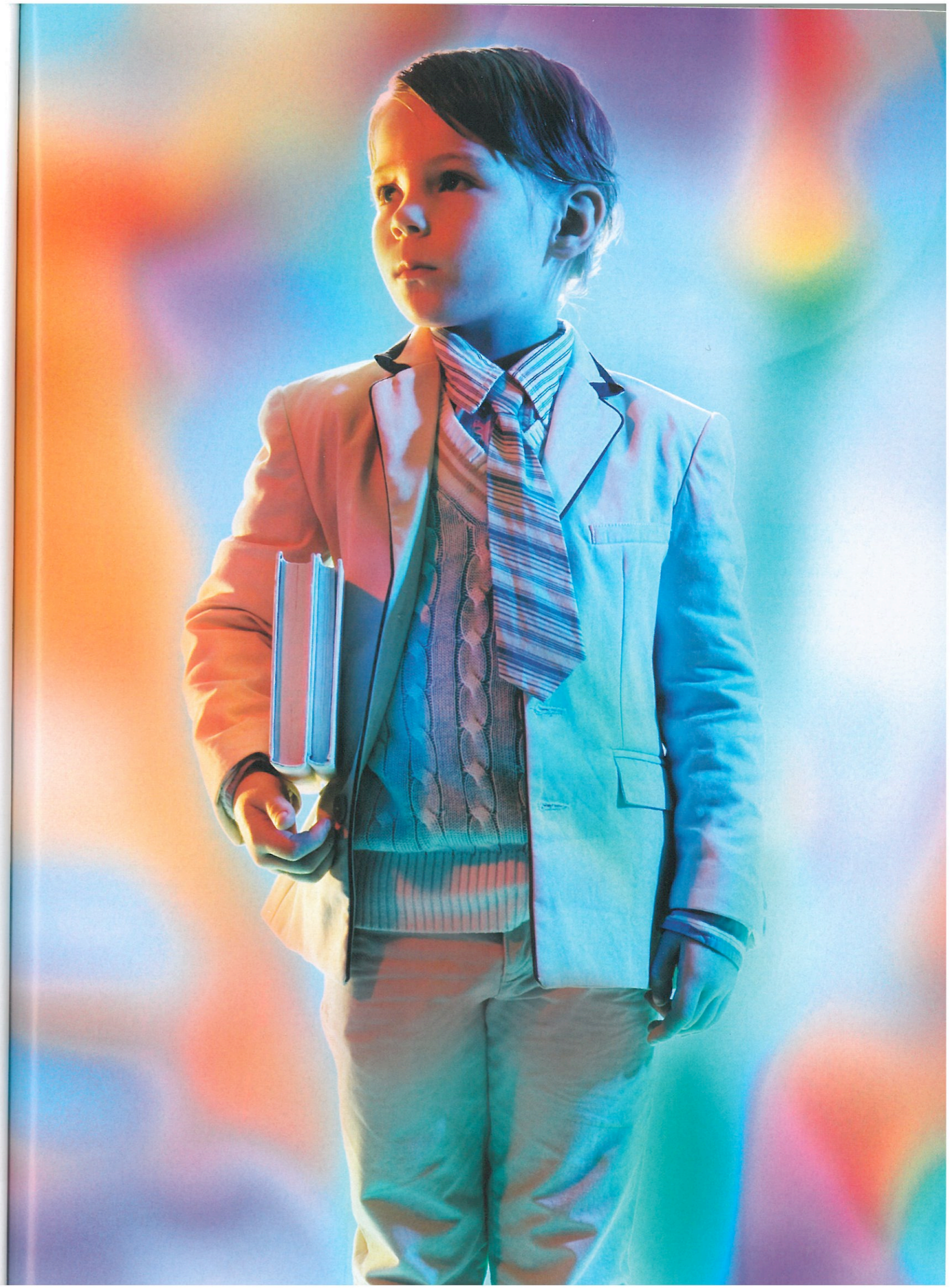
teacher keen to teach my pupils the secrets of success, the big challenge was the absence of any books to help me in this quest. Although there were thousands of books available for adults on this subject, I could not find a single book written for children. So, after years of teaching children about success without finding any suitable books, I decided I would write my own.

“Let your child know success is a choice, not luck”

The first step in helping your child to be successful is to give him an understanding of what actually constitutes success. It is not just about money. It is about happiness, choices and feeling good. People who are successful feel good about their success: how

hard they have tried; who they are; how they spend their time; and the choices they have in their lives.

Your child also needs to know that people are not born successful, that everyone has setbacks and failures, and that becoming successful is a choice rather than a matter of luck. Everyone can be successful by learning and acting on the following eight simple strategies.





1 Find your energy

Success does not come knocking at the door. We all need to go out and find areas in which we can experience success. Finding something your child is good at builds confidence. Some children may not be good at the things they spend most of their time doing at school, which makes it more important that schools have a broad curriculum offering something for everyone.

As adults, however, we learn that just because we are good at something doesn't necessarily mean that we enjoy it. Successful people love what they do. It gives them energy, work feels like play and time flies by. These are the lucky people who have found their "energy zone". They don't need any reward to motivate them. They do what they do simply because they love it.

Some successful people knew from an early age what they wanted to do – they had, if you like, a calling. For most of us, though, finding success is more of a falling than a calling! Most of us have no idea what will fill us with energy until we try it. That's why it is so important that your child develops the right attitude early – it gives her more chances to find her "energy zone".

2 Learn to concentrate

Children are living in an intensely stimulating time. They are bombarded with images from television, websites, games consoles and mobile phones. It has never been so important to teach your child how to concentrate. Of course, every teacher will tell children of the need to concentrate but few teach them how. Your

child needs to learn how to "tune out" things that are distracting her. This is a useful technique in a lively classroom or noisy house when she is trying to do homework. This is much easier to achieve, of course, if your child knows what it is she is supposed to be doing. By teaching your child techniques, such as drawing pictures to understand what she is doing, talking things through with others or breaking things down into small, manageable steps, you can help to boost concentration skills.

Children also need to learn how to prioritise. What separates the effective person from the busy person is not the act of concentration itself, but knowing how to concentrate on the right things. It is easy for a child to become immersed in an activity with a low priority while more important things get left undone.

3 Work hard

This is one of the secrets that most of us don't want to hear! There are no short cuts if we want to get really good at anything. Accomplishment is all about practice and your child needs to understand and value the benefits of working hard. She needs to know that work is good and is not something to be avoided. Unfortunately, there are people with negative attitudes to work and these people generally separate their lives into two: work and play. They view work as something to be endured and play as something to be enjoyed. Successful people do not view life in this way. They enjoy all aspects of their lives, including their work. They may not have "belly laughs"

whilst working, but they get a lot of satisfaction from what they do.

Many children become very frustrated if they don't accomplish something straight away. With a television culture of *X Factor*-style "overnight" success, it is very important to teach your child that it may actually take hours and hours of hard work to become really proficient at something and that, in real life, achieving success is not always easy for anyone.

4 Push yourself

To be successful, your child needs to learn to push herself. There are lots of ways in which children need to do this: for example, times when they don't feel like doing things, when they think they might fail or when their friends are trying to stop them doing things. It can be a difficult challenge to overcome, but it is essential for success.

You can assist your child by helping her to set goals, to decide on deadlines and to be less fearful. Sometimes your child won't know she is scared of something, just that she does not feel right. Parents and teachers need to recognise when a child is out of her comfort zone and help her to push past this uncomfortable feeling. This may lead the child into finding something that she loves. Your child also needs to know that it is OK to admit she is struggling and ask for help.

Finally, your child needs to learn to listen to people who care. If she is finding it hard to push herself, help is at hand, even if it sometimes feels like nagging! So always remember to tell your child why you are pushing her and make sure it is a gentle push and not a shove.

5 Imagine forever

In 1968, scientist George Land gave 1,600 five-year-olds a creativity test used by NASA to select innovative engineers and scientists. This involved finding multiple solutions to problems, asking questions and generating ideas. Ninety eight per cent scored at what he described as “genius” level. He then re-tested the same children at age ten to find that the genius level had declined to 30 per cent. By 15 years of age, only 12 per cent scored at the genius level. The same test given to 280,000 adults placed their genius level at only two per cent.

The test shows what most of us know: children have a fantastic imagination, which mostly declines with age. This decline is the enemy of success. To help your child be successful, you need to help him to keep having ideas as he gets older. Encourage her to believe there’s no such thing as a bad idea, as the best way to hit upon a good idea is to have lots. Ways you can help your child is to encourage him to listen to other people, teach him to be observant, to not be afraid to ask lots of questions and that it’s OK to borrow ideas from other people, as long as he admits that they’re not his own.

6 Improve a bit

Successful people are always trying to make things better. This doesn’t mean that there is anything wrong with what they have, but that they know that there is always room for improvement, even if it is only a small one. They try to make good things great. Rather than making radical transformations, however, they tend to make lots of small adjustments. This is

what you can teach your child: great things do not happen suddenly. They are more often the result of lots of tweaking and gradual refinement. This is actually good news because it means that it is possible for us all to take small steps towards greatness.

Help your child by teaching him to look at “just one thing” and then to try to make it “just a bit better”. By doing this over and over in lots of different situations, you will help your child develop a positive attitude to making improvements. Along the way, don’t forget to teach your child not to rush things, to always try to do his best and to never stop improving. Show your child examples of small improvements so he knows what you mean and that it is possible.

7 Understand others

Successful people use what they know to try to be useful to others. Think of the JFK dictum and instead of asking “What’s in it for me?” they ask, “What can I give?” If we look at a successful business, its success is in giving people things they value at the right price.

To help your child to understand others, you can encourage team effort and help him to improve his listening skills and to develop his questioning techniques. In a team, your child has the opportunity to think about others. We have all seen the pushy “me” types on shows like *The Apprentice*. They tend to be the first to be fired. The ones who serve their team well are often the ones who are hired. Those who serve others can offer ideas; in the service of others, their ideas might be even

more useful than the ideas of those seeking to serve themselves. By listening to others, rather than just hearing his own words, your child will become more informed about opinions and ideas. By improving your child’s questioning skills, he will be more likely to ask the right sorts of questions to help him to understand.

8 Don’t give up

Successful people have setbacks but they always find a way around a problem. Your child needs to understand that if he has bad luck, he is not alone. Successful people often bounce back with bigger, better ideas. That is because they know that being wrong is not the end of the world. Teach him that successful people learn from their mistakes and that he can, too.

Criticism can make your child feel like giving up. The fine line between feedback and criticism is hard to explain, so try to give him useful feedback by using specific phrases like, “I like the way you have put your shoes away neatly.” This is more useful than general statements.

By following these principles, I went from teacher to headteacher. Although happy in that job, I was then keen to try new things and started writing, publishing and public speaking. I now employ 23 people. And it all started when I stumbled on a book that taught me the secrets of success. Imagine what your child could achieve if he learns these secrets early in life. Success starts here ■

Secrets Of Success by Chris Quigley (Chris Quigley Education, £8.95) is available at www.chrisquigley.co.uk

