



Chapter 11

Build a Positive Network of Support

*In order to meet the challenge,
you have to have that support.*

Jackie Joyner-Kersey
Olympic Athlete

*Surround yourself with people
who take their work seriously*

Colin Powell
Former Secretary of State

*Personal relationships are the fertile soil
from which all advancement, all success,
all achievement in real life grows.*

Ben Stein
Writer & Lawyer

One of my biggest lessons in life was learning I cannot achieve success by my efforts alone. I heard the author of *Click: the Ten Truths to Building Extraordinary Relationships*, George Fraser say, “All of life is about working with and through other people. There is no success you can obtain, sustain, or maintain on your own, by yourself or in a vacuum.”

FORMAL SUPPORT

It is important to be aware of the formal support systems we can seek out or be invited to participate in. Some are paid services, while others are not. Some feature a one-on-one relationship while others are group-based. There are five main types of formal support: mentors, mastermind groups, coaches, advisors, and accountability partners. All of them are applicable to professional, entrepreneurial, and personal endeavors. Let's look at each one.

Mentoring is a brain to pick, an ear to listen, and a push in the right direction.

John C. Crosby
Politician

Mentors are individuals who help you achieve your goals. Most of the time, they are more experienced than you are in your field. Both parties have their responsibilities in this relationship. The mentors bring a willingness to share their expertise, ideas, and direction. The mentees bring their openness, commitment, and willingness to do what is required. The timeframe can be open-ended or defined for a set period.

The Harvard Mentoring Project promotes the value of mentoring. See their website www.WhoMentoredYou.org for stories about people who attribute their success to mentors who helped them. Among the individuals are:

- Michael Lee-Chin, Chairman of National Commercial Bank in Jamaica, philanthropist, and businessman, mentored by Warren Buffett, investor and philanthropist.
- Marian Wright Edelman, founder and president of the Children's Defense Fund mentored by Howard Zinn, her history professor at Spelman College.

- Maya Angelou, writer, historian, actress, and civil rights activist, mentored by Mrs. Bertha Flowers, a family friend and teacher (She is the subject of Angelou’s book, *Mrs. Flowers: A Moment of Friendship*.)
- Kenneth Cole, footwear and clothing designer, mentored by his father.
- Kathie Lee Gifford, TV show host, actor, and singer, mentored by Barbara Walters, journalist, TV reporter and show host.

From this list, you can see mentors come in many different forms, including parents, teachers, industry experts, business people, and financial investors. Their assistance can be invaluable. During his acceptance speech for Artist of the Year at the American Music Awards in 2010, Justin Bieber thanked Usher for being his mentor and creating opportunities that led to him receiving the coveted award. That’s the impact mentors can have.

Three of my mentors are Les Brown, Rene Godefroy, and Keith L. Brown. All are dynamic motivational speakers. Each of them taught me about the various aspects of the speaking and training profession, including marketing, negotiating, and using technology.

Mentor: Someone whose hindsight can become your foresight.

Anonymous

If you are a speaker, business owner, entrepreneur, or solopreneur (one-person business), consider getting a mentor. You can check with those who are most experienced in your field. Visit business-oriented websites like www.FastCompany.com for details on mentoring. Also, see if any corporations in your area are sponsoring mentoring programs. In the past, AT&T supported a mentoring initiative by pairing new women business owners with experienced AT&T women suppliers who shared their knowledge with their protégés (also known as mentees). Other companies have also sponsored similar programs.

Many professional and trade organizations provide mentoring for their members. The Georgia chapter of the National Speakers Association (NSA), for example, offers a program each year, running anywhere from 4 months to 12 months, depending on the format and the coordinator. I participated in several and found them extremely helpful. Check with your organizations to see what may be available to you.

A majority of major employers have mentoring groups where an employee is paired with a more experienced employee who offers expertise, advice and direction. See if your workplace offers such a program and consider participating.

Mastermind Groups are two or more individuals at a similar level in their careers or businesses who meet in person, via the Internet, or by phone to support each other's efforts. They share their knowledge, suggestions, and advice. The concept is described in the 1937 classic, *Think and Grow Rich* by Napoleon Hill. He explained it was "the coordination of knowledge and effort, in a spirit of harmony, between two or more people for the attainment of a definite purpose." Hill felt strongly that "no two minds ever come together without creating a third, invisible intangible force, which may be likened to a third mind." In other words, two fully functioning and contributing minds are better than one.

Early in my business, my involvement with a speakers mastermind group was beneficial for me. I have maintained contact with several of the members. If you are not in a group, plan to find one that is a good fit for you. If there isn't one available for you to join, then consider starting a group with one or more colleagues. You can find "how to" specifics at www.TheSuccessAlliance.com or use Google to find other resources.

Coaches are experts at getting people to make progress on their goals and dreams.

- General Coaches may work one-on-one or the process can be group-based. Most paid coaches offer a complimentary initial session to familiarize you with their approach. You can ask friends and colleagues for referrals or check the Internet. You can also visit www.JustGetSerious.com for details about my program.
- Skill Specific Coaches are people with the necessary expertise in a specific field. Most of their services are provided for a fee. I am a member of the Les Brown coaching program. His direction has been invaluable to me in my development as a speaker and trainer. There are coaches for every field including acting, writing, sports, and music. All of them help individuals sharpen a specific skill set. As with general coaches, check the Internet and ask colleagues for recommendations.

I absolutely believe that people, unless coached, never reach their maximum capabilities.

Bob Nardelli
Corporate Executive

Advisors are experts who provide direction and guidance. For entrepreneurs, I always recommend the Small Business Development Center (SBDC). They, along with other organizations, provide free advice on starting and growing a business. My current and past consultants have been extremely helpful to me in providing great ideas and direction. I also suggest the Small Business Administration (SBA) or the Service Core of Retired Executives (SCORE). You can check the Internet to see what is available in your specific area.

I've learned that the easiest way for me to grow as a person is to surround myself with people smarter than I am.

Andy Rooney
Commentator on 60 Minutes

Accountability Partners are two or more people in an arrangement in which they agree to support each other in pursuing their dreams by holding each other responsible for advancing on their plans.

Many times, people fail to make significant progress because they do not have to report to anyone about what they have done.

The following example demonstrates how having someone to be accountable to can result in extraordinary success. In the 1980s, three teenage boys, Sampson Davis, Rameck Hunt, and George Jenkins, made a promise to help each other fulfill their dreams to become doctors. They faced many obstacles because they were raised by single mothers and lived with the daily challenges of drugs and gangs on the streets of Newark, New Jersey. They overcame their challenges by holding each other responsible for moving forward on their goals and giving each other support and encouragement. Today, Davis is an Emergency Medicine Physician at St. Michael's Medical Center in Newark; Hunt is a board certified internist at University Medical Center at Princeton; and Jenkins is an Assistant Professor of the Clinical Dentistry at Columbia University. You can read about their difficult, but successful, journey to become doctors in *The Pact: Three Young Men Make a Promise and Fulfill a Dream* or visit www.ThreeDoctorsFoundation.org.

*Count on having
someone to be
accountable to.*

Donna Satchell Kimble

You can use the same strategy that Davis, Hunt, and Jenkins used to reach your dreams. Find individuals who have similar goals and are serious about reaching them. Develop a plan to hold each other accountable for making progress and provide the emotional support needed to stay in the game.

INFORMAL SUPPORT

Beyond the formal support systems, let's look at the various roles positive people can play when it comes to our plans and desires. In a formal support relationship, you ask someone to assist you in

a specific way. You may even tell a friend or colleague, “Philip is my mentor” or “Joan has agreed to be my coach” or “Bob is my business advisor.” People would understand the role and relationship. With informal support, people undertake the roles of Dream Maker, Loyal Supporter, or Cheerleader on their own and fulfill them through their words and actions. There are no set arrangements or specific time frames. The relationships are much more dynamic. Let’s look at the three types.

*80% of life’s
satisfaction comes
from meaningful
relationships.*

Brian Tracey
Author

Dream Makers are people who will have the greatest direct impact on your goals and dreams because they can open doors of opportunity for you. They can even break down some doors. What makes them so valuable is they are willing to help without your asking them and they may not be colleagues, friends or individuals you know very well. They see your talent, believe in your goals, and decide to make things happen for you. They could be hiring you, loaning you money, giving you a promotion, or helping with your business idea. We should plan to spend as much time as possible with these people sharing our plans and progress. We need to value and nurture these rare relationships.

*No matter what
accomplishments
you make, somebody
helped you.*

Althea Gibson
Tennis Player

As I said earlier, I attended college while working full-time as an administrative assistant at Clairol. During that time, I met Gerald Beddall, president of the company’s U.S. operations, at a company luncheon. For the short time we were together, I talked about attending college in the evenings, my excellent

grades, extra-curricular activities, and my desire to work in the marketing area. I wanted to leave a lasting impression in his mind. When I graduated two years later, he offered me a position as an Assistant Product Manager in the Marketing Division. I was the first administrative support person to be presented with such an opportunity.

I still remember being in his office when he extended the offer. It was on a Friday afternoon. He briefly described the job and asked me to think about it over the weekend and give him an answer the following week. At that moment, I wanted to shout, “Yes, Yes, Yes ... I will take it.” For the previous six years, I had been going to college in the hopes of getting just such a position. Over the weekend, I kept nervously thinking he might change his mind. So I got to work extra early on Monday morning to call him and excitedly accept the job.

That promotion had a tremendous impact on my salary, my career, and my life. Now that I have told you what Mr. Beddall did for me, let me tell you what I did for him. I sent him a thank you note. I am embarrassed to say, “That’s all!”

Two years later Mr. Beddall left Clairol to pursue other endeavors. On his last day at the company, I made an appointment to meet briefly with him. I thanked him again for the promotion and wished him well on his future plans. No gift, no good luck card and, even worse, no suggestion we stay in touch by exchanging addresses or phone numbers. What was I thinking? The problem was I was not thinking! How could I have such a valuable person in my life, who was also a president of a major company, and not plan to stay in contact with him? Today, I am still amazed at my ignorance at the time. Now, I know better so I would do better.

*Stay in touch with
those that matter.*

Anonymous

Here's another example of a Dream Maker. During an interview, the comedian Chris Rock explained how meeting Eddie Murphy led to his first movie role. The manager of the Comedy Strip introduced him to Murphy. Although Rock was not scheduled to perform that evening, Murphy asked the manager to give him a slot. Once on stage, he had the audience, including Murphy, laughing hysterically. Afterwards, Murphy told Rock he was flying to Los Angeles the following day to shoot a movie and asked if he would like to go. The next day, Rock was on a flight to L.A. It was his first time on a plane, first time in a hotel, and his first time in a movie. (He made a brief appearance as a parking valet in *Beverly Hills Cops II*). All those firsts happened because Murphy decided to give Rock an incredible opportunity. That is what Dream Makers do.

You may be asking yourself “How can I get someone to take such an interest in my goals and dreams?” Here are seven tips on how to make that happen.

1. Make your aspirations known to everyone because you never know who can help you. When I was at Clairol, everyone understood I wanted to work in the Marketing Department.
2. Find interesting ways to talk about what you are doing now that relates to what you want to do in the future. However, do not monopolize the conversation while discussing it. While talking with others at work about what they were doing, I made sure to bring up how great everything was going at college. If you are not comfortable talking about yourself, I suggest you read *Brag! The Art of Tooting Your Own Horn Without Blowing It*, by Peggy Klaus.
3. Know in advance what you would say or do if you had the opportunity to meet someone who can give you “that big break” or introduce you to someone who could.

4. As much as possible, be appropriately attired (for your profession or field) because you never know when you may meet your future Dream Maker. Understand you could run into the person in a non-business setting, so “appropriately attired” refers to the setting, not just the profession or field.
5. Because you do not know when you might bump into your Dream Maker or someone who knows him or her, it is always best to be respectful to everyone you meet. (See Chapter 13 – Respect People to Create a Foundation for Success.)
6. Be on top of your game (Remember, when given the chance, Chris Rock gave a great performance with Eddie Murphy in the audience).
7. Ask friends and colleagues to introduce you to individuals you believe could assist you. When meeting them, ask their advice or guidance, as appropriate. Also, offer to be of value to them. And remember to say “thank you” through a phone call or, better yet, with a hand-written note.

Once people have shown an interest in you or have helped in some way, stay in touch. Don’t do what I did and lose contact with these valuable individuals. Instead, call, email, write or visit (whatever is most appropriate). Let them know about the progress you are making. If they have already assisted you, tell them what you are doing now and remind them that you are grateful for what they did for you.

Loyal Supporters are people who are constantly singing your praises and looking for ways to help you. Like Dream Makers, they are willing to help you by providing great ideas, advice, or assistance.

When I was as an administrative assistant at Clairol and received my Associate’s Degree, one of the assistants, Roseann Paliotta, arranged a surprise luncheon for me. Everyone in my department was assembled in the conference room, including the assistants,

the managers, directors, and the Vice President of our department. Even the President of the company’s U.S. operations, Gerald Beddall was there. He knew about it because of Pat Alston, who worked for him. As she was leaving for the luncheon, she purposely told him where she was going in the hope he would attend, and he did. When I entered the conference room to give a document to my manager, I was completely stunned by the shouts of “Surprise! Surprise! Surprise!”

It is amazingly empowering to have the support of a strong, motivated and inspirational group of people.

Susan Jeffers – Author

After recovering from the shock of it all, I spent time talking to everyone, including the company’s president. This conversation led to the promotion I mentioned in the previous section.

Roseann and Pat were Loyal Supporters whose generosity and actions had a great impact on my life. But they were not the only ones who assisted me in my endeavors at college and work. There was Darrell, who had a journalism background, and volunteered to do the research for my theme papers. And there was Judi and Jerri, who I could always depend on to be there for me when I felt completely overwhelmed because of so many school and work projects. These individuals showed me how people, without important titles and large salaries, can help us achieve our goals. What they did for me defines how I treat people and reminds me to be a Loyal Supporter for others.

Stay with friends who support you. Talk with them about how you are doing, how they are doing, and keep your practices together.

Mevlana Rumi – Philosopher

Consider the people in your life. Do you have Loyal Supporters? If you do, then value those relationships and find ways to assist them in their endeavors. If you do not, see the tips on the next few pages about how to develop supportive relationships.

Although Loyal Supporters are always on the lookout for ways to be of value to us, let's not fall into the trap of waiting for them to do something and never ask for help. If that is something you are not comfortable doing, see the Get Help section of Chapter 10.

Cheerleaders are individuals who have a sincere interest in your dreams. They want to help you; however, they may be too busy with their own responsibilities. Or they may not fully understand your goals so they don't always know how to assist you. But they are always there to cheer you on. Their encouragement can be a great boost to you.

My friend, Patricia, was a great Cheerleader for me. After my promotion into marketing, I often found myself upset and stressed-out because of the volume of work, the long hours, the constant changes, and never-ending learning. One afternoon I was in my office thinking, "What did I get myself into with this job? I wish I could just quit." Have you ever felt that way? If you have, you know what a miserable feeling it is. In my frustrated state, I opened a large envelope to find the current copy of Essence Magazine with a note saying, "See page 76." I turned to the page and found an article about the top women in marketing with another note from Patricia saying, "One day you will be among these women." That message lifted my spirits, got me re-energized, and I never forgot it. The acts of kindness Cheerleaders provide can go a long way in encouraging us.

Sometimes our light goes out but is blown into flame by another human being. Each of us owes deepest thanks to those who have rekindled this light.

Albert Schweitzer
Philosopher & Physician

Actor and director Morgan Freeman has talked about the impact Cheerleaders had on his life during the early days of his career when things were not going well. "There were times I just said 'it is not going to work. I gotta eat. I gotta pay rent. I gotta do something else. This is not happening' and someone would

always come along and give me something to eat or say ‘You can’t quit’ ... I was ready to start driving a cab, go work in somebody’s office, anything ... I would have quit many times, (but) there was always someone who (would say) ‘you can do it.’” Because of these people, Freeman persevered and today he is a Golden Globe and Academy Award-winning actor. That’s what Cheerleaders can do for us.

A word of encouragement during a failure is worth more than an hour of praise after a success.

William Saroyan
Writer

A Hand to Guide Me by Denzel Washington has 74 stories about people whose lives were greatly influenced by supportive individuals who helped them. They include well-known people like former President Jimmy Carter; comedian and actor, Whoopi Goldberg; former Secretary of State Colin Powell; and women’s activist, Gloria Steinem. There are also lesser-known individuals like Dennis Smith, retired New York City firefighter; Martin Wong, neckwear designer; and David Boies, a trial attorney. I highly recommend this inspiring book. It helps us understand that no one achieves success on his or her own. Everyone needs supportive people to assist them. So plan to have them in your life and plan to be there for others.

Consider the people you are with most often, and ask yourself if you have any or enough Loyal Supporters and Cheerleaders. If not, think about ways to deepen the relationships with those you already know by:

- Spending more time with them (by phone or in person)
- Finding things to do together
- Doing the things I already mentioned like being of value, letting them know the progress you are making, and asking for help (Sometimes we don’t have supportive people in our lives because we never asked for support).

Also, develop relationships with new people who could take an interest in your goals and dreams. Here are some ways to do that:

- First, meet new people.
 - Introduce yourself to individuals you do not know at the places you frequent on a regular basis (work, church, various meetings).
 - Join organizations focused on your field of endeavor. Also, consider recreation, faith-based, social, political, health, and personal development groups. For the last group, I suggest Toastmasters International. Although their focus is helping individuals improve their public speaking and leadership skills, you meet interesting and supportive people at chapter meetings. For information visit www.Toastmasters.org.
 - Take on a more active role in the organizations where you currently have membership.
 - Purposely sit next to and socialize with new people when attending networking events with friends and colleagues. Separate from those you know to spend time with those you don't know.
 - Volunteer at a hospital, homeless center, or nursing home.
 - Go to social gatherings where you are normally invited and usually do not attend.
 - Find places to go where you can meet people and where small talk would be acceptable (sporting events, art receptions, etc.)
- When you meet new people, be genuinely interested in who they are and what they do. Find things you have in common, and tell them about yourself without dominating the conversation.

- If there is mutual interest in getting to know each other better, make plans to get together in person, over the phone, or via email.
- If you need to brush-up on your people skills to put your best foot forward or to understand how to engage others, I suggest *Breakthrough Networking – Building Relationships That Last* by Lillian D. Bjorseth and *Little Black Book of Connections 6.5: Assets for Networking Your Way to Rich Relationships* by Jeffrey Gitomer.

Next is a great exercise to help you understand the value of the relationships in your life.



Just Get Serious® About Success

Chapter 11 Exercise

THEIR VALUE – YOUR VALUE

In the past, people who completed this exercise have told me it was very insightful and caused them to look at their relationships from a different perspective. It has three separate parts, and I suggest you take your time considering the questions, your answers, and the implications of each one. Please feel free to share your thoughts about the exercise by emailing me at Donna@JustGetSerious.com.

	A	B	C	D	E	Total	Final Score
1-A _____							
1-B _____							
2-A _____							
2-B _____							
3-A _____							
3-B _____							
4-A _____							
4-B _____							
5-A _____							
5-B _____							

Part One

On all the rows ending with A (1-A, 2-A, 3-A, 4-A, 5-A), write the names of people you interact with most often – at work, in

business, or personally. Place one name on each row. For now, leave blank the rows ending with B (i.e. 1-B, 2-B). We will handle the B lines in part two.

Next, for each person, answer the following questions using a scale of 1 -10, with 1 being “rarely” and 10 being “always” and put the number in the column with the matching letter.

- A. Do they encourage, motivate, and/or inspire you?
- B. Do they offer to help you and then actually do so?
- C. Do they have goals and dreams they are pursuing?
(I have found that sometimes people without goals and dreams have a hard time understanding and being supportive of those who have them.)
- D. Do they ask you specific questions about your goals, projects, or various endeavors you have told them about?
(Are they paying attention to what you are saying? Are they really interested? Do they really care?)
- E. Do they treat other people well (polite, kind, and helpful)?
(Here, the range of “other people” is broad. It includes co-workers, friends, restaurant servers, and anyone else they have interacted with. Also, consider what you have observed them doing or saying first-hand. My experiences have taught me that how people treat others is a good indication of how they can eventually treat us.)

Once you have answered all five questions for each person, add up the numbers and put the sum in the column labeled “Total.” Next, multiply the number by 2 and put the answer in the column labeled “Final Score.” That number on each line will be between 10 and 100.

Part Two

On all the rows ending with B (1-B, 2-B, 3-B, 4-B, 5-B), write your name. For each row with your name, imagine you are the person

whose name is immediately above yours and ask yourself how he or she would answer the same five questions (A – E) about you and put the number in the column with the matching letter. (This segment is known as “Now the shoe is on the other foot.”)

Again, once you have answered the five questions, add up the numbers and put the sum in the column labeled “Total.” Next, multiply the number by 2 and put the answer in the column labeled “Final Score.” The number on each line will be between 10 and 100.

Part Three

Ask yourself, “What do these scores indicate about my relationships with other people and their relationships with me?” Here are some questions to consider:

- Do the scores surprise you?
- Are you satisfied with the scores?
- Do your friends and colleagues have higher or lower scores than you have? What does that indicate about your relationships?
- Are there changes you need to make to be a more valuable person to the individuals you have listed?
- Do you need to expand your network of friends and colleagues to have more supportive people in your life?

Depending on your answers, decide on what actions you want to take and then get started. Then write about your progress with people in your personal or Just Get Serious® journal.

You may be asking, “How about the negative people?” Don’t worry, I have not forgotten about them. The next chapter is about the passive and pessimistic people in our lives.



Chapter 12

Reduce the Impact of Passive and Pessimistic People

*Not everyone is healthy enough to
have a front row seat in our lives.*

Susan Taylor – Writer & Editor

*No person is your friend (or kin) who demands
your silence, or denies your right to grow.*

Alice Walker – Writer

*We must not allow other people's limited
perceptions to define us.*

Virginia Satir – Psychotherapist

People are . . . kind, mean, friendly, reserved, helpful, uncooperative, generous, selfish, hateful, loving, concerned, disinterested, passionate, indifferent, rational, and illogical. The extremes people can go to help is inspiring. The extremes people can go to hurt is enraging. We feel we can't live with some people. For others, we can't live without them. My friend, Lynda, always says, "It takes all kinds of people to make a world," and she is right.

In the previous chapter, I showed the various types of positive people we need in our lives to be successful in reaching our goals. Now let's look at the types of passive and pessimistic people we may unfortunately encounter.

PASSIVE PEOPLE

Others have written much about the constructive impact of positive people in our lives and the damaging impact of negative people. But there is another group we often overlook – passive people. They are not negative, but being with them or expecting support from them can end up being a disappointment and a waste of time. Like positive people, there are three categories.

Disinterested

These individuals don't say negative things *or* positive things. They simply don't say anything. They don't ask about your goals or show any interest when you talk about what you are doing. They rarely ask questions beyond polite inquiries. I have had such people in my life. It took me a while to realize time spent with them was unproductive and left me feeling discouraged.

Do not try to make disinterested people interested in your plans and activities. I remember being upset when friends did not react to my "good news" with the enthusiasm I expected. I used to get frustrated when telling them about something challenging in my life, only to have them cut me off by talking about things they were doing.

I remember wanting to share with a friend the latest news about a board game I had created. As I excitedly talked about how a co-worker gave me the name of someone to contact at a major game manufacturer, the friend interrupted me to say how upset she was that, the night before, her boyfriend had not phoned her. I let her talk on and on until she was finished. Then she said something about calling me later to give me the rest of the story and walked away.

At that point, I realized not everyone we talk to is truly interested in our goals. Sometimes they are only politely listening. So when a thought pops into their minds, it is easy for them to interrupt us because they are not paying attention to what we are saying. That's why it is necessary to have Cheerleaders and Loyal Supporters eager to hear about our progress. It is also important to join organizations of people with similar goals who can have a mutual interest in what we are doing.

Non-Believers

These people do not believe you can achieve your goals, even if there is evidence to the contrary. There could be signs your plans just may work or things may turn in your favor, but they can't see it.

Award-winning comedian and actor Steve Martin had a Non-Believer in his life. An interviewer once asked one of Martin's close friends what his family was like. The friend said Martin's father was reserved and aloof when it came to his son's desire to be a comedian. He talked about being with the father at one of Martin's shows right before he made it big. The friend said the audience was in awe. They laughed uncontrollably at all of his jokes and applauded wildly at his zany antics.

Steve received a standing ovation that seemed to last forever. Upon leaving the show, the father turned to Steve's friend and asked, "Do you think Steve's really got a chance in this business?" The friend was stunned. He probably wanted to reply with a one-word answer, "Obviously!"

*Convert the
non-believers to
believers by continuing
to believe and proceed
until you achieve.*

Donna Satchell Kimble

Martin's father wrote a terrible review about Steve's first appearance on *Saturday Night Live*. It was for the newsletter of a professional

association where he was the President. At a dinner celebration after the premiere of Martin's first movie, "The Jerk", a colleague commented to his father that he must be very proud of his son. He replied, "Well, he's no Charlie Chaplin."

Do you have similar people in your life who never see the progress you are making and don't believe you can achieve your goals? If so, do not allow their non-belief to undermine your belief in yourself. Limit your time, your contact, and your conversations with them. When it comes to family members, remember you did not choose them. But you can choose whether to let them affect your feelings about your chances for success.

You have to believe in yourself when no one does – that makes you a winner right there.

Venus Williams
Tennis Player

Quick Change Artists

These individuals are laughing with you today and tomorrow they are laughing at you. They cannot make up their minds about how they feel about your plans and progress. One day they are supportive about what you are doing and a few days (or even hours) later, they couldn't care less.

I witnessed such a person in action. Beverly, Julie, and I were having coffee at a Starbucks. Julie was excitedly telling us about her idea of forming a non-profit organization to help disadvantaged teenage boys get their lives back on track. Beverly and I agreed it sounded like a good idea and offered suggestions for her to consider. Beverly even told Julie she could put her in contact with a friend who had undertaken a similar project in California.

After an hour, Julie left. Beverly and I decided to stay and have more coffee. As we talked, Beverly said, "You know, Julie will never get that organization off the ground. She does not have the

experience or the money needed. And what does she really know about kids? She is not a teacher or even a mother.” When I started to disagree with her, Beverly cut me off and said, “I have known Julie for years, she always has outlandish dreams and none of them ever work.”

That is the typical behavior of Quick Change Artists. Their lack of support and interest can also show up when they promise to help you in some way, but things always come up at the last minute to prevent them from assisting you. Many of their reasons are highly questionable. Don’t count on them for any real support. Instead, limit the time you spend with them. And don’t go out of your way to tell them anything because, within a short time, they will probably be talking disparagingly about you to others.

PESSIMISTIC PEOPLE

These people can have a harmful impact on your efforts in moving forward. Like the other two categories, they fall into three distinctive groups. How you interact with them depends on which one they are in.

Naysayers

These individuals will tell you all the external reasons why you cannot be a success. By external, I mean things that have nothing to do with you, per se. They talk about what the company, the organization, or various people have done or not done to prevent individuals who are your age, gender, nationality, race, or religion from getting a promotion, a raise, an award, or a loan. They will talk about how much education or experience you do not have. They will

Remember that no talent, no brains, no character, are required to set up in the fault-finding business.

Og Mandino – Author

mention how those who are successful know the right people, have the right look, lots of talent or plenty of money. They like to cite example after example of others, like you, who have tried and have been unsuccessful. In bad or slow economic times, they will constantly talk about how it is not a good time to start a business, make a job move, expect a promotion or plan to buy a house.

When it comes to the remarks these people make, notice it is never about you. It is about the forces that will not allow you to achieve your desires. Their focus is usually on the past or current conditions. And while many times, they are telling the truth (even if it is *their* version of it), their remarks can be discouraging at best and demobilizing at worst if you listen.

Movie creator and director George Lucas said in an interview, “I decided to go to film school because I loved the idea of making movies. Everybody said it was a crazy thing to do because, in those days, nobody made it into the film business . . . unless you were related to somebody. So everybody was thinking I was silly – ‘You’re never going to get a job.’ But I wasn’t moved by that. I set the goal of getting through film school.” Initially, Lucas wanted to make documentaries; however, he changed his direction to entertainment films. That led to him eventually creating *Star Wars*, all of the Indiana Jones movies, and other successful films.

I believe every dream comes with at least one Naysayer attached to it as a way to test our belief in ourselves.

When I was going to college, I remember a co-worker named Emily saying, “The company will never promote you.” She went on to tell me they have never promoted an

*Never let what
somebody else says
distract you from
your goals.*

Michelle Obama
First Lady of
the United States

administrative assistant into a management position in the Marketing Department (the area where I wanted to work). She talked about how others in positions similar to mine had gotten masters degrees and were never promoted. Because she had worked at the company longer than I had, Emily probably felt she was being helpful and telling me things I did not know. Notice she did not say anything about me personally. That's because everything was always about "them."

When I tell this story to a live audience I will often say, "If Emily was in the audience, sitting right here (pointing to a nearby seat), I doubt if she would think I am referring to her because I am not using her real name." I have found people love to express their opinions about any number of things, including our chances for success. Don't let their ideas influence you. Instead, turn a deaf ear to their remarks and continue moving forward.

*Most negative people
don't think they are.*

Anonymous

In *Managing Workplace Negativity*, author Gary Topchik explains how many people do not realize they are being negative. He found when employees are confronted about their poor attitudes, about 80% do not see themselves that way at all. Sometimes, people do not understand how low-spirited and gloomy they are.

During one of my programs, I suggested that alerting negative people to their attitudes can sometimes lead to their changing. Months later, I was back at the same company and ran into Mary, who attended my previous class. She said after hearing me speak, she approached her aunt Carol about her negative outlook. Mary told Carol she could no longer spend time with her 10-year daughter unless she changed her attitude. Carol initially got upset and protested, saying she was not a negative person. But after

that time whenever Mary saw Carol, she was less gossipy and mean-spirited. Mary could tell she was trying to be more pleasant.

You can consider letting the Naysayers in your life know how you feel. You may or may not have the same results as Mary did. But depending on the importance of the relationship and the individuals, it could be worth a try.

Criticizers

These people will ridicule you for pursuing your goals. After speaking with them, you feel like you were in a boxing match with Muhammad Ali. They have nothing good to say about what you are trying to do. They are famous for making fun of your efforts while you are in the presence of other people. They love to talk about your personal shortcomings as reasons why you cannot succeed. You don't have enough money or education or know the right people. You are too old or too young to pursue *that* dream. You are not smart enough or don't have the talents or abilities.

*Don't let anyone rob
you of your curiosity,
your creativity or your
imagination*

Mae Jemison
Astronaut

Why would they say these unsupportive things? Many times, these people are unhappy with their own lives or feel insecure. Often, their disapproving remarks or "I was just joking" comments help them feel better about themselves at your expense.

Do not talk to these people about your dreams because you will probably end up feeling like a fool. It is best to discontinue a relationship with them or avoid them whenever possible. Sometimes they "come with the territory," being other people we enjoy being around or employees we have to work with. They can even be family members we live with or see at functions,

like weddings, funerals, and holiday gatherings. In those cases, you cannot escape their presence. Therefore, limit your conversation, ignore their petty remarks, and, if necessary, take steps to build or maintain your level of belief (see Chapter 3) after being with them. A while ago, I was having lunch with a group of colleagues. Alisa, who is always outspoken, asked me loudly, “So, how are you coming with that book?” I said everything was moving along well, it was just taking longer than I had anticipated. When she asked why, I started explaining I was interviewing several people and was planning to include their stories in the book. Before I could finish, she interrupted me and remarked in a sarcastic tone, “What you are writing – the great American novel?” A couple of colleagues chuckled. I just smiled. The next time I saw Alisa and she asked about my book, I simply replied, “I am still working on it. So what have you been up to?” and she started talking about herself.

I mentioned Barrington Irving in Chapter 5. He is the youngest person and the first person of African descent (Jamaican) to fly solo around the world. After completing his historic event, he said to a CNN interviewer, “They told me I was too young. They told me I did not have enough money. They told me I don’t have the experience. They told me I don’t have the strength. I don’t have the knowledge. Everyone told me what I could not do. They told me I would never come back home. But guess what?” He smiled broadly to indicate ‘but I did.’ See his interview at JGSBook.com (Videos).

Criticism is something we can avoid easily by saying nothing, doing nothing, and being nothing.

Aristotle
Philosopher

Irving’s remarks remind me of what was written about Fred Astaire, the award-winning dancer, actor and choreographer. Notes taken about his initial screen test included that he could not act, and could dance “a little.” Those disappointing comments did not begin to reflect his talent and the impact he would have

on the entertainment field. Because of his achievements, he is number five on the American Film Institute's list of the 50 greatest American screen legends.

Astaire's "low grades" are quite similar to what Fred Smith received for an assignment he did as a student at Yale University. His paper was about the idea of providing overnight delivery service. His professor found the concept interesting, but only gave it a C because he did not think it was feasible. Smith used his idea as the foundation for FedEx, which he founded in 1971.

*Any fool can
criticize, condemn, and
complain – and most
fools do.*

Dale Carnegie
Writer & Lecturer

Irving, Astaire, and Smith are clearly not the only people to hear critical comments about their goals and ideas. The literary industry is notorious for its disapprovals and, sometimes, cruel opinions. The comments below were written by publishers to some authors about their submissions. Their works were later published by others and received national, and in some cases, international acclaim.

- James Baldwin's *Giovanni's Room* – "Hopelessly bad." Once his book was released, it was hailed by many as a masterpiece and is still read and studied today.
- *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding – "An uninteresting and absurd fantasy which was rubbish and dull." It was selected by *Time Magazine* as one of the 100 best English Language novels ever published.
- *Lolita* by Vladimir Nabokov – "... overwhelmingly nauseating ... the whole thing is an unsure cross between hideous reality and improbable fantasy. I recommend that it be buried under a stone for a thousand years." Although many felt *Lolita* should be censored, it is on *Time Magazine's* list of the 100 Best English Language Novels.

- *Feel the Fear and Do It Anyway* by Susan Jeffers, Ph.D. – “Lady Di could be bicycling nude down the street giving this book away and nobody would read it.” Millions of copies of Jeffers’ book were sold in over a hundred countries. It has been translated into 35 languages.

Getting written criticism is one thing, but what about verbal negative remarks? On *American Idol*, many contestants faced Simon Cowell’s often blunt and cruel comments. So what does one do in such cases? We must be strong enough in our resolve and have enough confidence in our abilities to withstand the negative remarks thrown at us. This is not easy, particularly if you have your own doubts. Make sure you have overcome many of them before pursuing your dreams. If necessary, re-read Chapters 3 and 4 on strengthening self-belief.

Consider Jennifer Hudson. After one of her performances on *American Idol*, Cowell said to her and the audience, “*I think you are out of your depth in this competition. I think there are better singers ... I don’t think you are capable of doing anything better to have any chance of winning this competition.*”

Someone’s opinion of you does not have to become your reality.

Les Brown
Motivational Expert

What would you do if you heard similar words about you and your chances of success? Think carefully before saying, “It wouldn’t bother me.” We must have the determination to ignore the emotions that come with hearing such opinions. One thing I noticed in Simon’s comments was he used the phrase “I think” three times. Upon hearing the comments from Criticizers, remember they are only saying what they “think.” Remember how very wrong Cowell was.

Two years after losing to Fantasia Barrino on *Idol*, Hudson won numerous awards, including a Golden Globe and an Oscar for her

role in her first movie, *Dream Girls*. During her appearance on *The Oprah Winfrey Show*, Cowell called in to say he was eating “massive doses of humble pie” and described her performance in the movie as “extraordinary.”

Don't let Criticizers stop you or cause you to lose your enthusiasm. When necessary, make changes and do things differently. But continue moving forward as long as you believe in your dreams.

Dream Saboteurs

Of the three types of Pessimistic People, this one is the most dangerous to your goals, your dreams, and in some cases, even your life. Why? Because they are purposely creating obstacles for you. They come in the form of mean-spirited co-workers, jealous friends, insecure managers, and others. Their intent is for you to fail. They spend hours plotting how to make that happen.

*A successful person
is one who can lay a
firm foundation with
the bricks that others
throw at him or her.*

David Brinkley
TV News Anchor

Why would they do such things? Your success threatens them. Maybe they think if you become successful, they will lose your friendship. Maybe they feel your success will reflect poorly on them because, in comparison, they appear to have done little or nothing. Maybe they feel your being successful shows they are not smart or talented. The list of reasons could go on and on and you may never know for sure. Do not talk to these people about yourself or your goals. The important thing is to get them out of your life now if possible before they wreak the havoc they are plotting. If for some reason you cannot, then at least avoid them as much as possible.

Early in my career, I worked for someone who turned out to be a Dream Saboteur. Robin had been my manager for about two

years. There was nothing I could do to satisfy her during that time. There was always something wrong with everything I did, be it a major project or simple letter. When she resigned, I was glad to have the opportunity to work for someone else. On her last day at the company, her last task was to give me my performance review, which should have taken place weeks before. But she kept delaying it for various reasons.

At our final meeting, she said my performance over the past 12 months had gotten better in some areas and if I kept improving, I would be a good assistant. Despite my taking on additional responsibilities and projects, she still felt I was just average. Everyone I had ever worked for always thought my work was excellent, except her. At the end of our meeting, Robin told me to talk with human resources manager about the increase I would receive because she was too busy packing up her belongings to figure it out.

Imagine my shock when the HR manager said Robin had privately told her I was a terrible assistant and I did not deserve a raise. Since she was no longer at the company, I could not confront her and personally challenge her allegations. Robin claimed I was uncooperative, not willing to learn the new systems, and did not work as hard as everyone else. I was in tears. The question of “why” haunted me for a long time. The meeting with the HR manager ended with the decision to put me on probation and review my performance in six months!

What did I do? After much deliberation, I quit! Now, if you are in a similar situation, I am not saying you need do to that. I was prepared to quit. As I always advise people, put yourself in a financial situation where you are not forced to endure unfairness. Because of that philosophy, I had limited credit card debt; hence, resigning was an option and I took it. Plan to keep your financial house in order; so if you are ever in a similar situation, you can make the decisions that are best for you instead of your creditors.

Although there are Dream Saboteurs out there, most of us will never have to face what Carl Brashear dealt with. He threatened the Navy's status quo by being African-American and wanting to be a U.S. Navy Master Diver. What he endured because of those who plotted to sabotage his dream is enraging. There were evil threatening notes written to frighten him; physical confrontations to intimidate him; vile words spoken to humiliate him; test scores changed to dishearten him; despicable deeds committed to stop his progress; and hostile actions to endanger his life. Despite all these efforts to stop him, Brashear persevered and, in 1954, became America's first African-American U.S. Navy diver.

Then the unthinkable happened. In 1966, one of his legs was severely injured in an on-ship accident. Suffering unbelievable pain from persistent infections and gangrene, Brashear made the difficult decision to have his leg amputated so he could return to diving as soon as possible. In an interview, Brashear recalls the doctors laughing and saying "The fool's crazy! He doesn't have a snowball's chance in hell of staying in the Navy. And a diver? No way! Impossible!"

*I ain't going to
let nobody steal
my dream.*

Carl Brashear
U.S. Navy Master Diver

Brashear faced incredible opposition to becoming the Navy's first amputee diver. He went through months of excruciating physical therapy to strengthen his body to meet the reinstatement requirements. In April 1968, Brashear passed the harsh physical test, making him the first amputee restored to full service as a U.S. Navy diver. The movie *Men of Honor*, starring Cuba Gooding Jr. and Robert DeNiro, is about his determination, perseverance, and courage.

Other people have faced Dream Saboteurs in their quest to achieve their dreams. The list is long, and includes individuals like Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell, the first woman doctor in the U.S; Jackie Robinson, first African-American Major League baseball player;

Dolores Fernandez Huetra, founder of the United Farm Workers; of course, Martin Luther King Jr., and hundreds of others who decided they would not be stopped despite all the efforts of those who maliciously opposed them.

Do not let the pessimists deter you. For Naysayers and Criticizers, take one or more of the following actions:

1. Alert them to their negative attitudes. Remember the story about Mary and her family member.
2. Avoid them completely.
3. Ignore what they say.
4. Limit what you tell them
5. Continue to believe in yourself and your dream, and, if necessary, take steps to solidify your belief (see Chapter 4).

In the case of Dream Saboteurs:

1. Call upon an inner resolution that you will not be stopped.
2. Call upon your faith, beliefs and practices (prayer, meditation) to see you through.
3. If necessary, call upon the legal entities and other appropriate groups or individuals who can help you.

TWO LAST THOUGHTS ABOUT PASSIVE AND PESSIMISTIC INDIVIDUALS

First, remember that in Chapter 4 I mentioned Cheryl Richardson’s concept about the hardware store. It applies here as well. Talking to passive and pessimistic people about our plans is “like going to the hardware store for milk.” Think about it: How many times have you gone to the wrong people for something you wanted? If you are like me, the answer is “far too often.” That brings me

to a second thought: “Would we expect to find milk in a hardware store?” No. My third thought: If we go to the hardware store and don’t find milk, is it the store’s fault? No, of course it isn’t. Yet, we get upset when people who are usually unsupportive make negative comments to us. Why continue going to them? Is it because we want them to change into encouraging and helpful people? That is not going to happen. Instead of spending time with them, it would be better to develop friendships with new people who can be supportive of us. See Chapter 10 for seven ways to do that.

Second point: As a child, I once told my grandmother about a new girl at school who was my new best friend. She smiled and asked me “How do you know that? You just met her.” I was confused by the question, which seemed more like a statement, so I never answered her. Later, I understood what she meant when I was trying to avoid some of my new, so-called friends who had turned into fiends who lied, and intentionally hurt others’ feelings.

*Like plants,
relationships take time
to germinate and grow
into the fullest they can
be.*

Cleopatra Bell
Author

Sometimes we bring people into the inner circle of our lives much too early. We start spending huge amounts of time with people we just met, sharing with them our innermost thoughts and dreams. But do we really know them yet? The answer is “probably not.” It would be far better to take the time to find out about people before declaring them our friends. Also, observe the way they treat and talk about people. It can be a good indication of how they will eventually act with you.

To conclude this chapter (and the previous one), there is an exercise on the following page that I have given participants attending my achievement programs over the years. They have found it to be an eye-opening exercise that was both valuable and insightful. If you have thoughts about the exercise that you would like to share with me, feel free to email me at Donna@JustGetSerious.com.



Just Get Serious® About Success

Chapter 12 Exercise

THEIR ROLE – YOUR ROLE

Please re-create the form below on a sheet of paper with about 10 rows. You can also download it from www.JGSBook.com.

First, think of the people you interact with most often at work, business, and personally. Write their names in column #1.

Question #1 Their Name?	Question #2 Their Role?	Question #3 Your Role?
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		
9.		
10.		

Second, under column #2 write the role you see them playing in your life relative to your goals and dreams. The roles were described in this chapter and the previous one. They are:

- Positive
 - Dream Maker
 - Loyal Supporter
 - Cheerleader
- Passive
 - Disinterested
 - Non-Believer
 - Quick Change artist
- Pessimistic
 - Naysayer
 - Criticizer
 - Dream Saboteur

Third, under column #3, write the role you play in their lives. Question #3 is very important, because many times we want lots of positive people in our lives, doing all kinds of great things to support us. Consider this: Are you willing to be that type of person for others? Based on the roles you listed on the chart, are there changes you need to make with people in your life?

In order to be successful, value and strengthen the relationships you have with Dream Makers, Loyal Supporters and Cheerleaders. Equally important, we should fulfill those roles for others. When was the last time you assisted individuals you know in meaningful ways – helping them get a job or promotion, sharing your experience, introducing them to people they need to meet, speaking highly of them to others, giving them well-intended advice, or simply offering words of encouragement?

Limit or discontinue your interaction with those who are Disinterested, Non-Believers, and Quick-Change Artists. We should also ask ourselves, when have we intentionally or unintentionally

played such a role with others by being unconcerned about their endeavors, not thinking they could achieve their goals or been inconsistent in how we supported them?

When possible, totally avoid Naysayers and Criticizers or limit our contact with them. At the same time, stop disapproving of others' ideas and/or telling them all the reasons why their ideas will not work.

Plan to sever ties with those who are or have the potential to be Dream Saboteurs. Likewise, we must vow to never stand in the way of others or deliberately ruin their chances of success.

Reflect on the changes you will make in your relationships and then act upon your decisions so you can have more support and be more supportive.