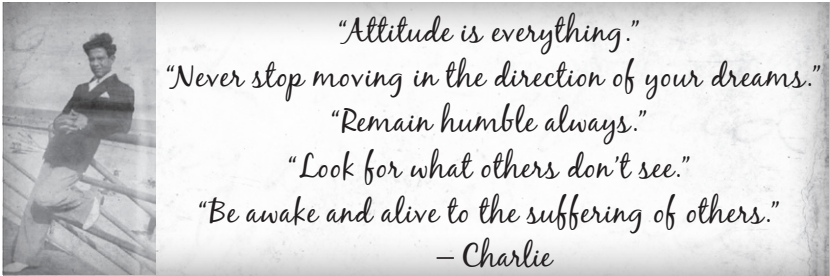


# 3

## Action and Attitude

*“Life is like riding a bicycle. To keep your balance,  
you must keep moving.”*

– Albert Einstein



**I**n this chapter, I want you to think about two words in a new and different light—two words that literally have everything to do with the everything in your days, as you go forward to live your dream and fashion your success.

The words are *action* and *attitude*.

How you act, and how you feel, from the moment you arise in the morning to the moment you drop into bed at night, determine whether or not you’ll ever live your passion or fulfill your purpose.

These are words with which you must become intimate. Charlie taught me that the journey you intend to embark upon demands that you never stop measuring, evaluating, and tweaking your actions. You also must

work to maintain a balanced and constructive attitude—one that you’ll be willing to sharply check at the door when necessary.

These are powerful words that have everything to do with success and living your best life. These are words that should speak to you loudly and constantly. They should rise up and come alive in you every morning when you first drop your feet to the floor by the side of the bed.

Each day is ultimately about two things and two things only: what you do (action), and how you react to the same (attitude).

## Living with Action

The lazy and uninspired will never inherit the earth, nor even the slightest speck of it. In order to achieve anything, you must be up and doing, actively engaged, and ever in motion. Building a best life requires more than mere motion, and more than mere effort or baby steps. It truly requires enthusiasm, zeal, and zest, along with the unbridled passion discussed in the previous chapter.

Action is for those who are willing to sprint and go all out. There are no half-measures or shortcuts. Each action taken must be considered, measured, and weighed, as each must fit into the larger context of the overall plan.

Success is ultimately the province of the one who is on fire, the one who is utterly determined, and the one who will keep shoveling and shoveling in the resolute belief that he or she will indeed move the mountain placed in his or her path, no matter its girth or its mass.

When you are going all out, fear itself gets cast aside and all systems are go, because the committed, engaged, and utterly active have no time for fear.

Of course, it is you who must implement your plan, as there is no magic in the moonlight out there that will do it for you. Plans are always the wellsprings of action, and, as such, your plan is not made to gather dust.

Action is passion in motion. As Pablo Picasso said, it is “the foundational key to all success.”

“Infuse your life with action,” proclaimed Bradley Whitford, the actor who played Josh Lyman on the long-running Emmy Award-winning series “The West Wing.” He said, “Don’t wait for it to happen. Make it happen. Make your own future. Make your own hope. Make your own love. And whatever your belief, honor your creator, not by passively waiting for grace to come down from on high, but by doing what you can to make grace happen.”

Or, as Bo Bennett, author of *Year to Success*, writes, “A dream becomes a goal when action is taken towards its achievement.” May you make what he says your daily mantra, for your road to success must follow just such a course—from the dream, to the goal, to the action, to the achievement, bit by bit and step by step, inexorably onward, until you can truly exhale, breathe deeply, and smile broadly after having fulfilled what you set out to accomplish. It can take a long, long time, but it’s not the time spent that matters. Rather, fulfillment is in the *doing*. That’s action.

## Living with Attitude

Like purpose, passion, and action, *attitude* is a larger-than-life word. Your attitude is the embodiment of the very way in which you grapple with life. It is the living expression of your acceptance or rejection of what life dishes out to you.

It is your signature, your logo, your mark.

Ralph Marston went so far as to say, “Excellence is not a skill. It is an

attitude.” John C. Maxwell said, “People may hear your words, but they feel your attitude.” So, yes indeed, attitude is one very big word.

To add to this potent litany of quotes about attitude is a popular saying that goes “We can complain because rose bushes have thorns or rejoice because thorn bushes have roses.”

Are you positive, upbeat and smiling when you try to succeed at anything, or are you down on the world and predisposed to think in skeptical terms about what is possible? Do you look for the good in people or rather expect to find the worst in them? Do you expect to take without giving or are you rather a “reap what you sow—you only get what you give” type?

Is the cup always half full, or half empty?

If you think that you can take without giving, if you expect the worst from people, if you are generally negative and slow to smile, or predisposed to give less rather than more, then you might want to save yourself the time and effort and put this book aside right now, because success and a best life just might not be your thing.

That is, of course, unless you are willing to do the hard work, and change!

The truth is that you can begin to change your attitude by simply biting your tongue and smiling when it hurts. You are capable of changing and improving the way you behave and act, if you only have the will. Even the worst of attitudes can be made right with a little spit polish, glue, and hand-holding therapy. Believe it or not, no matter how hard or angry, ditching the negative and accenting the positive just might feel good.

Why on earth would you want to hold onto a negative world view and attitude like that anyway?

It was the great American composer Irving Berlin who wrote in his book, *Gathering No Moss: Memoir of a Reluctant World Traveler*, “Life is 10 percent

what you make of it and 90 percent how you take it.” He weighed in awfully heavily on the attitude side of achievement, as do I.

What I am telling you is that 90 percent of what we are after here is largely the province of the upbeat and daring, the positive and determined, and the smiling and lighthearted. Yes, 90 percent of it is for those who will go forward undaunted, taking the hits and the failings and climbing over the pitfalls and the potholes, and even the occasional quicksand that will be placed in their paths. It is the positive and the upbeat who can deal with the vagaries and surprises of life.

As Charlie taught me, “Never stop moving in the direction of your dream.”

### Inspired by Charlie: Success Tips

- ✦ **You Carry the Great Tools of the Trade:** Success is, most certainly, all about you as you first look to claim your own special place in the world, but understand that as you ascend in the direction that you have chosen, you will likely be invited to change the world along the way. You will be invited to make a difference and leave a mark for good. The extent to which you do so will be correlated to the singular qualities that define you, your work, and your ascension in life. Charlie taught me to be awake and alive to the suffering of others when he said, “You must give in order to truly live. You must give in order to receive.” We’re talking about the qualities carried that make life worth living in the first place—qualities such as *compassion*, *honor*, and *humility*—the key qualities that Charlie embraced and exemplified in his service to others. The more that you embrace these great tools for living and carry them always in your tool chest, the greater your success and life will be.

Remember what Einstein wrote: “Try not to become a man of success. Rather become a man of value.”

✦ **Ignore Those “Realistic Expectations:** “Your journey to success begins when you take that first cold, hard look at yourself in the mirror and immerse yourself in that Emersonian trip down deep into the depths of your being to assess just who you are, what you’re made of, and what you’re capable of. You must do this in order to bore into the primordial powers of your passion, and to then set sail in the direction of your dreams, purpose, success, and best life. You may argue that you hold onto realistic expectations. However, you must understand that there are no limits upon those expectations. All limits are, in the end, just artificial creations. It is you who hold them, you who design them, and you who give them their standing and their power. They most certainly do not hold you, as you are the author of this relationship. It is you who render unto them, the power to hold you down. If you are willing to do the work, you can damn well improve and most certainly change for the better. Artificial limits inevitably and always crumble. As John F. Kennedy said, “There are risks and costs to action. But they are far less than the long range risks of comfortable inaction.”

✦ **Keep a Clear Head:** It is you who must act in the living present. Most certainly, there is a course of action for every step you take and for every choice you make. Planning and drawing the map that will lead to your successful life is no small thing. The vision and the end game or culmination of any plan will, in the end, be the culmination of literally

tens of thousands of actions, tens of thousands of choices, tens of thousands of steps forward, and tens of thousands of attitudinal responses to both those choices and steps. While we are all emotional beings, and emotion has its place in great endeavors that include becoming successful and fashioning your best life, you must do your level best to keep your emotions in check. Bore into them, understand them, even use them, but do not allow the emotions to override the reasonable.

## Your Attitude Is Everything

Remaining positive always and refusing to let despair in is key. Your disposition and the way you carry yourself has everything to do with just how you advance in life. One of the greatest weapons that you possess is your smile. It disarms, it opens doors, it invites and it encourages, so wear yours always, with the exception of those occasions when either bad news is being placed on the table or you are being reprimanded. Stay upbeat and literally wear your commitment to giving your very best always and to delivering the goods on your sleeves. Wear your determination to exceed expectations. When gentleness is warranted, be gentle, and when strength is needed, be strong. When compassion is warranted, be compassionate. Be exactly what a good human being should be.

Be a believer, a force, a friend. All of this and more is manifested in your attitude, in the very way that you carry yourself.

What is in the attitude, of course, is, in the end, what’s in you. So if being faithful and good at both your work and with the world matters to you, carry that. In fact, *wear it*. Wear the fact that you are a winner.

## Acting Is Difficult

For some, the unveiling of the plan will involve both working and going to school full-time, and for others, it will, for a time, demand working two jobs or even more. Maybe it will demand that you break out of long-established comfort zones in order to go in an entirely new and different direction. And maybe it will entail working with your family to let them know that your actions are going to involve sacrifice on their part and yours, and that there might be times when it is going to be awfully hard to hold all of the pieces together, times that require you to be courageous and to keep the faith.

I know of so many people who had to confront that critical choice of taking a step back in both standing and salary in order to recalibrate and place themselves back on the right road. Every day, somewhere, there is a general manager of a retail store who might take a trainee position in another company for less money, and an office manager who steps down in order to go where she can do more with her technical abilities, and even that rare businessman who is genuinely making it who steps back, breathes deep, takes the hit, and finally enrolls in culinary school.

For so many who have the guts to take the risk to become who and what they were meant to be, less *does*, for a time, become more. It's only that prominent player in their lives that we call "passion" that inevitably forces such reconsideration and such courageous boldness, for it takes guts to move on in an entirely new direction.

The great Johann Wolfgang Van Goethe wrote, "Thinking is easy, acting is difficult, and to put one's thoughts into action is the most difficult thing in the world." True, it can be exceedingly difficult, but it also is the portal that frees you to be you and fulfill your life's highest aspirations.

All over our great country, there are teachers who resign to enter the service industry and service industry professionals who decide that it's time to teach. There also are the occasional high achievers in business who have cathartic experiences that make them want to apply their talents in the nonprofit world.

God bless them, each and every one of them.

Every day, people are rerouting and determining to go down new and different roads as they continue to discover more and more about themselves. And it's all good, so long as their feet eventually get firmly planted where they were destined to be.

## Don't Ever Lead with Your Ego

The Book of Proverbs in the Bible states that "pride cometh before a fall," and that is true.

Keep the ego and pride at bay in the workplace and in the company of your peers. Celebrate the work and the achievement, but not yourself. As Thoreau said, "Go quietly in the direction of your dreams." Note that he said quietly, and not loudly.

The guy with the ego so large that he can't get his head through the doorway is never loved by his colleagues. The egotist, all too often, becomes an obstructive rather than a constructive force, and whatever relationships evolve are likely to be unhealthy. This is such a waste, for what you should be after is building the kind of relationships and connections that last for a lifetime.

Charlie knew all of this, and that's why he taught me to remain humble always. It is not about your pride, but rather your purpose, your goals, and your best life fulfilled. As he said, humility is your friend and ego is not.

## Keep Your Eyes Open: Think and Find Every Opportunity

Charlie said “look for what others don’t see,” and he certainly hit the proverbial nail on the head with that. Keep your mind open. Look beyond, look harder and deeper. If you do not look for what is new in each day, so much will pass you by. Opportunities rise up with the dawn just as the sun does, and anything is possible.

It is in the very nature of opportunity to be like this. It is there. It stares you in the face, but you do not always see it. It can be there to be found in some new information that you become aware of, in an email or a message or a text, in a person you just met, in a referral that was just made, in what transpires at a breakfast or luncheon or meeting, in a project or development or a new enterprise in your region that you just become aware of, in an idea that crosses your mind as you sip your morning coffee, and in so much more.

Everybody needs something, and you must look for those opportunities that may be hidden in the nooks and crannies of your field of endeavor. Always ask yourself: *Who needs what you have to offer?*

## It’s Much More Than the Job

To work is to survive, and that can be enough for an ordinary or so-so life. But if you want success, comfort and true fulfillment, if you want to put the icing on life’s cake, and if you want to be able to celebrate the story of your life, you already know that it has to be about more than the work alone.

Wake up to the simple fact that it is about so much more than the work, more than the job, and more than the ordinary. Extraordinary is about going beyond. It’s about maximizing the passion and the purpose, but it also must be about family, faith, and all of the higher order things that comprise a full life.

## Be Grateful and Live Gratefully

It is never just about you. Family may root for you, mentors may guide you, and people will be there for you, all along the way. Maybe a handful, or maybe dozens! And later, quite possibly hundreds and still more will be there, supporting and relying on you.

There is no such thing as being “on your own” when you are living your best life.

In the world I walk in, I see people as blessings and even angels in my life. Today, there are literally thousands of names in my contacts database, including past clients who continue to think of me for themselves or people they know. I am grateful to all of them. I never will take their goodness for granted, nor will I ever let them down.

In turn, I strive every day to refer out business when I can, and think of how I can help others. The more you help others, the more life will reward you.

You can take this to the bank: humility, goodness, character, and reverence also are among the mighty byproducts of true success.

## Acknowledge That Nothing Is Final

As you combine your action and attitude, acknowledge that here are no limits and no ends. There are only new beginnings. There are and never have been any final victories. The journey always goes on, just as your pursuit of your best life always goes on.

You may have climbed to the top of your mountain, but there will always be other mountains to climb.

High achievers are never fully satisfied. The day may come when you switch gears, and, while you may redirect your energies, you will never stop

achieving. You may bob and weave and adjust, but you keep breathing by going forward, continuing to ascend, and doing more.

No, there are no final victories. “Success is not final, failure is not fatal: It is the courage to continue that counts,” said Winston Churchill. That “courage to continue” never abandons one who lives a best life.

## The More Joyful, the More Successful

Joy may be the most important attitude of all. The ancient Egyptians had a profound belief about one’s entry into heaven. In short, the right to pass into heaven depended on the answer given to two simple questions:

Have you found joy in your life?

Has your life brought joy to others?

That was the only test that one had to pass in order to enter the portal to eternal bliss. There were no questions about success or high achievement or changing the world, but rather two questions about joy and whether or not you found it and passed it on.

Wow, isn’t that something! Just joy!

Therefore, be joyful. Find the joy in what you do and prosper and pass your joy unto others. Should you find the joy in what you do—and how can you not if you are following your heart in the pursuit of purpose and passion—you will succeed all the more. If you do, you will be an unstoppable force. The actual truth is that there will be joy enough in the mere pursuit of meshing vocation and avocation.

## Write the Story of Your Life

It doesn’t matter if it’s a sentence, a paragraph, fifty pages, or a book. Writing the story of your life and addressing what you want to be remem-

bered for is a telling and often game-changing exercise. It forces you to imagine and envision. It forces you to construct your best possible plan and, maybe, just maybe, to replace the one that you originally cobbled together.

This exercise is designed to help you distill purpose and passion to its essence. It shines a bright light upon just who and what you are and, most especially, upon just who and what you aim to be. It makes you a believer again. It gives you faith. It gets you back on track.

And yes, you are always free to rewrite.

I think about you writing your own story, and I hear this great line of Leonardo Da Vinci, who accomplished more than enough for one hundred lifetimes. He wrote, “It had long since come to my attention that people of accomplishment rarely sat back and let things happen to them. They went out and happened to things.”

Happen to things—write your story and make it happen.

## Twenty-Four Hours and Limitless Resources

Every day, you are given 24 precious hours, and it is up to you to use each one as best you can. Each day will be comprised of choices and actions. You will establish and determine the pace. There’s no rocket science, of course, in suggesting that the faster the pace, the faster the climb. That’s it, no less and no more. You get the same 24 hours every single new and promising day. Use them wisely. Be willing to do justice to each hour, be a doer and not a slacker, and you will steadfastly advance in the direction of your dreams.

It helps a great deal to know that you are armed with so many extraordinary tools today. You are living in the height of a historic age of technological advancement, where new apps, bringing you ever closer to all knowledge and information and people, get spit out by the game-changers

weekly. Microsoft and Apple and the Internet and Google and all the rest have made this amazing world so much smaller. No matter the interest or field of endeavor that inspires you, your exploration of it is but the snap of a fingertip away.

The opportunity to self-educate has never been greater, the very thought of which, given the theme of this chapter, reminds me of the words of Herbert Spencer, one of the Victorian era's great philosophers and political theorists. He wrote, "The great aim of education is not knowledge but action."

What he wrote is simply extraordinary, and it speaks loudly to what we are about here. More than 125 years ago, he hit the nail on the head by suggesting that education itself is but the rudimentary foundation of action, and that it is the "acting upon" what you have learned that ultimately counts.

Knowledge for knowledge's sake is of no value.

It is only, he affirms, the acting upon knowledge that has intrinsic value.

By the way, let me also note that the internet presents you with an opportunity to take your own "career aptitude" tests and your own "values clarification" tests, tools in that most essential effort to pinpoint just what your true avocation and purpose is. Of course, it is you who must take the journey within and you who ultimately calls the shots on your behalf, but it's nice to know, via tests such as these, that some fairly astute psychologists can, at least, weigh in on your behalf.

## Mixing It Up to Find Joy and Grace

There's also something to be said for not doing the exact same thing day after day. It's good to keep things interesting, so shaking up or tweaking the schedule and the routine makes a lot of sense. It's also extremely

important to take at least 10 minutes out of each day for quiet reflection and consideration, for looking inside and taking a personal litmus test.

Take 10 minutes to ask yourself questions like: *Am I where I want to be? What more, if anything, can I do? What happened yesterday or today that I can do more with? Who can help me? Where do I turn next?* This goes a long way in helping you become better, so I strongly suggest that you make it a habit to pointedly take out ten minutes each day for introspection, and when used wisely, I promise you that these 10 minutes will become the most important minutes of your days.

The author of the classic book *The Little Prince* once wrote, "It is in the compelling zest of high adventure and of victory, and in creative action, that man finds his supreme joys." Creative action, he insisted, evokes the supreme joys. Wow! Others have already told us, in no uncertain terms, that action can be an almost profound instrument of grace.

Out of action, out of doing, out of your motion, there exists the exciting prospect of fashioning both joy and grace, which excites me.

So many spend too much time wishing that they were different—a little old attitudinal response mechanism called jealousy, which never gives way to anything constructive and can often prove to be utterly destructive.

There's also an awful lot of anger that often gets directed at those who highly succeed—anger that gets tossed around rather indiscriminately. It gets voiced in envious, unkind comments such as, "Can you *believe* how successful he/she is or what he/she is doing?" Again, just in case there's any doubt, this is but another regressive force that only represses the one who voices it, and never takes that person the slightest bit higher.

The truth is that you'll go much further admiring them and, to whatever degree possible, studying and trying to emulate their success, rather than despising them.



## Rethinking Action and Attitude

Your attitude is everything. It is who you are. Our old friend Winston Churchill referred to attitude as “the little thing that makes a big difference,” and the bigger difference is always whether that attitude is positive or negative.

Accordingly, as it was once often said, “A bad attitude is like a flat tire. If you don’t change it, you’ll never go anywhere.”

If you were to google synonyms for action, among the many you would find would be force, life, movement, plan, bustle, dash, going, happening, motion, power, vigor, vitality, and spirit. That’s not a bad bunch of words with which to go to battle with, when the battle is for your dreams, your success, and your best life.

It is about doing, moving, plodding, finishing, daring, and achieving. If you are not up and doing, one of two things has probably happened: You are either stuck in the mud, or you are about to fall off the cliff’s edge into the great abyss.

Jack Canfield, the originator of the famous *Chicken Soup for the Soul* book series, wrote, “Successful people maintain a positive focus in life no matter what is going on around them. They stay focused on their past successes rather than their past failures, and on the next action steps they need to take to get them closer to the fulfillment of their goals, rather than all the other distractions life presents to them.”

Each action taken, each step forward, and each movement will generate an attitudinal response that affects actions to come. Simply know this: The mind never rests. Be it rationally, or emotionally, it never stops judging, evaluating, weighing, and forcefully suggesting. It can sure pump up the adrenaline and give way to either anger or acceptance. Again, it is your job to stay in control of this process.

As to attitude, the synonyms are equally telling. They include stance, posture, viewpoint, outlook, perspective, standpoint, position, temper, temperament, inclination, orientation, reaction, and approach. Each action you take activates or puts in play all of these telling synonyms of attitude.

In what we do and what we think about what we do, our lives are lived.

It is a huge and extraordinary process that you must consciously and vigilantly engage. As the great Zig Ziglar, author and motivational speaker, has said, “It is your attitude and not your aptitude that determines your altitude.” The truth is that, while what you know is critically important, he argues in this profound statement that how you live your life and how you respond to it are even more important.

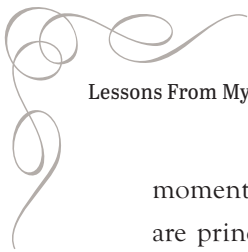
### What Would Charlie Say?

Charlie believed with all his heart in the importance of action and attitude. He firmly believed that opportunities present themselves to all, but that they are fully maximized only by those who determine to go after them. As he told me, “There is so much opportunity out there. Go after whatever you want in life and give it your all.”

I have shared enough words and thoughts about action and attitude, their importance, and the symbiotic relationship between the two. Still, I have one more philosophical contribution from Rainer Maria Rilke, a powerful and moving Austrian poet of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

Rilke wrote:

How should we be able to forget those ancient myths that are at the beginning of all peoples, the myths about dragons that at the last



moment turn into princesses; perhaps all the dragons of our lives are princesses who are only waiting to see us once beautiful and brave. Perhaps everything terrible is in deepest being something helpless that only wants help from us.

So you must not be frightened if a sadness rises up before you larger than any you have ever seen; if a restiveness, like light and cloud shadows, passes over your hands and over all you do. You must think that something is happening with you, that life has not forgotten you, that it holds you in its hand; it will not let you fall. Why do you want to shut out of your life any uneasiness, any miseries, or any depressions? For after all, you do not know what work these conditions are doing inside you.

Indeed, this is not a bad way to look at your life, and at all of the trials, tribulations, and doubts that your own actions may evoke. Yes, it is about your actions, the actions of all those who affect you, and your responses to both. Rilke suggests that everything, the bad as well as the good, happens for a reason, and that even that which is most difficult and entirely unwanted still teaches and instructs and enlightens, rendering you richer and stronger in the end.

Before you run and hide, he seems to say, let wisdom take a first crack at that which troubles.

Be up and doing, but consider each action and corresponding reaction. Even more importantly, consider your attitudinal responses to the same, which have everything to do with how you will likely act the next day.

Be up and doing, be daring, be bold, be aware, and be vigilant. In the ways that we've discussed, action and attitude will get you far.