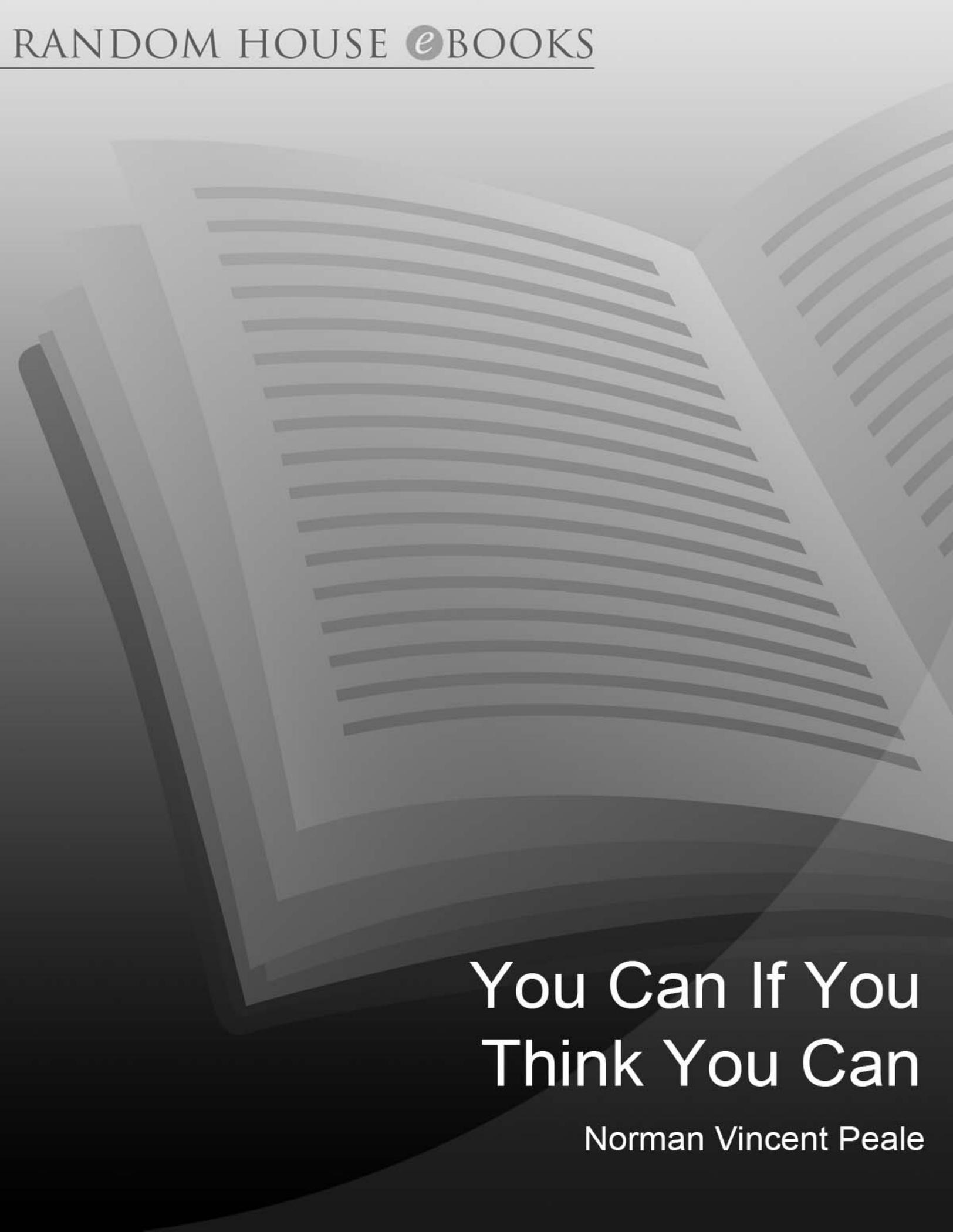


RANDOM HOUSE  BOOKS

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# You Can If You Think You Can

Norman Vincent Peale

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## About the Book

### **It's always too soon to quit.**

Everyone has problems at some point in their lives. They occur every day in business, family and personal life. Sometimes they seem insurmountable, or there are just too many of them for us to feel able to cope. This book will give you hope - and practical strategies to face the future with confidence.

*You Can If You Think You Can* shows you how to develop self-trust and motivation, how to forget fear and build calmness, how to recognise problems as challenges and how to tap all your inner resources to live your life to the full.

*Norman Vincent Peale titles available in Vermillion*

*The Power of Positive Thinking*

*The Power of Positive Living*

*The Amazing Results of Positive Thinking*

*The Positive Way to Change Your Life*

*The Power of Positive Thinking for Young People*

*Stay Alive All Your Life*

*Courage and Confidence*

*You Can if You Think You Can*

# You Can If You Think You Can

Norman Vincent Peale



Dedicated to  
RUTH STAFFORD PEALE  
my beloved wife  
and  
constant partner  
in all our many activities  
with love and gratitude

A special word of appreciation to my secretaries, Miss Grace M. Blythe, for her splendid assistance in the preparation of this manuscript, and Mrs Alice Olivet, for her helpfulness in research.

*Dear Reader—*

If you are an old friend, welcome to another book. If you are a new friend, welcome to you, too. One of the chief delights in life is to keep old friends and make new ones.

But why another book when I have already written seventeen and collaborated on others? Well, perhaps it is strange, but I seem to keep on feeling that I have something more to say, or that I would like to repeat in a different way some things I have already said, or perhaps I hopefully want to express in a more persuasive manner those principles which I know to be effective.

A long time ago I developed what might be called an obsession. The obsession is to try to help people get the best from life and learn how to live with its hard experiences in a creative manner.

Personally, I have always been fascinated by the tremendous qualities in the individual and by the amazing things human beings can do with themselves. To me this is so exciting, so fabulous, that I just cannot help coming forward once again with more inspiring stories of turned-on people who have really done something remarkable, especially in releasing their own potential. And these are stories of the plain people, just like ourselves. At least, like me.

Having known many men and women and having had opportunity to watch them overcome problems and come up with real values, I have become aware that certain specific principles are always involved in creative outcomes. This book is written to outline those dynamic and workable principles and to encourage my readers to put them into operation for themselves. Its purpose is to persuade you, the reader, that you can if you think you can.

This book is produced out of an enthusiastic belief in people and a desire to encourage them to take charge of their lives by fully realizing the amazing possibilities inherent in the mind.

If you are not experiencing the best and most exciting values, this book is designed to offer workable suggestions for reaching your objectives. If difficulties and problems are ganging up on you and your confidence is shaky, it is hoped that this book may make you realize that you can indeed handle whatever comes and handle it well. Practical suggestions are offered that can help you as they have helped others.

After you have read this book, if your belief in the powers of your own mind is enhanced, if you have a more workable thought pattern, and if you know for a fact that you can successfully deal with any problem, I shall feel that my sincere purpose in writing it has been achieved.

Of course I believe in everything said and reported in the book, in every idea and principle advanced. I believe in them because they work. My hope is that the book says something to you and does something for you.

## **Just One Word More**

Did you ever stop to think what a book can do? A book written from a positive and inspirational point of view? I wish it were possible to reproduce here many of the letters received which tell of the marvellous results such books have had in people's experience. Let me give you just one, a letter that came just as I was finishing this manuscript. It tells what a book did for a young woman, Loan Eng Tjioe, Ph.D. She writes:

Dear Doctor Peale:

Your books guided me through difficult phases of my life even before I came to the United States. I was still in my home country in Indonesia, when I came across your book, *Stay Alive All Your Life*. At that time I was

an unhappy, frustrated college student. I wanted to go abroad badly to receive a better education and to see what the world outside my country looked like.

Many friends of mine had gone to Europe for study, and I accompanied them one by one to the airport, where I said goodbye to them. I always came home in tears asking when it would be my turn to go too. However, my father was a small businessman and had five children to take care of. It was impossible for him to finance study in Europe.

I knew a miracle had to happen if I were ever to go abroad. Then I found your book and learned that I could get what I wanted, if I but *believed!* Your book also said that I had to act as if I were sure I would get what I wanted. Well, I thought I had nothing to lose by trying it.

I told myself that I would get a scholarship to Germany, the country where I wanted to study, because Psychology, the subject I majored in, originated there. I started taking German lessons intensively. I wrote to German universities asking about the possibilities of a scholarship. They all replied in the negative. No one could give me a scholarship unless I was already studying in Germany and proving my abilities there. But I kept on believing. My parents thought I had gone out of my mind to fight such a hopeless struggle. I let them talk and one day I received a letter from the University of Bonn that they were willing to consider my application.

I was excited and nervous. Now I had to go a step further in my positive thinking. I had to believe that I was going to study at the University of Bonn in Germany. I found a picture of this university and pasted it on the wall of my bedroom. I kept looking at it and told myself: "That is where you are going to study!" I learned the German language even more intensively. Then, after an agony of nearly a year, I received the letter that I had indeed won a scholarship. Three months later I left for Germany.

This happened about eight years ago. It was the first but not the last time in my life, which showed me that God is willing to give you everything you ask for, if you but believe.

I always thought that I would like to see you in person one day. Now this wish has been fulfilled, since my husband and I are living in New York at present. On coming Sunday our first son will be baptized by you. Who would have thought that long ago as I was still in Indonesia, clinging to your book as my only source of hope? Thank you so very, very much!

May God bless you!

Sincerely yours,

Perhaps this book may do something comparable for you. The principles it teaches are packed with power; so why not draw on that power? The book tells how. And remember, always remember: You can if you think you can.

NORMAN VINCENT PEALE

# 1

## The Persistence Principle: It's Always too soon to Quit

WHEN YOU HAVE a problem, one that is especially difficult and baffling, perhaps terribly discouraging, there is one basic principle to apply and keep on applying. It is simply this—never quit.

To give up is to invite complete defeat. And not only in connection with the matter at hand. Giving up contributes to an ultimate defeat of the personality. It tends to develop a defeat psychology.

Come at the problem a different way if the methods you are using are not working. And if the new approach fails to go well, then come at it still another way until you do find the key to the situation. For there is a key, there always is, and continual, thoughtful, undeviating search and attack will produce it.

At luncheon I noted that a friend of mine had the habit of drawing diagrams on the white tablecloth to illustrate points he was making. He was talking about a man who had it tough but who was tougher than his problems and who, because he wouldn't quit, came through finally to a spectacular outcome.

The diagram was of a man facing an enormous mountain. "How is he going to get on the other side of that mountain?" my luncheon companion asked.

"Go around it," I replied.

“It’s too wide.”

“O.K., burrow under it,” I offered.

“No; it’s too deep. Here’s the way. He rises above it mentally. If man can devise a mechanism that can fly forty thousand feet high—above mountains—he can come up with a type of thinking that can lift him above any mountainous difficulty.”

“Bill, that is pretty ingenious, but I read that concept a long while ago. ‘Whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt his heart . . .’”<sup>1</sup>

“Yes, that’s the idea,” he agreed enthusiastically. “Just think, don’t get emotional, and hold to the basic principle that it’s always too soon to quit.”

Recently I received an upbeat letter from a man who utilized this principle successfully. He told me that a few years ago he developed a prefabricated wall system for mobile homes. He organized a company and put all his money into it, but it didn’t take hold, failed to move. The firm ran into one difficulty after another, so much so that his associates pleaded with him to “bury the corpse.” But he would not let go.

This man is a positive thinker. He is also an individual who demonstrates the “hold on” type of faith, actually an invincible character, you might say. He believed that this difficulty need not defeat or destroy him. He said, “I refused even to entertain the thought of quitting.” So he did some rational, in-depth thinking and got an idea. And you’ll always get an idea if you think and don’t panic. He decided to establish a line of prefabricated floor systems to go with the prefabricated wall systems. And with this he “hit the jackpot.” A big company manufacturing mobile homes bought him out. Writing to tell about it, he gave me this terrific phrase: “It’s always too soon to quit!”

You and I have seen repeated again and again a real tragedy. We’ve seen people with goals and objectives. They

worked . . . they struggled . . . they thought . . . they prayed. But because the going was hard, they grew tired and discouraged and finally they quit. And afterwards it was often discovered that had they persevered just a little longer, had they been able to see just ahead of them, they would have found the result they sought.

## **Never Talk Defeat**

How can you develop this non-quitting, undefeatable attitude? Well, for one thing, never talk defeat, for if you do you can actually talk yourself into acceptance of defeat. One time when I personally was having some hard going, a man on the West Coast, whom I did not know, called me on the telephone. All he said was this: "Don't you be worried and don't you give up. I am saying the Good Word for you." Before I could ask him what the Good Word was, he hung up. And I still don't know what he meant by the Good Word. But I suddenly realized I had not been saying good, hopeful words; I had been talking "down." And by that action I was actually talking myself into a defeatist attitude and therefore into defeat itself. So I began saying good words, words like hope—belief—faith—victory. I used the powerful affirmation, "I can if I think I can." I began to act and think and work on that basis. Try that and your whole personality will begin reaching for the good things; and get them, too.

In an article Phyllis Simolke discussed this idea of "the good word," and how dangerous it is to use negative words. She suggested, for example, consideration of the word "no." That word "no" denotes a shutting of the door. It means failure, defeat, delay. But spell it backwards and take new hope, for backwards it spells "on." Get really activated; push "on" unremittingly towards your goal until your problem is solved, your difficulty dealt with.

She also drew attention to the word "teem." Everything seems to be "teeming" in your life, teeming with difficulty,

teeming with regret, teeming with ineffectiveness. So she advises turning it around to form the word “meet.” Meet each problem as it arises. You will no longer be teeming with defeat and hopelessness, but will become productive and creative by vigorously meeting each challenge as it arises. Turn “no” into “on” and “teem” into “meet.”

Change your thinking to meet problems in a positive, constructive way. And remember the persistence principle: It’s always too soon to quit.

Indeed, your chances of really getting where you want to go in life often hinge on your reaction to some shattering setback. Will you give up or will you keep on trying? It’s as simple as that. And what you decide, decides your future.

## **Call on your Grit**

Ever hear of the thrilling career of Hayes Jones? Back in 1960 this man was the phenomenon of the year in high hurdles racing. He won race after race. He broke records. He was, in fact, sensational. Naturally he was picked for the Olympic Games held that year at Rome. There he ran in the 110-metre high hurdles amid worldwide expectations that he would carry off the gold medal.

But surprisingly he didn’t. He finished third. It was, of course, a keen disappointment. His first thought was: “So what! I might as well quit running.” There would be no more Olympic Games for four long years. Besides, he had already won all the other coveted high hurdles championships. Why subject himself to four more strenuous years of keeping in top form? The only sensible thing was to forget it and get started in a business career.

This was plain logic, for sure. But Hayes Jones couldn’t settle for that. “You can’t be logical,” he says, “about something you’ve wanted all your life.” So he started training again, three hours a day, seven days a week. And in

the next couple of years made some new records in the 60-yard and 70-yard high hurdles.

Came the night of February 22, 1964 at Madison Square Garden. Jones was competing in the 60-yard high hurdles. He had announced that this would be his last indoor race. Tension ran high; every eye was on him. And he won, tying his own previous all-time record. Then a strange thing happened. In those days in the old Garden, when runners had crossed the finish line they disappeared under a ramp before they could slow down and stop. Walking back on to the track, Jones stood for a moment with head bowed, acknowledging the applause. Then seventeen thousand people packing the Garden stood in tribute. Jones wept. Many spectators wept, too, because a once-defeated man had still stayed in there. He wouldn't quit, and the fans loved him for that.

He entered the 1964 Olympics at Tokyo and ran the 110-metre high hurdles in 13.6 seconds, finishing first—winning his gold medal.

After that he went to work for an airline as a sales representative.

Later he offered to help as a volunteer in his city's physical fitness programme. His activities got spectacular results.

In a speech to a crowd of young men he quoted some lines which anyone would do well to tuck into his mind and live by:<sup>2</sup>

It's the plugging away that will win you the day,  
So don't be a piker, old pard!  
Just draw on your grit; it's so easy to quit:  
It's the keeping-your-chin-up that's hard.  
It's easy to cry that you're beaten—and die;  
It's easy to crawfish and crawl;  
But to fight and to fight when hope's out of sight—  
Why, that's the best game of them all!

And though you come out of each grueling bout,  
All broken and beaten and scarred,  
Just have one more try—it's dead easy to die,  
It's the keeping-on-living that's hard.

Hayes Jones's story brings to mind a line from Goethe: "Austere perseverance, harsh and continuous, may be employed by the smallest of us and rarely fails of its purpose, for its silent power grows irresistibly greater with time." That is to say, just keep on trying—that will do it.

This refusal to quit is called the persistence principle. Sadly enough, we hear little about persistence in this soft, permissive era. But as America historically produced strong men, the importance of persistence was constantly driven into the consciousness of youth. They were told to fight the good fight and never let anything throw them, and if it did, get right back up and attack the difficulty, hit it hard and then some, and keep on no matter what. Perseverance—that was the key word then, and it still remains the basic principle for anyone who wants success. You cannot creatively get anywhere in this life without sturdy application of the persistence principle.

### **Keeping at it gets Results**

The thinkers of the world, those who know the score, always ring the changes on persistence. Muhammad said, "God is with those who persevere." Muhammad, it appears, knew his stuff, and so did Shakespeare, who told us that "Much rain wears the marble." Well, marble is hard, very hard, but little raindrops constantly keeping at it can wear it down. Seventeen centuries before the Bard of Avon came up with the foregoing wise observation, Lucretius made the same point: "The fall of dropping water wears away the stone."

Edmund Burke, the great statesman, gave us a man-sized bit of advice. He, too, believed in the power of the

persistence principle. He said, “Never despair, but if you do, *work on in despair.*”

May I refer to another person, perhaps not so famous but certainly just as wise as those previously mentioned? The lady is my own mother. She practised the never-quit persistence principle all her life and she had plenty to contend with—very little money and all the ordinary human problems. But she was never about to fold and give up. She was made of sterner stuff. She was strong, always and inevitably.

I remember two things in my boyhood that I hated: spinach and algebra. And I do not really care for either of them today, although I must admit they now doctor up the spinach so it is more palatable. I would come home from school and inform my mother glumly that I just couldn't get algebra. I recall one especially gloomy day when it really had me on the ropes and I complained, “I can't get it. That's all there is to it. I just can't get it. I can't, I can't.”

She looked at me and, believe me, it was no soft “mama” look that she levelled my way. Her voice was sharp and crisp. She has been gone from this earth physically a good many years, but I can still hear those dynamic words as she quoted a familiar line from a man named William Edward Hickson: “If at first you don't succeed, try, try again.” And she would add, “You can if you think you can.” She made me believe that I could. The affirmation of strong perseverance, of keeping at it, of continuous, undeviating effort, is bound to pay off ultimately if you have the inner compulsion to visualize and keep at it.

## **The Perception Principle**

To be effective, the persistence principle must be supported by another vital principle—the perception principle and the power that derives from it.

What do we mean by the perception principle? When a person is defeated in his mind or is overwhelmed by a self-defeating situation, he needs perception. He must have the insight to perceive the inner cause of his defeat. He must see the situation not only on the outside, but on the inside as well. He must have an intuitive insight and understanding concerning himself—who and what he is. He must perceive and cultivate his inner powers. Then he can go on to a successful outcome.

It is a fact that most people who mess up their lives and fail do so, in part at least, because they are not organized inwardly; they are lacking in insight as to who and what they are. It has often been said, “He is his own worst enemy.” People can have goals and objectives and work hard and still fail. A person may wish to accomplish something creative and yet he cannot seem to do it; he fails at it. Why? Perhaps the trouble is something amiss within himself.

Actually, the hardest person in the world to know is oneself. We have a built-in, self-protecting mechanism that always tries to do what we want. It seeks to make the irrational appear rational. Many people simply do not want to know themselves. They will talk about other people and their problems, but they hide from themselves and will not face reality. Actually, one of the greatest moments in anybody’s developing experience is when he no longer tries to hide from himself but determines to get acquainted with himself as he really is.

People who fail usually do so not because they are unable to handle an outward situation—it is the inner or mental conflict that defeats them. You must see yourself as you really are and deal with yourself on that honest basis. That is the perception principle, and it is based on self-examination. Stand in front of a mirror and say to yourself, “Now, look, I want the truth about you.” Right away your mind may tell you, “Why, you’re all right. Don’t make so

much of it.” But the normal, healthy-minded individual will realize that true self-knowledge is always the beginning of self-development.

I spoke at a meeting in Washington, D.C. There were many distinguished government officials present and not a few so-called celebrities. I did not know many of them personally, but one man came to me afterwards and introduced himself. I recognized him immediately as an outstanding person, a man of distinction and ability, and proceeded to tell him how much I admired his leadership.

“Isn’t that something!” he remarked. “I thank you very much. But if it is justified, there is a good reason why.”

“Oh?” I replied.

“Yes,” said he. “It is a talk you gave one night about fifteen years ago right here in Washington. I attended that meeting and heard you speak. I was ambitious and well trained,” he continued. “Everybody told me I had ability. But much that I did went wrong. I was strangely mixed up in my thinking and reactions and did a lot of dumb things. But that night, as I listened to your speech, all of a sudden something dramatic happened to me. It was like being in the country on a very black night,” he reflected, “when suddenly comes a flash of lightning and you see the entire landscape clearly revealed.

“I had a flashing view of my inner self. And I could see that I was disorganized, and that was the reason I was being defeated. Right then and there I decided that I would get with it. So the first thing I did was to ask the good Lord to organize me, to bring all my shattered parts together inwardly. And my request was granted. In succeeding days,” he concluded, “I began increasingly to have a marvellous, actually unbelievable sense of capacity, unity, and power. Of course, everything wasn’t suddenly rosy, but it got better, lots better.”

This creative change happened because the man was able to apply the principle of perception. He got a good look

inside himself and then corrected what he saw that was amiss. Result: He got a power that projected him to success.

When a man begins to realize the potential within himself through the application of the perception principle, power takes over to release it, develop it, and actualize it into successful performance. By power is meant a sense of new strength, a feeling of adequacy. But before creativity can become operative, the individual must not only learn to know and believe in himself but must also have a power-releasing experience so conclusive that he will be able to carry on despite all odds.

Persistence motivated by perception releases new power and is the valid formula that leads to successful achievement, hard though the process may be.

### **Nudged by his Inner Potential**

Take the career of Bob Pettit, for example. Bob became one of the greatest professional stars of his generation, one of the highest-scoring men in basketball history.

At fourteen years of age, when Bob was newly in high school, he was 5 feet 7 inches and weighed 118 pounds. As he put it, he had "the co-ordination of a broomstick." He was a weak, frail little fellow. But he had a strong motivational urge to be an athlete. Instinctively he employed the perception principle. He alone felt, rather than saw, his potential.

He went in for football but didn't make the team. However, they did put him on as a third-string tackle. One day, when nobody else was available, he was put in a game, and the opposing quarterback poured a play over him for a 65-yard touchdown. That was the end of Bob as a football player!

Then he went in for baseball. And finally one day he was put in to substitute at second base. A player hit a fast ground ball to him and it zoomed right through his legs and

two runs came in. So that was the end of his baseball career.

Next, Bob went out for basketball. They needed twelve boys for the high school team; seventeen applied. When the list was posted, Bob's name wasn't on it. Small, frail, and weak, it seemed he just couldn't make it in sports. But he wanted so much to be an athlete—with giants!

So Bob went to his church and talked with the minister, who saw at once what was in this young boy. He told him that the Lord would make him great. Bob became a believer. Furthermore, the minister had an idea. "We'll organize a church team," he said. "And we'll get several other churches to organize teams, too!" These teams were made up of boys who couldn't get on the high school team. Bob was finally on a team!

For the first time in his life Bob felt important. He practised constantly. He took a wire coat hanger and bent it in such a way that it resembled a basket and nailed it against the garage. Hour after hour he threw tennis balls through this improvised basket. His father, impressed by his persistence, got him a regulation basketball and backboard.

Every afternoon after school Bob would throw baskets until dinner time. Then he would go in and have dinner, do his homework, and go back out and shoot baskets until dark. Every time he saw any kind of open rubbish bin along the street he would throw something into it, constantly throwing things into baskets. He became the leading scorer on the church team. He was determined to excel in basketball. His inner potential nudged him on.

He did not have natural strength, so Bob began daily exercises to build up his legs and arms. He did these exercises faithfully each day and because of his determination, it is said, he grew five inches in his second year! By the time he was a junior in high school, he had made the school basketball team. The coach couldn't get

over the change in Bob, who “wasn’t good enough to make junior varsity last year”!

The team became state high school champion in Bob’s senior year, and Bob went on to become the highest scorer at Louisiana State University and later with the St Louis Hawks. He became a magnificent physical and spiritual specimen, one of the greatest athletes of his generation. Why? Because he practised two principles—perception and persistence. Sensing the potential power within him, he simply would not give up.

But we do not have to be great athletes to make use of the perception and persistence principles. In day-to-day activities we are often confronted by situations where our ability to think positively and never give up is called upon.

### **Keep On Keeping On**

The story of a problem I suddenly had to deal with illustrates that often a situation which may seem completely hopeless will work out if you just keep hoping and, better still, keep trying! Unexpected obstacles gave me quite a demonstration of this.

After speaking at a meeting in Holland, Michigan, where I stayed overnight, I had an engagement the following night in Phoenix, Arizona. Under normal travel conditions it appeared to be no problem getting there. I was scheduled to take an early plane from Grand Rapids to Chicago and connect with a plane to Phoenix, which would get me there in plenty of time. It seemed like an easy journey.

But that morning in Holland, Michigan, you could hardly see the car parked right outside the motel room window. That is how foggy it was. I telephoned to the Grand Rapids airport and found it was fogged in. No planes going out.

I called Detroit. It too was fogged in. They advised that Chicago’s O’Hare Airport was also at a below-minimum overcast and did not expect any planes to be getting out

that morning. I called Minneapolis. Fogged in. In short, I was fogged in—hundreds of miles from Phoenix and my evening engagement.

What could I do? Well, I sat down and had a positive-thinking session, practising the persistence principle. The people in Phoenix had booked me eight months before. To call now and tell them I couldn't make it was the last thing to consider. I might have given up and said, "Well, there's nothing I can do about it. I just can't get there." Had I admitted that, I'm sure I would not have got there. But instead, I definitely practised a positive mental attitude, rented a car, and set out for Chicago, visualizing the fog as lifting by arrival time.

After going about sixty of the two hundred miles to Chicago, the engine started sputtering and missing. The prospects of my travel programme were not brightened by this mechanical difficulty. I forced my mind to take a positive view. At this point I came to a service station where, believe it or not, they had one of the best mechanics I have ever met. In a jiffy he had the engine half apart. He cleaned and scraped a lot of things and ended by putting in eight new spark plugs. "Now," he said, "it will go."

From a pay phone I called Chicago again. "Your plane's been cancelled," I was told. But the young lady added, "There's one going at four o'clock this afternoon." That would get me to Phoenix just in the nick of time for my speaking engagement.

Getting back in the car, what do you know? It wouldn't start. The battery was dead. The man recharged the battery. However, he told me. "You can get to O'Hare all right, but don't turn the engine off on the way, no matter what!"

With new spark plugs and all, the car ran beautifully. When I pulled up at O'Hare Field, I had to turn the motor off to get my bag out of the trunk, and then the car would not start again. The battery was really dead. So I simply turned the ailing vehicle over to an unappreciative policeman.

In the terminal thousands of people were milling around. While I stood hesitating, suddenly out of the crowd walked an airline official who recognized me and asked, “What’s your trouble?” I explained. “Our planes are all grounded,” he told me, “but another airline is going to try to get a plane out. If you can get on it, you’ll make your meeting. Let’s practise positive thinking—‘never give up.’ Wait here for me.”

He was gone a good half hour; then came back and said, “That plane is going out, all right, but there’s no space on it. But I’ll tell you what; we’ll go down to the gate and we’ll hold the thought that there will be a cancellation.” Well, when the plane was just about to take off, my friend informed me with a broad grin that I had a seat. Someone had failed to show.

I arrived in Phoenix forty-five minutes before I was scheduled to speak.

When everything seems to be going wrong, that is the time to practise the positive mental belief that you can still achieve your objective provided you persist, trying everything. If you start thinking it’s hopeless, your state of mind will actually attract further trouble to defeat you. Instead, hold the thought that conditions will shift in your favour—and get going.

The glib excuse about circumstances being beyond our control is too often used to rationalize a feeble giving up too soon. The people who get on in this world are the people who get up and look for the circumstances they want, and if they can’t find them, make them. That is the attitude that works wonders in handling problems. It is always too soon to quit—so don’t quit. You can if you think you can.

Well, now, let’s pull together a few ideas on the important principles in this chapter:

1. When tackling a problem the number-one thing is, never quit attacking it. Always use the persistence principle.

2. Remember—you can get over those big mountains of difficulties by thinking over them.
3. Adopt the motto, “It’s always too soon to quit.” Keep it going.
4. Use upbeat words. Never talk down. Speak the Good Word.
5. Plugging away will win the day.
6. Master the perception principle. Learn to know yourself. Know the real person deep within you.
7. If at first you don’t succeed, try, try again.
8. Do not let circumstances defeat you. With your mind, control circumstances. You can if you think you can.
9. Just keep on keeping on—just keep trying—for that will do it. Keep going. It can turn out O.K.
10. And God bless you all the way.

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<sup>1</sup> Mark 11:23.

<sup>2</sup> “The Quitter,” by Robert W. Service, from *Collected Poems of Robert Service* (London, Ernest Benn Ltd.).

## 2

### So what's your problem? You can handle it

“EVERY PROBLEM CONTAINS the seeds of its own solution.” That significant statement by Stanley Arnold, one of America's outstanding ideas men, underscores the important fact that the solution is built into every problem. This chapter will tell how to find that solution. It will show how you can handle your problems. Here again, you can if you think you can.

Almost invariably people assume that a problem is inherently bad. Whereas on the contrary, a problem may be, and usually is, inherently good.

When the Lord wishes to give you a great value, how does He go about it? Does he wrap it up in a glamorous and sophisticated package and hand it to you on a silver platter? No. He is too subtle for that. More than likely He buries it at the heart of a great big, tough problem and watches with anticipation to see whether you have what it takes to break the problem apart and find at its centre what might be called the pearl of great price.

Some people seem to feel, “Wouldn't life be simply wonderful if we had easier problems, or fewer problems, or better still, no problems at all!” But is that necessarily true? Would we be better off if such were the case? Let me answer this question by telling you of an incident.

Walking on Fifth Avenue, I saw approaching a friend named George. It was apparent from George's melancholy and disconsolate demeanour that he wasn't filled to

overflowing with the ecstasy and exuberance of human existence. This is a high-class way of saying that George was “dragging bottom.” He was really low.

This excited my natural sympathy; so I asked him, “How are you, George?” That was only a routine inquiry, but it represented an enormous mistake on my part, for George took me literally and for fifteen minutes enlightened me meticulously on how badly he felt. And the more he talked the worse I felt.

So I asked him, “George, what is disturbing you? What is eating at you? What is bothering you?” This really set him off. “Oh,” he replied forcefully, “it’s these problems, problems . . . nothing but problems! I am fed up with problems and I don’t mean maybe. All I want is to get rid of these everlasting problems.” He became so exercised about the matter that he quite forgot whom he was talking to and began to castigate these problems vitriolically, using in the process a good many theological terms. But he did not put them together in a theological manner, I regret to say.

### **Wanted: No more Problems**

“Norman,” he continued, “get me rid of these blankety-blank problems and here is what I’ll do. I will give you one thousand dollars cash money, no strings attached, for your work.” Well, I am not one to turn a deaf ear to such an offer; so I ruminated, cogitated, and meditated upon the proposition and came up with a solution that seemed to me not bad; at least it was realistic. But apparently George didn’t go for it, as I have yet to receive the aforementioned one thousand dollars.

“Well, George,” I said, “I certainly would like to help you. But let’s get the matter straight. Am I to understand that you want to get rid of all your problems, every last one of them? Is that it?”

“You said it,” he replied. “I want to get through with every last problem I’ve got. Believe me, I’ve had it—and then some. I’m through. I want no more problems—ever.”

“O.K., George, I have the solution, but I doubt you will like it. Anyway, here it is: The other day I was in a certain place on professional business, if I may thus characterize it, where the head man told me that there are a hundred thousand people; and not a single, solitary one of them has a problem.” The first enthusiasm I saw in George suffused his countenance and flashed up in his eyes as with considerable eagerness he exclaimed, “Boy, that’s for me! Lead me to this place!”

“O.K.,” I replied. “It’s the cemetery.”

And that is a fact—nobody in the cemetery has a problem. For them life’s fitful fever is over; they rest from their labours. They couldn’t care less what you and I read in the daily paper or hear on radio or TV. They have no problems at all—nary a one. But they are *dead*.

## **Problems, a Sign of Life**

It follows, then, in logical sequence that problems constitute a sign of *life*. Indeed, I would go so far as to suggest that the more problems you have, the more alive you are. The person who has let us say, ten good old tough, man-sized problems is, on this basis, twice as alive as the poor, miserable, apathetic character who has only five problems. And if you have no problems at all, I warn you: You are in great jeopardy. You are on the way out and don’t know it. Perhaps what you had better do is immediately go to your room and shut the door and get down on your knees and pray to the Lord, “Lord, please; look, don’t you trust me any more? Give me some problems!”

One wonders what has come over this great, free country. We are the descendants of a once great breed of men who had problems and had them aplenty. But did they whine and