

Take a little risk...

Sample chapter from

The Solution Within Yourself

**A practical guide for achieving results,
happiness, success and purpose in life**

Fred Schäfer

THE MAJOR DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SUCCESS AND FAILURE

What is reality? Take any event that has occurred in your life more than 12 months ago and ask yourself the following questions:

- a) What was the meaning of this event at the time when it occurred?
- b) What is the meaning of the same event today?
- c) How would another person have perceived the meaning of the same event?

Your answers to all three questions are probably not the same. In fact, the more dramatic the event was, the further in the past the event occurred and the more different the other person is from yourself, the more likely it is that these three answers are very diverse and even opposite.

Take this as an example: ten years ago you were in love with the most beautiful and perfect girl in the world and she told you to leave her alone. "I can't stand you", she said, "Go away!" What was the meaning of this event at that time to you? It was the end of the world. You thought you would never recover. You were down on your knees. Life wasn't worth living any longer. You suffered for weeks, perhaps even for months.

Today you are happily married and you have a two year old

son and a four year old daughter. Your wife is the most caring and fabulous person you can imagine. You are happy. Your life has meaning. Your family loves you and you love them.

What is today's meaning of the event which happened ten years ago? Amazingly, it is exactly the opposite. You are glad that this most beautiful girl told you to leave her alone. That's today's meaning. Exactly the opposite of what you thought ten years ago.

What's the difference between today and ten years ago? The difference is your perception. Ten years ago you believed something and today you believe something else. Ten years ago you believed in your "eternal" love to this beautiful girl and today you believe in your "eternal" love to your family.

Couldn't you have saved yourself an awful lot of headache if you had been able to adopt a different belief, and that means a different perception, ten years ago? The answer, of course, is simple - yes, you could have saved yourself a lot of pain. If you had been able to adopt a different belief ten years ago you could have been able to get over your pain in a couple of days instead of wasting several weeks or even months.

That's the difference between accidental beliefs and controlled beliefs. Ten years ago you were a victim of the accidental belief that you would never recover, that life wasn't worth living. You accepted that accidental belief because you allowed external circumstances and events to dictate your perception. The moment you stop doing this, the moment when you start to consciously decide what you want to perceive, and by that I mean how you want to interpret events, will be the moment when you start to control your entire life.

This is the major difference - the gap! - between successful people and people who don't get on in life. This is the solution within yourself! The successful ones are able to put a positive label on everything that happens to them, no matter what it is. They are opportunity-minded. People who don't succeed in life are often problem-minded. Successful people regard everything as a result. If something did not turn out the way they want, they regard it simply as a result that tells them how not to do it in the future. The ones who don't get on in life, usually regard such things as failure and give up.

Years ago when I got this change process started in my own life, this is what I did. I wrote the following statement in huge letters on a 60 cm by 90 cm piece of "butcher" paper and attached it to the most conspicuous wall I could find in my home.

In addition I kept an A4 size copy of the same message on my desk at work.

THE MAJOR DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SUCCESS AND FAILURE IS MY ABILITY TO CONSCIOUSLY DECIDE HOW I WANT TO PERCEIVE AND INTERPRET EVENTS.

This way I forced myself to reflect on the meaning of this message several times a day and as a consequence, within a matter of weeks, I had adopted an entirely different perception and attitude towards problems, crisis, stress and all kinds of negative events. Within weeks I was able to look at major problems as opportunities and at negative events as sort of adventures.

In the meantime I have presented this statement at seminars and presentations to people from all walks of life. I have never found anybody to disagree with it, but from the many discussions I had with people I do realize that to adopt it can be a most challenging task for some. To make this task easier, you can consciously apply a two stage perception control process.

Whenever something goes wrong - at work, with your family, it doesn't matter what - and you realize that your perception of the event is of a nature which puts you in a position where you are dominated by negative emotions - be it anger, aggressiveness, withdrawal, feelings of guilt or whatever - whenever this happens you ask yourself consciously the following question:

Do I want to remain in the position I am in or do I want to achieve results?

Often the emotional position you are in is one where you feel you are right and everybody else is wrong. If this is the case you can modify the above question and ask yourself:

Do I want to remain "right" (right in your own mind only) or do I want to achieve results?

If at this stage you consciously decide that you want to remain "right" (right in your own mind only) or that you want to remain in whatever negative position you are in, then that's the end of it for the time being. Full stop. Ask yourself the same question again an hour later or the next day.

If, however, at this stage you consciously decide that you want to achieve results, that you want to move back into a position where you try to influence things again, then you commence the second stage of this two stage perception control process. At this second stage, again very consciously, you tell yourself the following:

My perception of the event is not a suitable one. I will develop a suitable perception of the event. And the definition of a suitable perception is one that allows me to take positive actions.

The first positive action you then take is to enquire and to find out what went wrong. The most important thing is you do this without justifying or defending yourself and without criticising the other person's position. You seek to understand - what went wrong? You look at the issue concerned from a neutral observer's perspective. I am not saying this is easy. But if you do this very consciously, it is not that difficult either. But most importantly, if you do it, you will experience a tremendous sense of power and personal growth because you are actually managing your negative emotions. You will realize that you are no longer a victim of your emotional patterns, you actually can be the master.

It is an amazingly simple two stage process. It works if you decide to do it. The problem most people have is they don't consciously decide to apply this process. They prefer to remain in their negative position. In a way that's more comfortable. But if you challenge yourself to try this approach you will soon apply it automatically. You see, this is another great thing in life. If you replace your negative perceptions and habits with positive ones, as soon as you have practised your new positive perceptions and habits for long enough, they stick. You then apply them without effort and things which you couldn't handle previously you now succeed with naturally, simply because of your new personality.

Next time you are depressed, or upset with your son, your daughter, your spouse, your boss, or maybe you feel guilty, or you think you made a fool of yourself, whatever, decide to consciously apply this two stage perception control process:

1. Do I want to remain in the position I am in (do I want to remain "right") or do I want to achieve results?

If you decide you want to achieve results, then move on to stage 2:

2. My perception of the event is not a suitable one. I will develop a suitable perception of the event. And the definition of a suitable perception is one that allows me to take positive actions.

Here is another statement which, if you learn to make it part of your personality, can make all the difference between being happy or unhappy, wealthy or poor, healthy or sick...

SUCCESSFUL PEOPLE CREATE THEIR OWN BELIEF AND VALUE SYSTEMS, FAILURES ALLOW THEMSELVES TO BE DOMINATED BY WHATEVER BELIEF AND VALUE SYSTEMS THEY HAPPEN TO HAVE ACQUIRED.

Change your reading habits, at least for a while. If in the past you enjoyed reading novels, magazines, technical literature, business literature or whatever, change to biographies and autobiographies. Read the life stories of people who started with virtually nothing and made it to great success. But whilst you read these accounts of other people's lives, don't concentrate on the entertainment value of what you are reading, concentrate on events where things went wrong. Study these events and understand how the person concerned managed to overcome setbacks and problems. Ask yourself what the person you are reading about believed. It doesn't really matter whether you analyse the life of Arnold Schwarzenegger or Mother Teresa - Abraham Lincoln or Bob Geldof - Henry Miller or Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn - you will find they all have or had one thing in common. Let me express this in the present tense. They believe in themselves and in what they are doing. To these and millions of other successful people obstacles never meant that something can't be done, obstacles simply meant that other ways of doing something had to be found.

This is what I did. I read autobiographies and biographies of famous people. I identified their beliefs and values and I asked myself whether these beliefs and values are suitable for myself. Some weren't and some were. The ones which I found suitable, I adopted, sometimes I modified them slightly, I practised them and thus made them gradually part of my own principles and ways of doing things.

This is what I suggest you do. Go to a library and ask for a book with a short description of the lives of famous and successful people. Read these short descriptions and identify the personalities you are particularly interested in, then purchase or borrow the biographies or autobiographies of the people you are interested in, read them - study them - and identify the beliefs and values you want to adopt. Write these beliefs and values on a piece of paper and reflect on them at least twice a day for three months and from then on whenever you want to empower yourself.

In addition you can analyse situations where you failed in the past. Identify the negative beliefs and values you held and which contributed to your past failures. Write them on a piece of paper, then consciously decide to get rid of them. A good way of doing this is to have two columns on your piece of paper. On the left hand column you have all your negative, your limiting and unsuitable beliefs and values and on the right hand column you have your new, positive and empowering beliefs and values. This way you know exactly where you are coming from and where you are going to. Here are some examples: