

LIVING THE DREAM

Seven Key
Principles for Success



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Dedication

To my parents, Bill & Johanna Hufsey, for teaching me,
through the example of their lives, how to live humbly.

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Introduction

Should my life end tonight, I can honestly say I was fortunate enough to live all of my dreams. As a small, sickly kid growing up in Ohio, I dreamed of athletic glory. I was eventually offered collegiate football opportunities and achieved Golden Gloves status as a boxer. In junior high, I used to look at teen magazines and think to myself how cool it would be to appear on their covers one day. Not only did I become a teen idol on a wildly popular television show, I was blessed to have the #1 selling poster in the world. Along the way I also became a national dance champion, starred on a soap opera, toured the world as a musician, and amassed substantial wealth in real estate and banking ventures. I finally came full circle and returned to my original passion for entertainment—this time in a new and even more rewarding capacity. I have been truly blessed.

Despite my dyslexia, and having about a third-grade reading level, I've managed to become a multi-millionaire. I've created/managed/sold/dissolved/developed numerous companies and business entities in varied industries. I own and have owned real estate all over the world. Throughout my life, I have lived my favorite quote multiple times in multiple ways: "Success comes when preparation meets opportunity."

During my brief period living on the streets of Hollywood as a young aspiring actor, I met many colorful characters. One was a homeless man whom I was fascinated to see always reading books. One day I asked him about the material he was reading, and I discovered his story as well.

He shared with me that he was a former college professor. I was surprised to discover that he was a highly educated man. Since I had barely made it out of high school myself, I didn't have a lot of options. In my mind, if you had earned the degrees this man had, any door should be open for him. His situation was completely baffling to me.

He also shared that he found the books he read every day in a dumpster behind the library. What others threw out he voraciously consumed to feed his desire for knowledge. He read something new every day. The pity was that he filled his mind with all of this knowledge, yet he didn't know how to adapt and apply it to himself. Someone so gifted and so smart was missing what I felt was such a simple concept—to

try to do whatever it took to get out of the situation he was in and improve his life!

This man was not capable of reinventing himself or being able to picture doing anything other than being a college professor. He felt that there were no other options. In his mind, he believed that the only thing he could do was to teach on that level in that particular setting—a college campus. When he was laid off from his position, he lost everything and was unable to picture doing anything else. That's the key to re-invention: you have to be open to re-imagining your life. Sometimes you have to do something completely outside of your skill set or experience level to sustain yourself until the next door opens. Even when the cards don't fall neatly into place for you to conceptualize an easy transition... *especially* then!

The former professor truly believed that because he couldn't teach at the college level anymore he was done. Meanwhile my mind raced with all of the other potential career options he hadn't explored: librarian, English tutor or literacy volunteer offering lessons for trade with the YMCA or community center in order to get off the streets. Or how about this one: he could have taught young actors in Hollywood!

Being the kind of person I am, with a mind that is constantly maneuvering three steps ahead in every situation to try to benefit my current situation, I asked my new

acquaintance if he could help me with techniques to improve my reading skills to help when I went on auditions. Fortunately for me, he was eager to take on a willing student at that moment. The professor taught me to pick out two to three key words within a sentence to derive the meaning of the whole sentence. He also taught me that using the eyes for reading is no different than exercising any other muscle in the body. As with anything new, it took some practice to master this new technique. I am forever grateful for his advice because it's a technique that still serves me well to this day. Bolstered by this game-changer, a few weeks later I was further inspired to re-invent myself to improve my situation and get off the streets.

Several takeaway lessons from that experience have stayed with me for all of these years: always seek more knowledge; be open to learning from anyone, as you never know where the lessons in life will come from; don't judge people solely for their current situation when you don't know their story; and, most importantly, don't become stuck by merely accepting where you are today as your final destination. Never give up hope! When I think back on that time in my life, I always think of the quote: "Shoot for the moon; when you fall short you will land in the stars." Another description that reminds me of the professor is one I heard years later from the great motivational speaker Zig Ziglar: "*The PLOM disease—Poor Little Ole Me.*" Strive to never become a PLOM in life.

LIVING THE DREAM

The most common way people give up their power is by thinking they don't have any.

I was twenty-one when I made the trek out to Hollywood to pursue my dreams in the entertainment industry. In three short years, against overwhelming odds and after plenty of adversity and obstacles, I was firmly walking the path of making my dreams come true. By the time I was twenty-four years old I had made my first million. It's just that simple: If you believe you can achieve your dreams—you can. I know because it happened to me. We must believe that we are gifted and meant for something, and that this thing, at whatever cost, must be attained.

After three decades in Hollywood, I am happy, healthy and still living my dreams every day. But at this point in my life my mission has changed. Now my goal is to help others live their own dreams. I want everyone to know what it feels like to turn fantasy into reality. After my aspirations of becoming a professional athlete were shattered I shifted my dream to show business. Your dreams may perhaps be a career in the business world, achieving an athletic or fitness goal, attaining a degree in a specialized field, earning a certain salary, or just lie in the realm of strengthening and improving your personal relationships. I have written this book because I want to help you attain your goals. These days, I am *giving* to make a living. There's no better feeling

than helping others achieve true success... whatever their own personal definition of that might be!

There are, of course, numerous books already on the market about how to become successful, build wealth or achieve your heart's desire. I actually recommend many during speaking engagements. The true key to success, though, is to not only *read* the information contained in these published works but to *take ownership* of that information and apply the principles in your everyday life. Not every concept in every book, including this one, will work for or apply to all people. You have to be able to critically examine the material and determine what will inspire and spur you on to making some changes in your own life.

So...why this particular book? Thirty-some years into it, I'm still thriving in one of the toughest businesses in the world. I have encapsulated my hard-earned lessons and very best advice into seven directives that, when followed faithfully, cannot fail to help you find your own version of success. Don't just take my word for it. Over the years I've encountered every kind of person in every circumstance imaginable. I've encouraged everyone from Carol Burnett to Asia Monet Ray over the years ... and some of my friends will share their own very individual stories of how these concepts worked for them.

LIVING THE DREAM

Here are my keys for success:

Manage your Mind
Embrace your Authentic Self
Overcome Adversity
Plan and Prepare
Ready for Reinvention
Persevere
Nurture your Spirit

All of the above are proven entities that I have used to achieve every one of my various dreams. As we go through the book, we will discuss each of these concepts in much greater detail.

This book is an extension of the work I hold so dear to my heart, which is helping others. In short, this book is my labor of love. It is about how I learned to live the days of my life after I discovered I wasn't actually going to live forever. Remember: "*If it is to be, it is up to me*" translates to the reality that you must do more than read books. *You* have to do the work. *You* must invest the time. *You* must dedicate your actions, thoughts and words toward achieving your own goals, dreams and passions. I am here to get you up and on your feet. Get motivated! Stay on your hustle! You don't fail until you quit. Your life is your message to the world. Make it inspiring!



Photo by: Barbara Froelich

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