

The True Meaning of Success

As a young adult looking out into a world of possibilities, I can only imagine where life will lead me. To be honest, I do not know where I will be in five years, or even next school year. I find this a little unsettling because I sometimes wonder how I can be successful if I have no idea where I am going. Then it occurred to me that I need to develop a few of my own Laws of Life. I understand that how the rest of the world defines success and how I define success can be very different ideas. Quoting Ralph Waldo Emerson helps me illustrate that true success in life will not be measured by my income or social status, but by my inner serenity, my character, and how hard I strive to better the world.

“To Laugh often and much[...]” and having a sense of serenity is important to success. To be able to achieve this I know that I need to be able to always find the humor in a bad situation. As an American, I am prone to becoming a workaholic and I have been known as a perfectionist. Although it is not easy to do, I often have to force myself to take time off. I fight the temptation to always strive to be the best instead of doing my best. Now I realize I can only give what I can and trying to give any more can lead to self-defeat. I cannot let my work or even my goals deprive me of enjoying the company of my family and friends. If I had all of the material possessions that I have ever desired but had a life void of happiness and laughter, then everything I owned would be worthless. This is why the ability to enjoy life and to achieve a sense of inner serenity is the first step to success.

“To win the respect of intelligent people and the affection of children [...]” is a sign of character, morality, and success. I can gain the respect of intelligent people, such as my grandfather, in many different ways. I can do this by standing up against the crowd for something that I believe in or by how I choose to handle a challenging situation. A problem should be dealt with to the best of my ability and not avoided. I know that the most important guidelines in my life are the ones I have set for myself, not the values that other’s consider important in their own. I have a serious obligation not only to myself, but also to the ones I care about, to adhere to my guidelines and beliefs while respecting the opinions of others. I feel that this is a serious obligation because I want my younger sister to live her life according to the morals she develops and I teach her by example. When she is old enough to understand, I will tell her what I was once told: “If you stand for nothing, you will fall for anything.” I will also tell her that the ability to stand up for beliefs that are not shared by others is a sure sign of success.

[...] To leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthy child, a garden patch, or a redeemed social condition [...]” is the greatest success that I, or anyone, can achieve. As I contemplate my position in the world, I look out and see a world of beauty and wonders, but at the same time, I am sobered by the poverty and those in need. This instills in me excitement and expectations, but stronger yet, it instills in me a challenge to do my best to help those in need. One of my laws of life is to treat others with honor and respect, just as I want to be treated. In case I never become the scientist that cures cancer or the President of the United States that brings peace to the world, I will do many small things to bring joy, peace, and happiness to those I encounter along the way. Making someone’s life a little bit better is the ultimate form of success.

True success is achieving something that will outlast my lifetime. Trophies and such gather dust while living my life to the fullest, having the courage to stand up for my convictions, and

changing the world for the better withstands the test of time. I know I will not fail if I follow Emerson's advice:

“To laugh often and much; to win the respect of intelligent people and the affection of children; to earn the appreciation of honest critics and endure the betrayal of false friends; to appreciate beauty, to find the best in others; to leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthy child, a garden patch, or a redeemed social condition; to know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived. This is to have succeeded.”