



Lessons of Stars: How to Be a Star in Your Life and Career

By [Harrison Barnes](#)

When Cameron Diaz first moved to Hollywood she very quickly became one of the most popular people in town. Everyone knew who she was: she was well-liked, popular and someone people were talking about and wanted to know and be friends with.

One of the first and least obvious rules of Hollywood and life is this: It's not who you know, it's who wants to know you. If you are great, you will be found. Despite so many people clamoring to be stars, there are actually very few real stars. The real stars "shine" and stand out—they are well-known *before* they become stars. Cameron Diaz was one of the most popular people in Hollywood long before she became a star.

If you are a real star, everyone wants to be like you. If people don't think you're amazing, there is a serious problem. Success is something that you give yourself – fame is what others give you.

Diaz didn't start as an actress. She was a model. But she tried out for a minor role in Jim Carrey's movie, *The Mask*, and had so much presence in the audition that she was asked to come back and try out for the lead role. At this point in her career, she had zero acting experience. Prior to returning to the audition, she worked with an acting coach for a few weeks. She auditioned for the role, and the rest is history.

What is a star? What makes someone a star? How do they become a star?

Because of where I live and work, I see stars every day. I know several of them. There are some things stars actually do on an ongoing basis that makes them stars. Due to these things, they would be stars in just about anything they did.

- If they sold real estate, they would be stars.
- If they applied themselves in academics, they would be stars.

If they tried to be great attorneys, they would be stars.

Everyone, in every profession out there should try and be a star.

When you look at someone like Diaz, what do you see? You may see a lot of things, but one of the most obvious things you notice is that she is *alive* – she has an enthusiasm and energy about her that are almost palpable. Most stars are also alive like this—it's contagious and conspicuous. They don't hide behind social mores and what they think they need to be. They are simply themselves, authentic and vulnerable. They speak and communicate from their hearts. They are "real" people – genuine in their speech and actions. People understand them. They are living life.

And this brings me to what is likely to be you – and comprises 95 percent of the world: Most people are walking around "dead." Most people don't let their true selves come out and they're afraid of being transparent because they don't want to be hurt. Most people have closed their hearts long, long ago. When people are young they are excited, open and live their lives without their brain judging, categorizing and being afraid to act. Your brain will never accomplish anything because it hides your light. Ask yourself, "How come I'm not shining as brightly as I was before?"

I have three young children. My 10-month-old smiles all the time. My three-year-old laughs out loud, giggles and smiles constantly – she is so happy and excited. When she is upset about something, you also know it. She screams, throws herself on the floor and tells you exactly why she is upset – she may be jealous, afraid, or want a toy. Regardless of how she feels she is honest about it. Her true self is always coming through.

My six-year-old, though, is not so much this way. She is gradually losing this honesty with herself and her emotions. She has to. Whether it is through school, peers, or even my wife and me, she is gradually learning she needs to cover up and mask her true feelings and who she is inside. This formerly emotionally honest child has started to cover up and her heart is gradually closing, like most people as they age.

Most people are far more prejudiced towards themselves than others.

The first lines of the Bible state that in the beginning God said, "Let there be light." The whole idea of light is something that needs to come through in you and your life and everything you do. Someone like Diaz allows her light to come through – as do most stars. It's called "show" business, not "hide business." Real stars allows themselves to shine – like stars.

When a star gets on stage, they must blow people away with more passion and excitement than anyone expects. The best stars give 150 percent in their performances. They can reach deep within themselves to bring out the best in their characters – and themselves. They do not do anything operating at 50 percent — every part they take, they give the most of themselves they possibly can. More than people expect.

In your career, you should always seek to give the absolute most of yourself. Success is something that you give yourself — fame is what others give you. People who hold back and apply themselves are always the ones who never get anywhere. Clock watching, doing the minimum amount expected and not giving 150 percent are all signs of people who rarely are able to achieve anything meaningful in their lives and work. Giving 150 percent is not just important in your work – it is also important in your relationships. How do you think that people like Diaz were able to become so popular before they became stars? As friends, acquaintances and more, they connected with people, were more authentic and tried harder than others. This is something that made them stars.

Another major characteristic of stars is that superstars watch what they eat. They do this through the food they eat and the thoughts that they allow into their mind.

I am not going to get into a debate about what you should eat and whether to diet; however, it is important for being a star. If

you are “star” through and through, you are going to be very concerned about your body. You are in the limelight, and someone who is setting an example for others. You want to look and be your best in all respects.



Most stars are extremely careful with what they eat. I remember reading an article about Charlie Sheen and Denise Richards when they first got together. Denise Richards was bragging about how they had so much in common because they both only ate pre made meals that were delivered to them because they had to look good on camera. This may sound like something that is relatively shallow and inconsequential, but in reality it is not. Stars are concerned about being their absolute best in all respects, and this carries over to their diets and everything they do to a major degree.

Being a star is not just emotional, it is also physical. We live a few doors down from a female star and a few times a week she actually leads an exercise class for people in the community. She is passionate about her health because she is in the limelight so much. She does not get paid for the exercise class – it is just the sort of thing that she does.



The public image of someone like Sheen is something akin to a train wreck. To some extent, this is true, but even for someone like Sheen you need to look at the things he is saying and does. His public statements about having tiger blood, being original, all powerful and so forth are mental statements that show profound levels of motivation and self-confidence – something needed to be a star. Moreover, he is also vulnerable and honest about his addictions to sex and inappropriate behavior. He hides nothing and bares his soul. The same can be said for other stars such as Lindsay Lohan – regardless of what you say about them, they are authentic to a great extent.

Stars are not only careful about what they eat physically, they are also very careful about the thoughts that they allow into their brains. Thoughts are food. Most make a major and concerted effort to surround themselves with positive people and thoughts. They understand that both positivity and negativity are contagious.

When you look at your life, your friends and the people you associate with, you will learn a ton about who you are. For example, junkies attract junkies, happy people attract other happy people, people living the lives of stars attract other stars. If you surround yourself with unhappy and negative people, this is who you are likely to be as well. If you surround yourself with people energized by the possibilities of the world, you are likely to be energized as well.

I was meeting with a well-known acting teacher who coaches people like Meryl Streep, Al Pacino, Johnny Depp and other well-known stars. He told me that sometimes they would be listening to him speak in a room of 100+ students. The best actors and actresses always listened very carefully. They would madly scribble notes, leaning forward and wanting to learn more. In most cases, most of the other people in the audience sat there unengaged. He believes that most people who never become stars (or are not stars) think they already know everything.

What made this so amazing to me is that the acting teacher said the real stars all listened in this way – even after winning Academy Awards. They felt they needed to continue learning more and could always grow. They poured everything positive they possibly could into their minds at all times and were always growing.

For most of my career, I have bought various motivational books for people in my companies. I noticed over and over that some people took the information, read it and absorbed it. Others acted aloof, left the books in the office and acted as if they already knew everything. Some people also became extremely defensive:

“I already know that!”

“I already do that!”

They tried to attack the messenger.

Their position is that they already know everything.

When someone is coaching you, giving you new information and trying to teach you something, the very last thing you should be doing is ignoring that information and not absorbing it. The strongest people out there always make every effort to absorb every bit of information they can. Stars want to grow so they can shine more. As long as criticism and new information is productive, they want it at all costs.

Being able to accept criticism and input is also about vulnerability. Vulnerability is a safe fear – like a roller coaster. You think you are going to die but never do. The best stars know how to be vulnerable. People do not want to help people who aren't vulnerable. Vulnerable people are more likeable than non-vulnerable people. It's human nature to want to help the most vulnerable people.

Around three years ago I was travelling and met a very famous movie star—the sort of star who makes tens of millions of dollars per picture. Within a short time of knowing this person, they opened up to me about their career and what they were unhappy about, what they felt they were not good at, mistakes they had made and more.

I was amazed that this person would tell me so much information. The effect this had on me was that I liked the person more and wanted to help them – despite his being at a far higher level than I am professionally. This is something I have seen over

and over from stars like young children, they can be honest with their emotions and vulnerable to others. They are not closed off and allow themselves to be vulnerable.

It actually takes courage to be vulnerable. Being vulnerable is a strength. Being vulnerable means opening your heart to life and everything it has to offer. To experience love you need to be vulnerable. People who do not allow themselves to be vulnerable are usually trying to avoid pain – but they are also avoiding all of the fun, love and great things that life offers.

Stars are resilient and do not allow themselves to be easily discouraged – they believe in themselves. When Picasso started out and was displaying his work in Spain people thought his work was terrible. He then went to Paris and displayed his work and people thought he was a genius and his fame ignited.

When Lady Gaga, Jesus and others were starting out, people thought they were insane. However, their originality and ability to persevere in the face of discouragement kept them going. They believed in themselves and eventually, like Picasso, they succeeded.

Another star I know was married and had what appeared to be a very happy life. Deep down, though, she knew she was not in love with her husband. She reached within herself and decided that as difficult of a choice as it was, she needed to divorce her husband and did. The alternative for her was living a life that was not completely fulfilling.

Stars know that they need to make hard choices to have a good life. They do whatever they need to and go through the pain it requires to have a good life. If you make hard choices, you will have an easy life, and if you make easy choices, you will have a hard life.

On the most simplistic level, if someone is fat and not exercising they are not making the sorts of choices that are required to be healthy. The easy choice is to eat whatever they want whenever they want. The hard choice is to exercise and go through the pain and to exercise the self-control to avoid eating when they want to.

You need to have great positive energy that is radiating out of your body. If you do not have this sort of energy, you are going to be less employable than those who do have that energy. A star knows that life is like a dinner party. The people who are the happiest and radiate the most positive energy are likely to be the most employable and do the best in the world. If you were a casting director, would you want to pick someone who is depressed and unhappy and put them on your set for six months?



Stars are also not afraid to meet people and get out there. When someone is successful, they are able to connect with all sorts of people. Unsuccessful people often feel they are different than other people and do not connect with them. When I am walking around and see stars, I have noticed that – despite not knowing me — most are friendly and say hello and smile and give off a lot of energy. Most people do not do this. This is what stars do. I see Cindy Crawford all the time – despite not knowing her. She always smiles. She does this with everyone – I am not special. A few months ago, my wife and I were on a bus at a ski resort with Laura Dern. She started talking to us out of nowhere and was incredibly friendly. She did not know us. I remembered it, though, just like I remember people like Cindy Crawford for being so nice.



To be really successful in your career, you need to learn the lessons of stars. You need to take care of your body and mind. You need to watch what you allow in mentally and physically. You need to constantly be willing to learn more. You need to be vulnerable and connect with others. You need to be willing to make hard choices and not only easy choices. You need to let your light shine through. You need to give 150 percent to your work – more than anyone else. You need to realize that you are part of the human experience and open your heart to others and be genuine. You need to turn your light on.

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