

Stay on Track

By [Harrison Barnes](#)

I have been interested in self-improvement and the process of growing spiritually, emotionally, and intellectually for most of my life. For the most part I believe we are all interested, to some degree, in growing and getting better at everything we do.

If you go to any bookstore, you will undoubtedly encounter thousands of books all claiming they can help you improve in all areas of your life. There are gurus and similar types of people throughout the world who will tell you how to change or improve one thing or another about yourself. For example, if you want to lose weight you are going to find plenty of experts who will help you work towards your goal. There are books, self-help programs, seminars, personal trainers, retreats, surgeons, hypnotists, psychologists, drug companies, food companies, dietary supplement makers, and all sorts of other people out there waiting to tell you how to lose weight.

If you adopt the advice of any one of them the chances are pretty good that you will lose the weight you want to.

Losing weight is not the problem, though.

The problem is keeping the weight off. None of these people and programs is going to spend the next 10, 20, 30, 40, or 50 years by your side, coaching you on how to stay fit. Instead, they are most likely going to take your money, help you lose the weight immediately--and then disappear into the wilderness.

In order to lose the weight you want, your challenge is going to be maintaining a diet over time. You are going to be tempted on a daily basis every single time food is put in front of you. Sometimes you may feel as if you are getting tempted each moment of every day. In fact, the environment, your metabolism, and a variety of other factors are all seemingly going to conspire against you to make keeping the weight off increasingly difficult.

You are not going to find a lot of books out there with titles such as *How to Deal With Peer Pressure to Keep Weight Off*. Instead, most of the content you will find is about getting you started on the right track, but not necessarily taking you to the finish line.

It is the same thing with achieving success in your career and life. You can read everything that I and others interested in your welfare write, and it may get you started on the path towards success. But you and I know too well that anyone can get started on the path to success--however not everyone can run the entire race. Running the entire race is about the most important thing you can possibly do if you want to succeed. Because running the entire race, and staying on the track no matter how difficult it may become, is something very few people can do. Most people start something not knowing what it takes to reach their goal, and then they get distracted and dissuaded along the way.

Or they realize that success brings with it, its own special set of unforeseen challenges: For instance, one thing about finding personal growth and progressing towards your goals is that you are not necessarily going to be met with a parade by the people around you--even by those who love and support you the most. Success breeds envy and envy breeds all sorts of problems.

Anyone can get started on the road to success and a life of fulfillment. The real task is staying on the path of success. Because once you get on the path there are always multitudes of people out there who want to knock you off of that path. Unfortunately this is just how it works. The more successful you get, the harder and harder it gets to stay on the path, and the easier it is to go astray.

No one is going to be there to keep you on your mission and this is the most important thing you must realize. You have to stay focused even amidst the myriad distractions of people and life.

In my neighborhood while growing up, most of my friends had parents who did things like working as waitress in restaurants, work in factories, and other similar jobs. As I got older, I began to associate with kids whose parents did far more impressive things like run banks and auto companies. But because I had spent so much time growing up with the people I did, I ended up spending most of my time with the kids from the "old neighborhood." The thing about these kids, however, was that as I got more and more successful in school, in colleges, and so forth, they developed a resentment towards me. Even now after many years, I sometimes wish I had kept my freaking mouth shut about what I was doing. But since I did not, I paid a price in my friendships.

People do not like other people who could possibly be perceived as better than themselves. People generally want to knock people off that pedestal, even if it does not really exist in the first place. The second you start trying to better yourself, you may notice this occurring with just about everyone around you.

My wife and I were discussing this issue yesterday because we went to a beach club down the street and saw a girl whom she recognized from her "Mommy and Me" class. My wife goes to this class with a bunch of girls she grew up with. She is extraordinarily proud of our daughter who, to our astonishment, ended up advancing far more quickly than the other kids in the class. For example, our daughter started talking, walking, and so forth months before many other kids of the same age. My wife made the mistake of being incredibly enthusiastic about our daughter's accomplishments in the class, and this ended up alienating my wife from many of the other women in her group. Instead of being happy for my wife, these women started excluding her from various events, which understandably hurt my wife's feelings.

The second you try and show you have strength or stick out from the pack, others are going to be around to knock you off your horse. They will do it by excluding you. They will do it by defaming you. They will do it virtually any way they can. Keep this in mind, those of you who wish to succeed: If you do extremely well in anything, you will need to be prepared for resentment, and for dealing with others who are going to try and knock you off your path.

One of the hardest things for any of us to do is to stay on course. This is something that I have thought about for a long time

and this is also something that I think can make a giant difference in the quality of your life. Self improvement is a fine idea and all, but staying on course is what it all comes down to.

Recently I came across list called "The Paradoxical Commandments of Leadership," which was so powerful that I want to share it with you:

1. People are illogical, unreasonable, and self centered. Love them anyway.
2. If you do good, people will accuse you of selfish ulterior motives. Do good anyway.
3. If you are successful, you win false friends and true enemies. Succeed anyway.
4. The good you do today will be forgotten tomorrow. Do good anyway.
5. Honesty and frankness make you vulnerable. Be honest and frank anyway.
6. The biggest men with the biggest ideas can be shot down by the smallest men with the smallest minds. Think big anyway.
7. People favor underdogs, but follow only top dogs. Fight for a few underdogs anyway.
8. What you spend years building may be destroyed overnight. Build anyway.
9. People really need help but may attack you if you do help them. Help people anyway.
10. Give the world the best you have and you'll get kicked in the teeth. Give the world the best you have anyway.

These commandments are valuable on many levels because they can drive you to do exceptionally well in everything you do. They were originally written by Kent Keith in a book called, *The Silent Revolution: Dynamic Leadership in the Student Counsel*. At the time he was only 19, a sophomore at Harvard.

During his time as an undergraduate, Kent visited numerous high schools, lecturing young students about leadership and giving workshops. Many of the students wanted to change the system; however, Kent noticed that they most often gave up when they faced any sort of difficulty:

"I saw a lot of idealistic young people go out into the world to do what they thought was right, and good, and true, only to come back a short time later, discouraged, or embittered, because they got negative feedback, or nobody appreciated them, or they failed to get the results they had hoped for," recalls Keith. "I told them that if they were going to change the world, they had to really love people, and if they did, that love would sustain them. I also told them that they couldn't be in it for fame or glory. I said that if they did what was right and good and true, they would find meaning and satisfaction, and that meaning and satisfaction would be enough. If they had the meaning, they didn't need the glory."

Each of these commandments is about the importance of staying on course and really addressing the issue.

People are illogical, unreasonable, and self-centered. Love them anyway. Most people out there are thinking only about themselves the majority of the time. If you do well at anything they are not necessarily going to be happy for you. They are going to think about how your success makes them look. They are going to think that if you are doing too well, you are not going to like them, and that you will not want to be friends with them anymore. These same people are going to discourage your ambition and everything you hope to accomplish because of how it is going to make them look. I read an interesting quote recently in a book called *The Best Damn Sales Book Ever*:

You know them. The coffee cup brigade are the sales people who walk around all day holding a coffee cup, telling anyone who'll listen the right way to do things (according to them); what's wrong with the company, the boss, and the product; and how, if they were running things, it would be different. The only problem with the coffee cup brigade is they never do anything, and because of that, they look to drag you down with them.

People are self centered. They think about themselves first--always. Do not worry about it, though. Love people; do not hate them. Their reasoning for being competitive with you, undermining you (or whatever) may be illogical, but it does not need to concern you or command your attention.

I cannot even begin to tell you how many illogical and nonsensical people I have encountered in my career. I used to tell people that I thought they were completely off their rocker, yell at them, and so forth, but now I do not even allow problematic people to affect me that much. I have learned that a substantial portion of the population is completely off their rocker. I love them anyway. Rather than being negatively affected by how nuts so many people seem to be, I have just decided to embrace everyone.

When you start doing really well you begin to see a lot of people close to you acting very irrational. A lot of this is due to the fact that your success is threatening them. Love them and do not fight them. This is the best way to deal with this. Allow them to be irrational but do not allow it to drive you nuts.

You are going to see the worst side of people very quickly the more successful you get. Whether it is your parents, other relatives, your coworkers, or others around you--people will very quickly show their self centered side to you. Do not stress about it. Just love these people anyway. You can analyze it all you want, but just know that they are acting the way they are for reasons which are more about them than you. Love them anyway. *Stay on track.*

If you do good, people will accuse you of selfish ulterior motives. Do good anyway. When I was in law school I used to attend church twice a week and I went on my own. My girlfriend would not go with me and I did this every week. On one Ash Wednesday I saw one of the most inspiring sermons I can remember. It dealt with the fact that if you do good you should not tell others about it. Meaning, you do not want to draw attention to the good you do. The purpose of your good act should be only to do good, not to gain praise or otherwise draw attention to yourself.

Since hearing that sermon I have done a lot of secret charity acts that I simply do not talk about. My wife does not even know everything I do. I am simply constantly doing this or that and little charity things off the radar. I am very glad that I keep a low profile with my charity work, although it is not nearly as significant as it should be--but I keep doing it. What I notice is that this secret work that I do has never gotten "sidetracked" by other people's negative opinions. Keeping out of the limelight has made it easy for me to continue my charitable work.

The public work I do is different...

However, one of the more interesting things I have seen is that the work I do publicly often gets attacked and criticized. For example, I like to write about how to [get jobs](#), which I have been doing for years. Nevertheless, there are people out there who ascribe selfish motives to this. My life mission is to find people jobs. I have been doing this with an incredible amount of enthusiasm my entire career. Some people claim this is selfish too... In fact, in just about everything I do there are people who ascribe selfish motives to it.

Notwithstanding all the criticism, I have continued doing everything I do because I believe in it. I will always continue, despite the criticism. I believe in who I am and what I am doing and I will continue to do good regardless of what the cynics may say.

If you are doing something worthwhile then continue with it and do not give up. Who cares what other people say about you? What is the alternative they are offering? Who cares if the work you are doing provides you with economic rewards? This does not make you evil. Do good anyway and do not allow people to dissuade you. *Stay on track.*

If you are successful, you win false friends and true enemies. Succeed anyway. I cannot tell you how many people will be there to be your "false friend" and "true enemy" once you become successful. This will amaze you.

In most cases the "false friends" you meet when you become successful will be people you may admire and look up to. They will realize your success and very quickly start calling you "a friend" in a superficial sort of way. You will spend very little time with them and they will suddenly be your friend. Your friendship and their "false bond" with you will be based largely on your success and nothing more. There will not be a deep bond to go along with this and the friendship will most likely be based on what you can do for them, how you make them look, and so forth.

You need to be incredibly careful. I cannot tell you how many stories I have read about boxers, overnight music sensations, and others being preyed upon by more powerful people the second they became successful. When you are successful, you are going to find yourself increasingly isolated in some respects, and you will have a difficult time telling your real friends from your fake friends.

My wife's family used to be very wealthy and then they lost all their money some time ago. My wife has told me numerous stories about how when this happened, many of the family's former friends were suddenly no longer friends. The family was left with a small core of friends and not many more. Many people are superficial and this is a real shame.

This is just the way it is. Realize you will have numerous false friends and leave it at that.

The real danger of success, however, is that you are going to win a ton of enemies. People will become extremely jealous and simply not like you by virtue of your success. It is really odd to me how this works. You will suddenly have people around you who hate you. Former coworkers you were promoted over and other people who are threatened by your success.

It is always interesting for me when I go to trade shows in the employment industry. I will be standing around doing nothing and competitor will walk up to me and say something like: "You think you are a big deal because your site has more jobs than ours but we still value relationships with employers. If you got off your ass and met more employers perhaps you'd see that your business model is ass backwards!"

BOOM! Out of nowhere someone I never met will walk up to me and start hurling insults at me. When I look into it, it is almost always a competitor who is threatened by our company, or something along those lines. Who cares? Everyone has enemies. You are going to gain enemies when you are successful.

In my case, my companies have employed literally thousands of people throughout the past decade. Not everyone has had a good experience working with me and I am sure some previous employees even dislike me. Our companies have had hundreds of thousands of customers. Not every one of their experiences has been the best. Try as you may, you are going to make enemies just by being successful. Do not take this personally and do not let it make you quit! It is the same process for everyone. *Stay on track.*

The good you do today will be forgotten tomorrow. Do good anyway. For the most part, most people are not going to care what you did a month or a year ago. Most people will judge you on what you can do today and the most recent thing you did.

One of the biggest ways this comes out is in helping people. For years I have helped people who were chronically unemployed, get jobs. I have taken a personal interest in numerous people throughout the years and have done everything within my power to help them get jobs. After getting these people jobs I rarely hear from them again, and they rarely credit me as the one who helped them get a job. I do not care. I help people anyway and continue to do so.

In my companies I have helped numerous people by giving them massive raises, promotions, and so forth. Once people get this, the next step for them is often wanting more. Instead of being happy with what they have gotten, they very quickly forget everything you have done and want more. Who cares? It is important to do good anyway.

One of the most amazing things to me is when I watch young attorneys. Some of them will work 100+ hours in a week rarely sleeping. Then when business slows down in the firm, they will lose their job within a few months. The good they did is quickly forgotten, or so it seems. I am sure you can come up with similar experiences you have had with your own previous employers. You work really, really hard and then people forget about it later on. You help someone, offer something, or make some sort of contribution and it is quickly forgotten, as if it didn't matter at all.

Do good anyway.

When you are constantly focused on doing good and working hard, these attributes become part of your character. It comes across in how you look, the way you talk, and what others say about you when you are not around. No good that you do ever goes unrewarded. Continue doing good--there is no reason not to.

Many people are constantly evaluating each good action they do, expecting to get a corresponding return. There is much more to it than that and you need to continually be doing good regardless of your expected outcome. You are not going to get an instant return and reward from every good act that you do, but you will be rewarded in your character and reputation. Do not get detracted from people who tell you that your efforts are in vain. *Stay on track.*

Honesty and frankness make you vulnerable. Be honest and frank anyway. One of the biggest challenges that people have is continuing to be honest and frank. Most people want to remain strong at all times and to continually project an image of confidence, strength, and power. The truth is that the more honest you are, the more powerful you become. Allow me to explain:

When you try to hide the truth, people do not know who you are. Being vulnerable is actually a positive thing because it allows you to be human, and for others to care about you, and identify with you and your weaknesses. No one expects you to be perfect. Admitting your failures and lapses is one of the more important things you can do, and not doing so can get you into trouble.

I knew of an attorney once who had worked incredibly hard for over 8 years as an associate in two [law firms](#). He was notified that he was a couple of weeks away from being made a partner in a major American law firm. One day a partner in the law firm asked this man if he had sent a letter to client about a matter. Knowing full well he had not, the associate wanting to look

good said he had sent the letter the previous day. The associate then went into his office, drafted the letter, and sent it out postdated for the previous day. It was not a big deal and the letter that was sent late was not that important. Somehow, however, the partner that had asked him to send the letter found out it had been sent late, and found out the associate had drafted the actual letter after speaking with him. The associate was fired from the law firm on the spot. Because of his lie, I believe he ended up not getting another job for over a year. This talented and hardworking young man literally destroyed his career over this one incident.

Tell the truth. Just be honest. People will respect you more, people will identify with you more, and you will feel better about yourself. *Stay on track.*

The biggest men with the biggest ideas can be shot down by the smallest men with the smallest minds. Think big anyway. If you go around telling people you want to lose weight, improve in your career--or whatever it is you are trying to do, you will be absolutely amazed how quickly numerous people will appear to tell you what you are trying to do is impossible, it cannot be done, you cannot do it, you are not skilled or whatever.

This has happened with every single thing I have ever done that has some significance. Do it anyway. The ideas you have are likely to threaten other people, who will come up with one reason after another why something cannot be done. A quote from *The Best Damn Sales Book Ever* is instructive in this regard:

If you let them, salespeople (and most people, for that matter) will come up with every excuse in the book why it can't be done. Why? Because they have no vision. They don't see themselves as successful, they only see themselves failing. In order to fulfill this prophecy they need a reason. So what do they do? They prejudge (most salespeople call it "qualifying") almost every prospect they come in contact with and decide ahead of time he or she won't buy.

People will do this with you too. They will prejudge and tell you why you cannot do well. Do not let people shoot you down or destroy your dreams. Small people attack other people's dreams. You need to be strong; do not ever let others dissuade you. *Stay on track.*

People favor underdogs, but follow only top dogs. Fight for a few underdogs anyway. Most people, you included, I am sure, favor underdogs. We do it in sports, we do it in work.

Fighting for the underdog is a matter of character and spirit. You too are an underdog, or were an underdog. Appreciating the weakness in others makes you stronger and hoping and working on behalf of the good is something that adds to your character. Few people have the sort of character needed to not simply follow the crowd, which follows the top dogs. When you allow yourself to follow underdogs, you show yourself as a leader, and you strengthen your character. This helps you stay on track when people try and push you off the horse, as you take other actions to improve yourself and the world around you. *Stay on track.*

What you spend years building may be destroyed overnight. Build anyway. I was in a restaurant several months ago and there was a man standing at the bar who was drunk out of his mind. He looked quite respectable but he was acting like a buffoon. He was telling the bartender how he had lost everything--tens of millions of dollars in property. He was upset and said he felt like everything he had worked for all of his life had not been worth it. He was complaining that this all happened because he did not get a certain bank loan.

You can lose everything you have worked for in an instant. It happens. This is not an excuse not to keep trying. Life is based upon forward momentum. Just because something bad could happen in the future, or has happened in the past is not an excuse to give up. People spend years, or decades, building relationships with others and then inevitably, someone dies. It all comes to an end some day, but this is not a reason not to try. You need to constantly be building despite the fact that doom may lie over the hill. Never give up. *Stay on track.*

People really need help but may attack you if you do help them. Help people anyway. One of my favorite shows on television used to be the show *Intervention*. In this show, people with drug problems, eating disorders, and others would face interventions, wherein their families and others would intervene--often saving their life.

You want to help people even if they attack you for it. I have been attacked by people I have helped get jobs and others. Who cares? I help people anyway and keep doing my job. *Stay on track.*

Give the world the best you have and you'll get kicked in the teeth. Give the world the best you have anyway. If you look around you'll see the most successful people are the most criticized. All you need to do is pick up any newspaper or magazine to see this. The better you do, the more opposition and criticism you are going to face. This is what happens. You need to always give your best anyway. *Stay on track.*

Yesterday one of the most remarkable things happened. Our maid announced that she needs part of the day off today because she is running the Los Angeles Marathon. This in and of itself may not sound unusual; however, this woman is in her mid-50s, quite overweight, and recently had a gall bladder operation. I have also never seen her exercise a day in my life. Right now as I write this she is vacuuming and later she will be running the race.

My first reaction was that the idea of this woman running in a marathon was insane. But, of course, I did not tell her this. Everyone has a spirit within, which drives him or her to do great things. It is those naysayers around us, and the prospect of something bad happening that often keeps us barred back, and on the sidelines.

But there is nothing glorious, fulfilling, or memorable about spending your life on the sidelines. You need to run the race, and once you start running you need to *stay on track*.