

## Resist the Temptation to Cut Corners in Your Career

By [Harrison Barnes](#)

All over Las Vegas and Los Angeles are these billboards that say "Get The Lap Band!" These lap bands are surgical procedures wherein they cut a person open and tie a band around an area of the stomach in order to constrict its size. The idea is that with a smaller stomach, a person eats less and is able to lose weight.

With its high success rate, I think the lap band is a terrific idea for obese people. Every day I am reading one new study or another about the extreme dangers of obesity and how once people lose weight, they are able to live much longer and healthier lives. The lap band will probably end up saving a lot of lives and offering enormous benefit to a tremendous amount of people.

But despite the advantages of the lap band, I have another concern with it, which is a bit more pronounced. When people do anything that they should not be doing, such as overeating, smoking, drinking, not taking care of their body, indulging in harmful behavior and so forth, they are making choices which I would argue they have control over. We are all tempted with numerous choices each day to do the things we know we should not be doing, or not do the things we know we should be doing. With no sense of disrespect to people who are struggling with obesity, I do not think a lap band intervention is necessarily the answer:

- Learning to control and dominate the voices inside our head that tell us to do what we know we should not be doing is the answer--in my opinion.
- Following the voice that tells us the correct thing to do, even if it is difficult, is the answer--in my opinion.

Prisoners, the chronically unemployed, school dropouts, people who are continually in trouble with the law, and so forth--are typical examples of people who habitually follow the *wrong* voices in their heads. Your life and success in life will be in direct proportion to your ability to follow the *correct* voices in your head.



Consider the person who picks up the cigarette or consumes the fattening foods he or she should not even be touching. Have you ever known someone who has had a cancerous lung removed because they smoked? Have you ever known someone who had a dangerous heart bypass operation due to having too fatty of a diet? Many of these people come back after a brush with death and simply keep indulging in the same self-destructive behaviors. It is incredibly common and also quite shocking. It is a constant battle of will power.

There is a function of "will" that is involved in this sort of harmful behavior, and many people are making decisions that are within their control when they do negative things to themselves. This is also true when we do negative things to others. For example, if we talk negatively about another person when we know we should not, we are acting in a way that we know is wrong, although we fail to exercise the self control abstain from the negative talk. Criminals who commit violent acts, rob, and so forth also fail to exercise this self control.

A couple of times each month someone says something to me like "I am going to tell you a secret but I promised the person who told me the secret that I would not tell anyone." Going ahead and telling these secrets is another example of failing to exercise the self control that I am talking about. In fact, each day, numerous times throughout the day, a failure to do the right thing and to do things in the manner *we know they should not be done* is a failure to exercise the correct level of self control.

Each one of us has an internal enemy within us and we are struggling with it all the time. The internal enemy is the voice that says we should not do something even when we know we should. The voice also tells us to do something when we know we should not. We are all haunted and tracked by this voice constantly. In fact, throughout the average day, this voice seems to

talk to us endlessly about this or that, trying to get us to act in one way or another:

- We decide to come into work earlier and stop being late from now on--but still the voice tells us to sleep a little longer.
- We decide to start exercising every single day after work--but still the voice tells us that we are too tired to exercise and that we should watch television instead.
- We tell ourselves we will stop eating fattening foods--but still the voice tells us less than a day into the new diet that it is ok to eat the fatty foods.
- We tell ourselves we will put in extra effort at our job--but still the voice tells us that will no one will notice if we continue to put in minimal effort.

In effect, we all have two separate brains, which are continually at odds with one another. If you decide you are going to do something positive that takes effort, you will soon hear a voice telling you why you *should not* do that positive thing. You may suddenly visualize doing the opposite of what you should be doing. This opposing voice is ruthless and will exploit any angle to get its way. It may sometimes hide in the dark, beneath the surface, but it is always there to express itself through your thoughts, feelings, and the images that project into your mind's eye.

This voice seems to be you, but it is not. You can dominate this voice, which generally knows only one answer to any question, and one solution to any problem: Its way. This voice can be persistent, secretive, clever, determined, funny, intelligent--even ruthless in its pursuit. For instance, if you want to do something like stop smoking cigarettes, this voice may say: *"Right now I am under pressure from all sorts of things and it would not be good for me to quit smoking right now. I'll quit at a later time. I can just cut down smoking a bit for now and eventually everything will be ok."*

Any thinking that supports and encourages what we want not to do comes from this voice. Any thinking that disagrees what we know we should be doing is also this voice.

This voice is also known as our ego. The ego is comprised of the thoughts in our minds. We make these thoughts real by giving them our cooperation. If we withdraw our support from these thoughts, they will go away. There are thousands of thoughts that cross our mind on any given day. By choosing not to act on those thoughts that are destructive or detrimental to our progress, we choose not to give them legitimacy, which is very empowering.

Due to the needs of our ego, most of us work every hour of every day, seeking to fulfill its wants and desires. We are controlled by what the ego wants almost every hour and minute of every day. This voice makes us think that we are the victims of other people and various other external circumstances. This voice makes us *think* we are in control of our own nature and actions when, in reality, this voice is the one in control. There is a continual, clear struggle within every person; a choice must be made between doing things the correct way or the incorrect way; between taking care of one's self or not taking care of one's self; between making the extra effort in life or not making the extra effort.

Learning to identify, understand, and override this voice of the ego can give us a chance to effect a true transformation of our own character. Whenever you are trying to do something positive, you will generally encounter obstacles and conflict. Many people are content to be complacent and to continue lives within which not much is ever achieved. This complacency prevents us from making the inner changes that can lead us to success. We are convinced by the ego not to challenge ourselves, and to accept complacency--even in mediocrity. When you are continually challenging yourself and resisting the negative voices, you are developing your character and making yourself stronger and stronger. You are becoming a better person and gaining more depth. You are bettering yourself and the world.

What does this have to do with your career and life? Your success in life will be in direct proportion to your ability to follow the correct voices. In every profession, there are people who have the reputation of doing things the way they should be done and there are those who have the reputation of doing things incorrectly, or in a *half-assed* way. Doing things correctly takes extra effort and it is never easy. My career advice is to avoid giving in to the temptation to cut corners. People are not always watching you as well. Many people will cut corners when others are not looking. In fact, cutting corners when others are not looking, is incredibly common in the workplace. However, it is the people who do what is difficult and do not cut corners who generally end up doing the best in everything. Work that requires extra time, effort, and discipline is valued and appreciated much more than work which does not require extra time, effort and discipline.

In the working world there are typically multiple layers of people working on various tasks. The people who typically do the best at every task and in every profession are the people who are constantly doing things the correct way. As an example, I will use the [legal profession](#):

- The higher up you go on the food chain, the better the quality of work you will generally [find in the attorneys](#). At the highest level, there are fewer typographical errors; also the work is extremely well thought out and the arguments track correctly. All angles of the work have been considered. Someone has put in extra effort to make sure the final product produced is 100% perfect, or the best it can be. In order to do this level of work, the attorney will have resisted probably thousands of times any urges to cut corners and to not do things perfectly. Within the work product there are so many intricacies that have been considered that it is extraordinary. The attorney's extreme concentration and command of craft is evident.
- The lower you go on the food chain, the worse the quality of work will be. There may be more typographical errors, for instance. The arguments may not make complete sense, and may not track perfectly. Numerous other angles that could have been considered and incorporated into the attorney's arguments, may not have been considered. The attorney doing the work may have made numerous errors because he or she was primarily concerned with getting the work done. The work probably did not require (or at least, not in the attorney's mind) an especially high level of concentration while it was being done. To the extent there is an internal voice telling the attorney to cut corners, he or she has done it.

These sorts of differences exist in every service. They exist with people who paint your house, for example. The best painters are continually making sure that they are not getting flecks of paint in the wrong areas. They may wash their brushes, or change brushes more often. They may use better paint and spend more time mixing the paint. No matter what profession you analyze, the people who are the best are those who avoid the temptation to cut corners in their efforts. Instead, they strive for perfection, meaning that they strive to make each and every project they undertake the very best it can be. This is what is commonly known as *work ethic*.

We see this with products as well. We respect companies that make the best products, and the best products typically are the best made. These products take extra effort to manufacture, and it pays off in the final product: We are willing to pay more for things that are better made. We seek out and are more likely to [purchase products](#) that are better made.

My wife's father is a jeweler. A couple of years ago I became very interested in the diamond industry because it is so involved. Diamonds carved in some parts of the world have more value than diamonds carved in other parts of the world. The reason? A lot of it has to do with the skill and training presumed of a diamond cutter from India versus a diamond cutter from Belgium. The diamond cutter from Belgium is presumed to be better trained and more skilled. The diamond cutters from Belgium are hence typically trusted to cut the largest diamonds. Every profession has these kinds of distinctions.

Whether it is a product or a service, we respect when it is delivered in the best possible way and with the most thought and conscious effort. When the idea of cutting corners is rejected in favor of doing a [better job](#), we respect the product or service more. In order to rise to the top of any profession, the most important thing you can do is resist the voice that tells you it is ok to cut corners, or to rush through your work while others are not looking. When you do what is difficult, but the right thing to do, you and your work will be stronger. This will inevitably lead to greater opportunities in your career in life.

#### **THE LESSON**

Many people fall prey to the false attractiveness of the ego, allowing it to dominate their lives and hinder their progress. To conquer your ego you must establish a sense of what is and is not correct, and introduce discipline to your business and personal life. This means your work will result from true effort rather than cutting corners, and you will be respected for the ethics that govern your actions.

---

<https://www.harrisonbarnes.com/>