

Be the Person You Are Capable of Being

By [Harrison Barnes](#)

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, "Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, and fabulous?" Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world. There's nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We are born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It's not just in some of us, it's in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.

-Marianne Williamson

Several years ago, I was writing a newspaper article about a movie critic and political commentator, Michael Medved. Medved was asked why George Bush had lost the election to Bill Clinton. Medved said something along the lines of, "Months before the election he had some of the highest approval ratings of any American president. In order to understand this, you just need to look at simple psychology. He lost because he wanted to."

I thought about this statement a lot because it is true in so many aspects of our lives. We decide how far we want to go then sabotage ourselves at some point along the way. There are numerous reasons we do this, and I would like to review some of those reasons below.

When I was about 15 years old, I was always getting into trouble. One night, I went out with my best friend and took down about 20 street signs around town in the middle of the night. I might have even been drunk. We did this on motorcycles. We were absolutely insane! I did end up returning the street signs to the city a couple of days later when my mom's boyfriend found them in the garage.

I also want to note that, in this particular period of my life, I had so many friends it was unbelievable. The phone rang constantly. I would get calls in the middle of the night asking me to go somewhere and have fun. I grew up with a lot of wild kids. When I was 25 years old and living in New York City, I turned on the television and saw a kid I knew from my adolescent years on 20/20. He was in prison on a charge that was almost silly. One guy I knew was thrown in juvenile detention for a few months after he stole a meter maid's cart and led the police on a chase.

I moved to Bangkok, Thailand, at the age of 15 after my father was transferred there. I was enrolled in an international school and quickly realized I didn't have a lot of school mates interested in being wild. There was simply no place for that sort of behavior in this new environment. I had fun, but the people weren't wild like the friends I had back in the United States. A lot of my classmates were from Taiwan and Japan, and they were very serious about school. Some were from places like Nepal, and many were from Israel. The idea of being a social misfit simply didn't work there.

For weeks, I was very depressed. It was as if I was going through some form of withdrawal. I had no friends interested in being wild and no one at the school liked me for the wild guy I was. I couldn't even call my friends back home. Instead of continuing to be wild, I had no choice but to fit in with the kids at the international school.

So I started applying myself. I ran for an officer's position in the student council and won. I tried out for varsity soccer and made the team. I exercised daily. I started studying a lot. I worked as hard as I could. By the end of the year, I was a straight "A" student and had the highest grades in my class. I became a completely different person.

When I returned from Bangkok in the summer after my year of school, I announced to my friends back home that I was different now, had much better grades, and so forth. I expected all my friends to be proud of me. Instead, they no longer wanted to socialize with me. They didn't want to be friends with someone who took himself so seriously. They were interested in the person I was before. Throughout that summer I was depressed because these people were no longer interested in being my friend.

One morning around 7 a.m., a bunch of former friends showed up at my house in a van. They came in, woke me up, made some jokes then left. They seemed very wired, and on the way out one of them punched a hole in the screen door. They didn't seem to know what they were doing. I found out later this group of friends spent the summer traveling around in the van doing cocaine, and the van was known as the "coke van." I have never done drugs at all and these guys had entered a completely different realm. None of these guys ever did anything with their lives.

Despite feeling isolated, I continued working hard and doing the best I could in school and in life. I ran for student [government positions](#) again and won. I continued to improve myself. As I improved, I found myself growing apart from the people around me. This is what happens as you keep improving. People around you aren't always comfortable with this and you outgrow them or grow in different directions.

I want to make a point I believe is extremely relevant: as you grow, don't look back. Your future will always be better than the past you leave behind. There are people who won't like it when you grow, but your growth should motivate them to improve as well. You will find some people will grow right along with you, just in different ways.

I once received an email from one of our very talented employees requesting that I shouldn't point out something very good that this person did in their job. The person was afraid of looking too talented in others' eyes. The mistake many of us make is not allowing ourselves to be all we can be.

I want to be clear on something else as well: if you start living the life you want and try to be as successful as you really want to be, you will often face external opponents. However, the largest obstacle you will ever face is yourself. Never stand in the way of your own success. Embrace your capabilities.

In the movie *To Die For*, Nicole Kidman plays a [reporter](#) motivated to have an important career as a [television journalist](#). In

this movie, Kidman's husband tries to prevent her from becoming a well-known and successful [reporter](#). Parents, spouses, peers, and numerous others influence us every single day, and often this influence is an attempt to keep us down.

Never allow others to keep you down. The decision to excel is your own. You can do, be, and have everything you want. Now is the time to take charge of your life and be everything you are capable of being. You are one of the most special people ever. I can assure you that what is waiting for you is much better than never reaching your full potential.

About 10 years ago, I was at a bar in Detroit with my girlfriend. I was about to leave when I passed a table of people with whom I'd been friends before I began working hard and applying myself. I used to think they were the coolest people. While I won't get into specifics, I didn't want to be associated with those people anymore. None finished college and they did odd jobs like clean boats for a living. Deep down, I knew if I hadn't moved to Bangkok and taken charge of my abilities, I would probably have had a very similar life.

Take charge and do everything in your power to be the person you are capable of being. You will like where you end up.

THE LESSON

You have the power to become the person you are capable of being. Although you will face external obstacles in the process of becoming this person, your biggest challenges will be internal. Don't allow others to keep you down. Instead, decide to excel on your own. In order to achieve your goals, direct all of your energy toward being the best person of which you are capable.

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