

Eve Magazine October **The Secret of Success**

For the majority of people, success looks something like this: outstanding exam results at a reputable school and college, the latter preferably overseas, followed by a lucrative position with social standing, country club membership, Beemer, Rolex, a pretty wife and at least two bright and beautiful children, one boy, one girl.

Certainly there is nothing to be said against aspirations to financial security. And yet we often read in the tabloids, and experience within our own communities, money does not necessarily bring happiness. As Ayn Rand once said, there is a certain calm to be had from a full bank account! Trouble is, when is a bank account ever *full*? It has also been pointed out that the problem with *desire* is, that, once fulfilled, it tends to leave a vacuum begging replacement with another! And so it goes on....

For by far the largest sector of our population, subsisting on a few dollars a day (or less), a certain measure of financial security would bring relief from empty stomachs and the concomitant miseries of abject poverty. A more equitable re-distribution of wealth should be at the top of any progressive government's agenda. Thus said, we now turn to look at what rather more material preoccupation has done for the developed countries and those here who would emulate them. Man really cannot live by bread alone. This we see most clearly in the depressing statistics emanating from the 'lands of plenty', bearing witness to a different but no less ravaging form of poverty. Sales of anti-depressants have reached astronomic heights, even among children; stress-related disorders cost western governments billions annually; divorce rates soar, while drug use, both legal and illegal, has become almost pandemic. Successful people, in this sense, pay a high price, it seems.

Advertising 'success' linked to intellectual prowess and specialised expertise - those areas of endeavour rewarded best, and perhaps unduly, by society - has long since been normal practice among mainstream educational institutions. Those of us, who have brains wired for data storage and left-brained reasoning, and in a position to take advantage of the system, have fared best in these halls. And what of the rest of us? We hear so often of dancers, actors and artists, for example, who have flunked school, but have overcome, by sheer willpower and the courage of their convictions, the obstacles of otherwise ambitious parents, and other limiting social factors, in the pursuit of their dreams. When they are successful and fulfilled, we all find this jolly admirable *in hindsight*, but how many of us would tolerate or encourage this behaviour in our own children?

Harvard psychologist Howard Gardner pointed out that most schools focus on developing children's logical-analytical and linguistic skills, which he considers a far too limited approach, given the "multiple intelligences" of human beings. The arts, he emphasizes, help develop the far broader range of intelligences. And, as I reported in the last issue, a recent UK survey of 254 leading companies showed that 71 % thought exam results a poor indicator of future performance. Research shows that "there is no scientific evidence that exam results or degree class predict *success* throughout life. There is even evidence suggesting the opposite."

Daniel Goleman in his bestseller *Emotional Intelligence* (publ. 1995) questions the emphasis in our culture on breeding **IQ** as opposed to **EQ**. He argues that our view of human intelligence is far too narrow, and that *emotions* play a far greater role in thought, decision-making and individual success than is commonly acknowledged. *A balanced all-round* intelligence includes: self-awareness and impulse control, persistence, zeal and motivation, empathy and social deftness - *these* are qualities of people who excel, who are stars in the workplace.

The compulsory education system was originally set up to supply the workforces of the industrial revolution, the human cogs in the great industrial machine. Information was scarce, so children had to be brought together at a place where information could be amassed, a school. They needed to get used to a

set routine as in the factories and organizations that needed them. Processing and regurgitating information and knowledge was key, creativity and innovation were not much in demand and could be a nuisance. In many countries in the world, while the content may have been updated to a degree, the basic philosophy has not been consciously revisited.

Yet so much in our world has changed. Information is flooding in through communication technology and professions are changing. Business week (June 11, 2001) hails biotechnologists, designers of windmill and fuel cells, chefs and architects as the leaders at the forefront of change. All these professions are deeply embedded in understanding natural forms and processes. These leaders of change are thinking outside and beyond the current trends and imagining futuristic technology. They can fantasize and turn their fantasies into profitable useful realities.

Interestingly, it is mostly those people who have not chosen to follow the traditional, well-trodden road of individual material success whom we as a global culture honour as folk heroes. Rather it is those individuals who turned their backs on the status quo, whether by galvanizing dissent into revolution against repression or persisting doggedly with innovation in the face of ridicule, and even persecution, have passed with the most glory into the annals of history as successful human beings. People like Galileo, St. Francis of Assisi, and more recently, Mahatma Gandhi, Mzee Jomo Kenyatta, Mother Teresa, Martin Luther King, Wangari Maathai, and even John Lennon and Bob Marley, have earned our respect, for example, more particularly for their active stands against social injustice..... What would parents feel about their children wanting to emulate these role models?

Success surely means more than achievement. It means forging successful business partnerships based on trust; leading satisfying intimate relationships with spouses, children, relatives, friends; creating communities and schools that foster individual growth and self-realisation; nurturing balanced and bio-diverse environments; pursuing eco-friendly endeavours and right livelihood; encouraging artistic expression, responsible freedom and true democracy; in short, aspiring to the highest human values.

Those now being educated will have to do what the present generation has been unable or unwilling to do: stabilize world population, reduce the emission of greenhouse gases that threaten to change the climate - perhaps disastrously - protect biological diversity, reverse the destruction of forests everywhere, and conserve soils. They must learn how to use energy and materials with great efficiency; They must rebuild economies in order to eliminate waste and pollution. They must learn how to manage renewable resources for the long term. They must begin the great work of repairing, as much as possible, the damage done to the Earth in the past 150 years of industrialization. And they must do all of this while they reduce worsening social, ethnic, and racial inequities. No generation has ever faced a more daunting agenda.

It is our responsibility as caretakers of the coming generations to reconsider our definitions of success, and create new forms of education that better prepare our children for the challenges of the future. The definition of success thus broadened, we can actively encourage each individual child to unfold his or her particular God-given talents to contribute positively to the evolution of a humanity founded on universal social values as well as scientific and academic endeavour.

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