

## **Success Within: How to Create the Greatest Moments of Your Life**

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From thoughts, actions, and change, to giving, forgiving, and relaxing, to money, laughter, and much more, *Success Within* lights the way to ultimate success one week at a time.

### **Week 3**

#### **Total Recall**

*“[Memory is] a man's real possession . . . In nothing else is he rich, in nothing else is he poor.”*

—Alexander Smith

One of my favorite memories from childhood is of my mother, grandmother, and me listening to Minnesota Twins baseball on the radio. I can see the sunlight shining in through the partially closed drapes, and the dust mites swirling in the light. I am maybe five or six, and I am sitting on the floor, on a rough, dark blue carpet playing with my model horse collection. For some reason I know that it is a Sunday afternoon, late spring or early fall, but the windows are closed so it's not during the heat of the summer. My mother is on the couch to my right, embroidering something, and my grandmother is sitting to my left in a chair by the big picture window.

It's not a very dramatic memory, but I get a very warm, safe, and loved feeling whenever I recall that particular moment. It's a moment that I doubt was memorable for my mother or grandmother, but for me it was special. And that's what this week is all about, remembering those special moments that are meaningful, if only to you.

Memories are a huge part of our lives. In many ways, experiences—which become memories—shape who and what we are. If you are to create great moments in the future, you have to remember great moments of the past. For some, this is harder to do than for others. Many people have a hard time remembering. Others have unfortunate experiences in their past that they'd just as soon forget. What is needed this week are the activities or moments in your past that made you feel safe and warm and loved. Think back. What made you happy? What made you jump up and down with excitement? What moments were so special they brought tears to your eyes?

In the course of my career as an entertainment publicist, I have had the opportunity to write hundreds of bios for entertainers of all genres. One of my public relations clients was the legendary country music star Johnny PayCheck. John was best known for his

1978 hit, “Take This Job and Shove It,” which happened to be written by another former client of mine, David Allan Coe. I did John’s public relations in the early 1990s, and back then John loved a good meal. If I wanted a long career discussion with John, I found he was most forthcoming across the dinner table.

I remember asking John about his earliest memory. We were at one of his favorite restaurants, the Country Buffet in Hendersonville, Tennessee, just north of Nashville. I was gathering information for his “fact sheet” (a promotional piece of quick bits of trivia information that often accompanies a bio). He started with a memory at school when he was about ten, then moved to a scene at a country store when he was seven or eight, and finally recalled playing with a dog when he was maybe four or five. What I remember most about John telling me the dog story was the look of pure happiness on his face. As he remembered, it was as if he was transporting himself back to a time when life was simple. It was a time when the act of throwing a stick for a dog brought pure joy, and just recalling the memory brought those joyous feelings back to him. He smiled through the rest of the meal, remembering that dog and the fun they’d had.

This week’s success plan is to recall those great moments of your past. Then you’ll explore those moments as much as possible with the people or places that were a part of it.

### **Step 1: Remember**

To begin remembering, you might try to recall your first memory and take your life year by year from that point. Or you might find memories from a central theme in your life, say football, or girl scouts, or family vacations; or you could find memories from certain places you lived, or schools you went to, or people you knew. There are many ways to trigger memories. Looking through a photo album might trigger memories, or holding an object that was important in your past. Just find your personal trigger to start the flow of memories. Remember to “ink what you think”—to write the memories down so you remember them!

When thinking about these memories, try to bring back all the details that you can. What time of year was it? Was it hot or cold? Was it sunny or rainy? What were you wearing? What colors are in the memory? What smells or sounds or tastes? Who, if anyone, was there with you? Were you happy or sad? Be sure to record all of these details in your *Success Within* notebook.

As you go through this process, some memories are going to be more vivid than others. Some will be vague impressions, while others will be very clear in your mind. Some memories you will recall with delight, while others might be of sadder times. Whatever the memories, there will be a few that will become your favorites. These memories are the ones you will focus on next.

### **Step 2: Revisit**

By now you should have recalled a dozen or more great moments. Choose one or two that are special to you, then make plans to revisit the moment more completely. For example, if you remember going shopping for school clothes with your mother, ask her about that time. What was going on in her mind at that point in her life? Was she worried about not having enough money for the clothes? Or was she pressed for time, or using the

day to talk to you about other things? View the memory from her side.

Maybe you once made the winning shot in a basketball game—in overtime. Look up your old teammates and relive that day. Or make plans to visit your old high school and walk down memory lane. If that's not possible, how long has it been since you visited a basketball court? Go shoot some hoops, or teach someone else how.

Understand that it is very possible that other people involved in your memory won't remember the event at all. And that's okay. But be sure to share what you remember and why the memory, and your friend's part in it, mean a great deal to you. Even if he doesn't remember, you will make him feel very good by knowing he contributed in some small way to a great moment in your life.

The other possibility is that he will have a completely different memory of the event. Talking with other people about your recollection is a wonderful way to get to know another side of someone, and hear how the event was important in their life. The other person may also be able to add new information to the memory, enriching it even further.

If you don't have anyone from those special times in your life to reminisce with, find a memory partner. Choose one day each week or month to share memories with each other. This person could be a spouse, a child, a neighbor or co-worker. It could be a man you ride the bus with to work, or a woman from your church. The only requirement is that he or she has the desire to listen and share his or her own memories.

### **Step 3: Find a Daily Memory Moment**

In addition to recalling and exploring great memories from your past, take time every day this week to create a daily memory moment. If you see a rainbow, stop and appreciate its beauty. Take a moment to enjoy watching the mime on the street, to smile at kids playing tag, or simply enjoy the graceful lines of a building.

I once dated a man whose greatest memory of our relationship is most likely a walk in the park on a snowy day. We briefly spotted the scarlet brilliance of a cardinal against the snowy backdrop. It was a breathtaking moment and it struck something deep within him. Regardless of his feelings about me, I am sure he will remember that moment fondly and forever.

Another client of mine lost his wife in a tragic suicide. In the weeks and months that followed he mentioned to me several times that the only thing that got him through were the special moments that each day brings: the beauty of a tree, the song of a bird, the lazy movement of clouds in the sky, a smile on someone's face.

So each evening this week, take a moment and jot down your greatest special memory of the day.

### **Week 3 Success Plan**

Recall some of the great moments of your past

Revisit those moments with the people or places important to that moment

Find a special moment every day to cherish