

What To Do To Be Successful - Jordan B Peterson

IQ is a predictor of success, and you can't do anything to improve it. Peterson cited a study by Daniel Simons that contradicts the claims that you can do brain training exercise to improve cognitive ability. According to Peterson and Simons, you can play brain training games, get better at those games, a lot better, you get better at similar games, but in general it doesn't have any effect on your cognitive abilities at all. No one knows how to increase IQ. There are studies on how to stop it from decreasing as you get older. Starting at age 20 your IQ decreases, pretty rapidly. Physical Health is the best preventive... so exercise. It oxygenates the brain. Both Anaerobic and Aerobic exercise.

Conscientiousness **is the second best predictor**. Two aspects of it: Orderliness and Industriousness. The latter is a better predictor, and there's a strong genetic component BUT you can work on micro Habits with regards to your conscientiousness. Like setting up some aims, goals for yourself.

- **MyNote:** so far, we're screwed. the top two predictors are out of our control. Peterson advertised The Future Authoring Program that he designed to help with that.

What are the potential sources of Motivation? The big five manner: (1) if you're extroverted you want friends, (2) if you're agreeable you want intimate relationships, (3) if you're disagreeable you want to win competitions, (4) if you're open you want to engage in creative activity, and (5) if you're high in neuroticism you want security.

In order to have motivation you need a Goal that aligns with your values, break down the goals into micro processes, and then see progresses toward your goal. The Dopaminergic Incentive Reward System, which is the thing that keeps you moving forward, will reward you if it sees progress toward your valued goal.

- **MyNote:** I see a lot of connections with Cal Newport theory: [Follow Your Passion is a Bad Advice](#)

Implications: **better have a valued goal!** Else it's hard to get rewards and motivation. The more valuable the goal, the more the reward system gets triggered. **It means you wake up in the morning and you're excited about the day.**

Jordan recommends to **specify your long term ideal**, and also "a place you want to stay the hell away from". Your goal should make you say that "if that would happen as a consequence of my effort, it would clearly be worthwhile". Because the question is always "why do something?" You can answer that if you have something that's worth pursuing. The next question could be "Where to look for worthwhile things?" and the answer could be "ask your temperament or do a structural analysis of the sub components of human existence: you need a family, you need friends, career, educational goals, plans for time outside of work, attention to your mental and physical Health..."

- **MyNote:** very good analysis but I don't buy the "where to look for worthwhile things" part. He doesn't mention Freedom. He only mentions commitments. He didn't mention Spirituality, search or meaning itself...

What you should be doing at universities is **trying to figure out who it is that you're trying to be**.

- **MyNote:** it reminds me the concept of Authenticity by Simone Perotti - *"L'autenticità non è essere se stessi, sono già me stesso. Essere se stesso significa cercare di somigliare il più possibile all'idea che hai di te, cioè a ciò che ancora non sei ma che sai di poter diventare se ci provi."* (Italian, sorry :P)
- **MyNote:** My criticism of this is that it's not very actionable. So far, nice analysis but... ok, what I should do? What should my goals be? How to find them? Is it really family, friends, work and hobbies?

Sometimes people don't want to specify their goals because they don't want to specify conditions for Failure. So if you keep yourself vague and foggy then you don't know when you fail. Realizing to have failed is painful, and we want to avoid painful things. So you can keep yourself blind to your failure, except that then you're going to fail 100% of the time. And you'll recognize it when you fail so bad that you're done. This can easily happen by the time you're 40.

- **MyNote:** what a cold shower!

Once you get your goal structure set up you might tell yourself "*ok, if I could have this life, it looks like that might be worth living*"... despite the fact that's going to be anxiety provoking, threatening, and there's going to be some suffering and loss involved, obviously, **the goal is to have a vision for your life such that all things considered that justifies your effort**.

- **MyNote:** I like the fact that he never mentions Happiness, i.e. he didn't say "if I could have this life, it looks like I'll be happy". And even if he mentioned the

absurdities of existence (see [The Absurd](#)), he never mentioned the lack Meaning of life - which is a prerogative of Atheism.

Then what do you do once you have a vision? **You turn down the micro routines:** how does the vision instantiate itself day to day, week to week, month to month. **A Schedule can be unbelievably useful.** Google Calendar. Make a damn schedule and stick to it.

- **MyNote:** micro routines? Habits? Goals vs Systems? Time Blocking?

The schedule should not be a bloody prison. **Set the schedule so that you have the day you want**, not the day filled with things you "should" do. Tell yourself: *"so I've got tomorrow, if I was going to set it up so that it was the best possible day I could have, what would it look like?"* Schedule like that!

Of course there's a bit of responsibility that's gonna go along with that, because something you want to insist on is that **at the end of the day you're not in worse shape than you were at the beginning of the day**. Maybe 20% of your day has to be responsibility and obligations - maybe it's more than that, depending on how far behind you are. You can ask yourself *"what's the right ratio of responsibility vs reward?"*, and you got to negotiate that with yourself. Negotiate, not tyrannize yourself!

So define the day that if you had that day that'd be a good day. Even if you get it with 70% accuracy that beats ZERO. Even 50%. Aim to 51% next week! **You're going to hit that position when things start to loop back positively and spiral you upward.**

Have a little conversation with yourself: you know what you like, you won't do what you're told, you won't do what you tell yourself to do... **it's like you're a bad employee and a worse boss**. You don't know what you want to do, and when you tell yourself what to do you don't do it anyway... **you should fire yourself!**

This above is the plan to work on your Conscientiousness.