

The 8 Keys of Excellence – Definitions and Descriptions



INTEGRITY – Match behavior with values

Demonstrate your positive personal values in all you do and say. Be sincere and real.

Living in integrity means that everything we say and everything we do are true reflections of what we value, what's important to us. Think about what your behavior says about you. Does it clearly show others what you value? Do you show up as honest and committed, or dishonest and indifferent? Are you spending your time with the people and activities you value, or is your focus elsewhere?

When we live in integrity we are sincere and true to ourselves—we don't say or think one thing and do another. People trust and respect us, our relationships are solid, and we feel good about ourselves. Those positive feelings from others and within ourselves reinforce our values and build our reputation and self-esteem, leading us to greater success in all areas of our lives.



FAILURE LEADS TO SUCCESS – Learn from mistakes

View failures as feedback that provides you with the information you need to learn, grow, and succeed.

When we live the Key of Failure Leads to Success we see failures as feedback, we learn from them and make the changes needed to be more successful in the future.

To live this Key successfully we may need to change the way we think about failure. Rather than viewing failure in a negative way where we put ourselves down and think WE are a failure, think of failure as a valuable learning experience. When we look at our mistakes with a view to learning from them, rather than sending ourselves negative messages, we are on the path to success.



We may be reluctant to try different things because we're afraid of failing. Fear of failure does nothing but keep us in our comfort zone where we stick with the familiar, the "safe" choices where we don't "risk" another failure. When we step out of our comfort zone—when we're willing to try something new—that is when we take a step toward success.

The only real failure is not learning from our mistakes. The key to success is to look carefully at what went wrong, change what we did the first time, and try again by applying what we learned.



SPEAK WITH GOOD PURPOSE – Speak honestly and kindly
Think before you speak. Make sure your intention is positive and your words are sincere.

Words are powerful! They have the power to uplift and enlighten or put down and depress. A few cutting words spoken in a moment of anger can affect us for a long time, perhaps even a lifetime. On the other hand, a few kind words can make a very positive difference in how we feel about ourselves … sometimes for a lifetime.

What we say to others—and to ourselves—can have a huge impact. Speaking with good purpose is about always considering the intention of our words. It's about communicating directly, clearly, honestly, and with a positive purpose. The first step is awareness. If we always think before we speak instead of just blurting out whatever comes to mind, we can learn to consider the reason for our words and make sure we are speaking with good purpose … will our words build someone up or put them down? We all sometimes have negative thoughts, but we don't have to say everything we think.

There will be times when we need to share critical thoughts. At these times, if our purpose and how we phrase our words is considered first, sharing honest and direct feedback can be very positive and powerful, and build trust.

Speaking with good purpose is the cornerstone of healthy relationships. This Key fosters a positive emotional environment where people are happier, more productive, and more likely to succeed.





THIS IS IT! – Make the most of every moment
Focus your attention on the present moment. Keep a positive attitude.

This Is It! is about focusing on NOW instead of later, or next week, or next month, or next year, or yesterday, etc., and making the most of it. A positive This Is It! attitude can make everything we do and every day productive, fulfilling, and fun!

Life is full of distractions and opportunities to do something else, something other than what we're doing now. Many of us spend a lot of time thinking about those other things. Instead of making what we're doing now "it" our focus is often elsewhere—on things we wanted to do, could have done, should have done, or want to do "sometime." Whenever our thoughts are occupied with something other than what we're doing, we miss what's going on around us in the moment … while we're waiting for the next moment to arrive the present moment slips away.

When we live in the NOW we have power! With a This Is It! attitude we make the present "it" and find joyful moments that we might otherwise have missed!



COMMITMENT – Make your dreams happen
Take positive action. Follow your vision without wavering.

Commitment is the breathtaking moment of making a compelling decision, jumping in, and going forward with gusto. Once a commitment is made, indecision is eliminated—there is no more "Should I or shouldn't I?" … "Will I or won't I?" A commitment is not made lightly—it's about making a decision so strong that there is no going back … like a skydiver who has jumped from the plane!

The decisive act of making a commitment—when we decide to do "whatever it takes" to reach a



goal—sets in motion an energy field that propels us forward on our path. At each step along the way, our commitment inspires us to take positive action and overcome obstacles, and pushes us on until we “make it happen.”



OWNERSHIP – Take responsibility for actions

Be responsible for your thoughts, feelings, words, and actions. “Own” the choices you make and the results that follow.

Ownership is our willingness to take responsibility for the choices we make. When we take responsibility for our choices, others know they can count on us and we earn their respect.

If you tell a friend you’ll meet him at a certain time but you’re two hours late because you were hanging out with another friend, take responsibility for your choice. Don’t make up excuses like “I couldn’t help it … Billy just wouldn’t let me go.” Take ownership by saying, “I was wrong not to meet you as planned or call you when I realized I’d be late.”

When we take ownership of everything we do and say and stop blaming things outside ourselves for situations that occur in our lives, we have greater control. We may not be able to control everything that happens in our lives but we can control how we respond to what happens. By taking ownership of our actions we create a huge shift in our life.

Ownership is a whole-life concept. We can take ownership of our education, our relationships, our fitness, our fun—all areas of our life. And when we take ownership we take pride and feel confident and fulfilled.



FLEXIBILITY – Be willing to do things differently

Recognize what’s not working and be willing to change what you’re doing to achieve your



goal.

Flexibility is the willingness to try something different when we realize that what we're doing isn't working. Many times a day we are faced with situations that are different from what we had originally planned. One way to deal with these situations is to be rigid and continue to do things in the same way over and over—another is to handle them with flexibility. Being flexible is responding to changing or new situations in ways that move us forward.

Flexibility is about not getting locked in to one way of doing something. If we're trying to achieve something (like getting up on time in the morning) and it's just not working, we try another way (like moving the alarm clock to the other side of the room so we have to get up to shut it off). Flexibility is about recognizing all kinds of habits or patterns or activities in our life that aren't working and changing them, and even changing them again until we find the one that works!



BALANCE – Live your best life

Be mindful of self and others while focusing on what's meaningful and important in your life. Inner happiness and fulfillment come when your mind, body, and emotions are nurtured by the choices you make.

When we're in balance we make time for the things that are important to us. Staying in balance is an ongoing process about choices. We're constantly making choices about what we do, what we say, how we feel, what we think, etc.

When questions arise about how we spend our time, we make choices depending on what's important in the moment. We may choose to give up time with friends to finish a project for work or school, or we may choose to put aside something we're doing to help a friend. Many of the choices we make every day—choices about school, work, hobbies, sports, family, friends, health, etc.—are about balance.



Balance is not about rigidly devoting equal time to everything that matters to us, and it's not about totally immersing ourselves in one area of our lives to the exclusion of all others.

Balance is about considering everything that's meaningful and important to us when we make choices about how we spend our time and energy. When we find the right balance we are happy, healthy, productive, and fulfilled.