

How to Change

You need four beliefs.



by Barbara Bartlein

SUPPOSE YOU HAVE MADE little progress in modifying your behavior in spite of feedback and coaching—what can you do?

Suppose you struggle with balancing your personal and professional life, often finding yourself overcommitted. You have a demanding job as well as family, church, and community duties. You have difficulty saying “no” and feel guilty that you are not doing enough for your children. You try to decrease your work load but seem to be busier each year. What can you do?

There is a paradox of success, making it difficult for successful people to grow and improve. When things are going well, people have little motivation to change. Yet, successful people need to change before they have to change or they will plateau or decline.

Four Key Beliefs

Successful people have four key beliefs that drive their success and, often, limit their growth. These beliefs are:

I choose to succeed. Successful people believe that they are doing what they choose to do, because they choose to do it. They have a strong need for self-determination and do not like feeling controlled or manipulated. They believe that their behavior is a result of their choices and commitments. The more you believe that your behavior is a result of your own choices and commitments, the less likely you are to want to change your behavior. Your personal commitments can make it hard for you to change.

I can succeed. Successful people believe that they have the internal capacity to make desirable things happen. They do not see themselves as victims of fate; rather they believe that their motivation and ability has driven their success. Successful people often confuse correlation with causality. Because they get positive reinforcement for results, they may not have an accurate perception of what behaviors drove those results.

I will succeed. A contagious sense of optimism is an important characteristic of successful people. They not only believe that they *can* achieve, they believe that they *will* achieve. Because they are ambitious and goal-oriented, they have difficulty saying “no” to desirable opportunities. Some successful people

drown in a sea of opportunity and burn out trying to complete what they have promised. Successful people are busy and face the danger of overcommitment.

I have succeeded. Successful people tend to have a positive interpretation of their past performance. They consistently over-rate their performance relative to their peers. When positive outcomes occur, they believe that their efforts were instrumental to the success. They see their history of what they have done as a validation of who they are. Successful people’s positive view of their performance can make it difficult to hear negative feedback from others.

Successful people have difficulty in accepting input from others. If the feed-

back does not agree with their perceptions of themselves, they tend to deny the information for three reasons: 1) the input is from someone that they see as inferior; 2) they view the input as incorrect, and the other person as confused; 3) they agree there is truth in the feedback, but it can’t be important since they are so successful.

This is why feedback is ineffective with successful people. As Denis Diderot once said, “We swallow with one gulp the lie that flatters us, and drink drop by drop the truth that is bitter to us.” **PE**

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ACTION: Change before you have to change.

Mental Resilience

Counterbalance abilities.



by Al Siebert

THE FLEXIBILITY FOUND IN highly resilient people comes from their complex inner nature. Here is a list of counterbalanced personality qualities typically found in people who overcome adversities and setbacks to achieve solid career success.

How many of these pairs of counterbalanced qualities describe you? Creative and analytical. Serious and playful. Hard-working and lazy. Sensitive and tough. Cautious and trusting. Unselfish and selfish. Self-appreciating and self-critical. Impulsive and thorough. Stable and unpredictable. Outgoing and introspective. Optimistic and pessimistic. Counterbalanced personality qualities indicate advanced emotional intelligence. The more pairs of traits you have, the more you have the mental and emotional flexibility essential for resiliency.

Your resiliency in rapidly changing circumstances comes from having many such pairs of traits, whatever they may be. The longer the list of pairs of counterbalanced, paradoxical traits you recognize in yourself, the more emotionally complex you are, and this can increase your chances of handling any situation successfully.

Adapting to new circumstances is the key to survival in all of nature. If

you always respond one way and never in the opposite way, you will sometimes be helpless to stop yourself from automatically reacting in a self-defeating way or will do or say something that you later regret.

When someone does not handle life’s challenges well, it is often because this person always thinks, feels, or acts in only one way and would never consider doing the opposite. Many people are so taken with the idea of being self-starting, for example, they lose sight of the need for the counterbalancing skill of being self-stopping. Most people with positive attitudes have such negative attitudes about negativity specialists they end

up making big mistakes because they miss the benefits derived from being able to think in negative ways.

Thinking that personality traits should be constant in all situations is very limiting. Don’t think that you have to stick with one personality trait and never do

the opposite.

Having a variety of responses is crucial when handling unpredictable, chaotic, or changing conditions. Successful people know that it is better to have many possible responses than to be limited to a few. They often allow creative intuition to guide spontaneous action without taking designed, pre-planned action.

Well-integrated inner complexities increase your psychological stability and give you greater mental and emotional flexibility for dealing effectively with many unexpected circumstances. **PE**

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ACTION: Develop your personality traits.

