

## Sex, Diets and Success: Self-Help and the Merchants of Success

What's on your social media?

“Lose over 20 pounds per month - Enhance your love life - Stop being a prisoner of your job - It's all up to you - Here's the ONE THING you need to do - And we're going to give it to you for free - Goal-setting will change your life - Throw off the shackles of the *shoulds* in your life - If you only invest in one program this year, this is the one - Millions have turned their lives around - If someone like this could do it, so can you - Imagine making 40, 50 or 100 thousand dollars a month all from your own part-time internet business - This will make you irresistible to women - Listen to what our successful clients have to say - Why wait when you can have everything you want right now - You can't change other people, you can only change yourself - Only you can change your life - If you only had one day left to live what would you be doing? Live life like there is no tomorrow - Imagine the possibilities - The sky's the limit.”

Sex, diets and success. You can have it all – except the weight of course.

Okay we get it! We are responsible for our own lives. We are the authors of our story. I am responsible for whatever happens in my life. That's the message the self-help industry has been drilling into our brains for decades.

### **The Real Consequences of the Self-Help Industry**

But what has this acceptance of self-responsibility actually done to people? Surprisingly, the results can be devastating.

The below-conscious logic goes like this:

If I'm responsible for myself and only I can solve my own problems and it's up to me to make myself successful . . .

then, who's to blame when:

- My job is awful
- I can't make ends meet or get out of debt
- I can't lose weight
- I don't have time to eat properly
- It's hard to communicate with my partner
- My kids won't do as they are told
- There is so much to do I can't cope
- And I can't get it up?

Is it any surprise that so many people feel depressed and report feelings of self-loathing? “I *should* have been able to do something about this, but I haven’t. So there is clearly something seriously the matter with me.” It’s even worse when someone has had success in a number of areas. “Why can’t I just conquer this problem when I’ve dealt with even harder issues? I’m a failure.”

According to the National Institutes of Health, for example, between 20 - 40 percent of adults are trying to lose weight and the most predictable reaction are feelings of blame or shame.

This logic is invisible to the eye, inaudible to the ear, and yet the feelings of guilt and “it’s my fault” are there in the pit of the stomach. As soon as someone accepts the belief that everything is within their power, the logical conclusion is that they are to blame when there is something they haven’t overcome. And who doesn’t have unsolved problems in their life?

**Maybe we have been sold a bill of goods. And this belief that we have failed at doing what every human being *ought* to be able to do, is exploited every day.**

### **The Merchants of Success have the formula!**

The Merchants of Success know we feel guilty about our failures. They use this to tempt us with seductive language and promises. And they know the formula that works:

#### **1. The Hook**

First they talk about possibilities, the sky’s the limit, think of all the ways you could benefit if you..... . . .to get you to imagine what life could be “if only”. They use what is called Options language. This language puts people into a creative, imaginative mindset where you can visualize any possibility and even begin to believe it. This is where you start to *see* your own private yacht.

#### **2. Line**

Second, they propose a solution and make it sound easy. In fact, the solution often does it for you. You don’t need to take any initiative. Just sit back and let the money roll in. “This special vibrating belt will melt the pounds away.”

#### **3. Sinker**

Lastly come the testimonials. They show you how people just like you (or even better – complete losers) have turned their life around. If they can do it, so can you.

If they have hooked you in an area about which you are sensitive, you get so excited at finally being given the solution, you sign up. Who can resist? Not me. Personally, I have spent thousands on lose weight programs, since weight management has often been a challenge for me – and one about which I’ve felt guilty. Others spend a fortune on get-rich-quick schemes.

### **The Letdown**

Once a person has signed on, they are given lots of information. The first challenge is to make sense of everything. As you make your way through the process, you are still enthusiastic, especially when you see the Merchants of Success have worked out all the details. “Yes, it’s true, all you have to do is *follow the proven formula* and it can all be yours.”

The problem is that actually following the system is as exciting as cleaning your room was when you were a kid. The only way to succeed is to relentlessly follow the detailed step-by-step procedure laid out. They will give encouragement along the way to make you believe it’s easy. “All you have to do is follow the easy steps.”

Unfortunately, you signed up because they got you into the Options mode, feeling inspired by all the possibilities. You are not in a Procedures mode where you would enjoy following through, completing and finishing each step before starting the next. The Options way of thinking is diametrically opposed to the Procedures way of thinking.

But the Merchants of Success are so congruent and believable. Because they succeeded themselves, they believe anyone should be able to do it. What’s good for me is good for you.

I have learned from my own experience that even knowing the Merchants of Success sales formula will not protect you. The call is irresistible with their “Options-imagine the possibilities” language, but the only way to succeed is by getting into Procedures mode. Most people attracted to the call will fail because they can’t follow the procedure, and then, having subscribed to the “you can do anything” belief, they will blame themselves and feel guilty. Then the Merchants can sell them the next miracle cure.

### **The Hope-Disappointment Cycle**

Many self-described self-help junkies have a habit of starting projects without being able to complete them because they get distracted by other options and possibilities. They often find themselves at square one, wondering why they can’t succeed and blaming themselves.

The consequences of this Hope-Disappointment Cycle are self-destructive. “Even though it ought to be easy, I still couldn’t do it. Since each person is supposed to have all the resources they need to be successful, the logical conclusion is I am not good enough”.

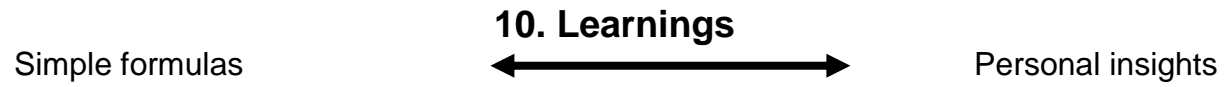
But isn’t it also true that if we were really able to do anything we wanted, we would have already done it? Chronic self-dissatisfaction is no way to lead a life. Isn’t it okay to not be rich, famous, thin or irresistibly sexy?

**You don’t have to choose between being hoodwinked by Merchants of Success and doing nothing** with your life or stopping learning. It is possible to learn from others who help you to

master important skills and improve how you live your life. I call these teachers “Partners in Progress” because they operate as a partner who helps you grow.

### How you can tell the difference between Merchants of Success and Partners in Progress

Merchants of Success		Partners in Progress
End Result	<b>1. Marketing Focus</b> ←————→	Ends and Means
Little to no effort of Effort Gap between now & goal between not clarified	<b>2. Effort</b> ←————→	Realistic Evaluation Transparent gap Present & Future
Implied quick, instantaneous	<b>3. Time Frame</b> ←————→	Over time, realistic
Options, possibilities “the sky’s the limit”	<b>4. Sales Language</b> ←————→	Options, Procedures Possibilities & How
External motivation & reinforcement	<b>5. Source of Motivation</b> ←————→	Develop Internal motivation
One size fits all	<b>6. Adapted to the Individual</b> ←————→	Different strokes for different folks
Naïve fantasy Few, if any	<b>7. Chances of Succeeding</b> ←————→	Positive realism Many succeed
Temporary fix	<b>8. Likely Results</b> ←————→	Lasting results
Guru, rescuer	<b>9. Relationship</b> ←————→	Partner with clearly defined roles



There are no limits to the things you can read, listen to, watch or attend. How will you decide what you want to learn next?