

Empowering DIY: Making Your Own Luck

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We all can point to that one person in our lives for whom everything seems to come easily. He or she has a good income, great house, beautiful children and the checkout line they choose always moves the quickest. You probably really wonder about that person. Why are they so lucky? Why not me?

Well, why not you? Recent research has confirmed ancient teachings telling us that we have more power over our own luck than we think. If we focus our energy and attention in the right ways, we can make ourselves into the type of successful, powerful, happy people that everyone else will wonder about. Read on for three tips from emerging science that can change your life:

1.) Don't covet your neighbor, just focus on your own life.

Ancient theory: The Epideictic. Scholars have known about the epideictic since Aristotle discussed it in the third century BCE, though the details have always been murky. Basically, we've always understood the power of praise and blame to define our world, but only recently have we been able to support it with science.

Modern science: In one recent study, researchers played a video of a man spilling a glass of milk to two groups of people. One group spoke English and similar languages, the others spoke languages in which blame wasn't built into their sentence structure. They found that the people from the first group, whose sentences are built around, "He spilled the milk," could identify details about the man in the video that the other group could not. Your language is leading you to blame people, including yourself, even when it doesn't help you!

We tend to credit ourselves when we succeed, and assume other people got ahead because they were lucky. If you think people are luckier than you are, then you might need to rethink how you give credit.

The takeaway: If you want to be luckier, stop worrying about upon whom to place blame. Don't blame yourself for your failures and don't let life events force you into a negative mindset. Who cares who spilled the milk?

2.) Trust your gut

Ancient theory: Extrasensory Perception (ESP). Perhaps you've had an occasional premonition or foreboding about something and chalked it up to coincidence. That's because people are likely scoff when you talk about it as anything but that. However, you can sometimes look at a situation and just know something is right or wrong even if you can't put your finger on it.

Modern science: More and more, scientists are backing you up. Thin-slicing is a term psychologists use to describe the hunches we get from looking at a person or situation and making instant judgements about them. Studies have shown that people respond as accurately to five-second clips of conversations and situations as they do to five-minute clips.

In his New York Times Bestseller *Blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking*, Malcolm Gladwell covers this topic very well, discussing topics from fashion to art fraud. The feeling of instant recognition is so powerful that people with specific brain injuries don't recognize their loved ones because they don't feel the instant recognition.

Takeaway: Lucky people know when to trust their gut. Most of the scenarios you deal with daily are scenarios you've been dealing with for decades. You've done alright so far, so let your instincts take over. Try to use analogies to determine if the problem in front of you is like the ones you've seen, and if so, go with your first instinct. After all, your cave-person ancestors didn't call an all-staff meeting every time they fought a mastodon, or you wouldn't be here today.

3.) Keep it simple

Ancient theory: Simplicity is at the heart of Taoism, Buddhism, Asceticism, Feng Shui, and many more.

Modern science: Dr. Barry Schwartz and his colleagues have run countless studies to show that modern choices and convenience actually make us less happy. For example, if offered a chocolate from one of those heart-shaped assortments, you'd probably prefer to choose one from among a big box with dozens of choices rather than having to choose among a slim selection. Unfortunately, in his experiment, the people who chose from the smaller selection were much happier with their decision. They didn't wonder "what if" or experience buyer's remorse. The same is true with all sorts of variations on the same experiments.

Takeaway: Lucky people make choices and stick with them. Next time you're in a convenience store, look at how many kinds of M&Ms they have. Regular, peanut, peanut butter, mint, almond, pretzel, crispy ... the list goes on and on. Now check the sizes: regular, sharing size, fun size, big hanging bags, even bigger bags, mixed packs ... so many to choose from. Ask yourself: Will getting your M&M choice exactly right make you any happier than picking one at random? If not, then don't waste your energy

trying to get it right. Lucky people make the right choice in this situation because they realize any choice is the right choice if they make it quickly and stick with it.

Want to improve your luck? The best thing you can do is improve your thinking. Dump your baggage by focusing on yourself, trusting your gut and sticking to your decisions. If you want to be the person who has everything going great, start by realizing that you already do. Count your blessings. Then, realize everybody is showing you their best face all the time. If your friend's Facebook feed is filled with nothing but amazing life events and exciting vacations that seem to happen to everyone but you, remember that you're seeing a condensed version of everybody's life, with only the best parts put online.

If that doesn't help, then think about it this way: Somebody, somewhere is looking at your life and envying your "luck."

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