Leading an Inspired Life
by Jim Rohn

Thrive
Strategies for Living Up to Your Potential

QUICK OVERVIEW
In the introduction of Leading an Inspired Life, Jim Rohn explains that at 25 he was “behind on my dreams, constantly wondering what I could possibly do to change things for the better. Then good fortune came my way.” That good fortune was an introduction to a mentor who taught him the success principles that changed his life. This book is a comprehensive compilation of many of those best practices. Readers learn 15 fundamentals essential to success, including discipline, communication, financial independence and refining one’s personal philosophy. This summary covers the sections related to personal discipline and the fundamentals of business success.

Let this powerful book serve as a reminder and a guide to living your very best life.

APPLY AND ACHIEVE
If you’re facing business challenges, consider Rohn’s comment on seeing the opportunity in every situation. “Enterprising people always see the future in the present. Enterprising people will always find a way to take advantage of a situation, not be burdened by it.” If you’re struggling, it’s time to think differently.

Rohn explains that developing an enterprising attitude requires creativity and the courage to use that creativity to go against the grain of society. To boost your creativity, refuse to accept that there is only one outcome or solution to a problem. Instead, make a list of many potential scenarios. Then choose the one that will help you turn a negative situation into a positive result. Brainstorming five, 10 or even 20 possibilities challenges your mind to look beyond the obvious for a better, more creative idea.

SUCCESS Points
In this book you’ll learn:

• Why you need a plan
• How lack of discipline sabotages success
• You can change your direction instantly
• Why enterprise is better than ease
• How your priorities impact the ability to thrive
If there is one magic word that stands out above all the rest, it is discipline. Discipline is the bridge between thought and accomplishment, between inspiration and achievement, between necessity and productivity.

Failure is not generally the result of one major incident, but rather of a long list of accumulated little failings. If your goal requires that you write ten letters today and you write only three, you are down seven letters. If you want to make five calls and only make one, you are down four calls. If your plan calls for saving ten dollars today and you save none, you are down ten dollars.

The danger is looking at an undisciplined day and concluding that no great harm has been done. But add up these days to make a year—and then add up those years to make a lifetime—and it will become apparent how repeating today’s small failures can easily turn your life into a major disaster.

Success, on the other hand, is just the same process in reverse. If you plan to make ten calls and you end the day having made fifteen, you are up five calls. You can see what a massive difference this sort of thing could make in a year…and what wealth and accomplishment await over a lifetime.

**Developing Discipline**

The first key to discipline is awareness of the need for and value of discipline, especially the discipline to make the necessary changes. What will it take? What must I do and what must I become to get all I want from life?

The second key is willingness. More than that, it is the eagerness to maintain your new discipline deliberately, wisely, and consistently.

The third key to discipline is the commitment to master the circumstances of your daily life—to see and harness the opportunities to make something of the good as well as that which comes in the guise of misfortune.

Discipline does many things, but most important of all is what it does for your mind-set—it makes you feel better about yourself. Even the smallest discipline can have an incredible effect on your attitude. And the good feeling you get—that surging feeling of self-worth that comes from starting a new discipline—is almost as good as the feeling that comes from the accomplishment the discipline brings.

A new discipline immediately alters your life direction. You don’t change destinations immediately—that is yet to come—but you can change direction immediately, and direction is very important.

Discipline is the continuing process that brings all the good things. Remember, anyone can start the process. It’s not, “If I could, I would;” rather, it’s “If I would, I could. If I will, I can.” So start the process. Begin a new habit, no matter how small it is. Size isn’t important; whether or not you start and whether or not you continue are all that matter.

**From Knowledge to Achievement**

If knowledge is power, if knowledge is the forerunner to success, why do we fall short of our objectives? Why, in spite of all our knowledge and collected experiences, do we find ourselves aimlessly wandering? Settling for a life of existence rather than a life of substance?

While there may be many answers to this question, the ultimate answer may be the absence of discipline in applying our knowledge. The key word is discipline, as in self-discipline.

It doesn’t really matter how smart you are if you don’t use your knowledge. It doesn’t really matter that you graduated magna cum laude if you’re stuck in a low-paying job. It doesn’t really matter that you attend every seminar that comes to town if you don’t apply what you’ve learned.

We spend our lives gathering: gathering knowledge, gathering skills, gathering experiences. But we must also apply the knowledge, skills, and experiences we gather in the realms of life and business. We must learn to use what we’ve learned.

And once we’ve applied our knowledge, we must study the results of that process and refine our approach. Finally, by trying and observing and refining and trying again, our knowledge will inevitably produce worthy, admirable results. And with the joy and results of our efforts, we continue to fuel our ambition with the positive reinforcement of continued progress. Pretty soon, we’ll find that we’re swept into a spiral of achievement, a vertical rise to success. And the ecstasy of that total experience makes for a life triumphant over tragedy, dullness, and mediocrity.

But for this whole process to work for us, we must first master the art of consistent self-discipline. It takes consistent
self-discipline to master the arts of setting goals, time management, leadership, parenting, and relationships. If we don’t make consistent self-discipline part of our daily lives, the results we seek will be sporadic and elusive.

It Takes Discipline to...
- Conquer the nagging voices in our minds: the fear of failure, the fear of success, the fear of poverty, the fear of a broken heart.
- Keep trying when that nagging voice within us brings up the possibility of failure.
- Admit our errors and recognize our limitations.
- Be totally honest, both with ourselves and with others.
- Plan and to execute our plan.
- Look with full objectivity at the results of our applied plan. And it takes discipline to change either our plan or our method if the results are poor.
- Be firm when the world throws opinions at our feet.
- Ponder the value of someone else’s opinion when our pride and our arrogance lead us to believe that we are the only ones with the answers.

With consistent discipline applied to every area of our lives, we can discover untold miracles and uncover unique possibilities and opportunities.

CULTIVATING YOUR ENTERPRISING NATURE
We’re all aware that many people feel that we must be careful when focusing on money or affluence or abundance… that in the pursuit of those things there is danger. And I do agree. If you make money your love and pursue affluence to the exclusion of other values in life, you have lost, not won.

However, let’s consider this question: if you could do better financially, should you? That’s not a bad question. In the time you’ve allotted to labor, economics, success, achievement, productivity, the creation of value, the development of skills and creativity, if you could do better, should you?

I think that one of the greatest satisfactions of living life to the fullest is doing the best you can with whatever you have. Doing less than your best has ways of eroding the psyche. We seem to be creatures of enterprise.

**Enterprise Is Better Than Ease**
I’ve decided that enterprise is better than ease. If you rest too long, the weeds take over the garden in the summer. Life doesn’t stand still, and random negativity will start overwhelming the positive arrangements of life if you just let things go. So we’ve all got to have a positive attitude about activity.

Let me give you one of the best examples I know. An ancient phrase states, “Whatever your hands find to do, do it with all your might.” That’s a powerful philosophy. Many people are getting by with using half their might. That may be their own personal philosophy of activity, but how much more could they achieve if they used all of their might? You’ve got to evaluate that question for yourself and apply it to your own life. Put it on your mental scale and come up with your own answers of how it applies to you.

How should you live your life? Are you working to your full potential now?

**Creating Opportunity**
To be enterprising is to keep your eyes open and your mind active. It’s to be skilled enough, confident enough, creative enough, and disciplined enough to seize opportunities that present themselves… regardless of the economy. A person with an enterprising attitude says, “Find out what you can before action is taken.” Do your homework. Do the research. Be prepared. Be resourceful. Do all you can in preparation of what’s to come.

Enterprise means always finding a way to keep yourself actively working toward your ambition.
Enterprise requires two things. The first is creativity. You need creativity to see what’s out there and to shape it to your advantage. You need creativity to look at the world a little differently. You need creativity to take a different approach, to be different.

What goes hand-in-hand with the creativity of enterprise is the second requirement: the courage to be creative. You need courage to see things differently, courage to go against the crowd, courage to take a different approach, courage to stand alone if you have to, courage to choose activity over inactivity.

Every time we choose to do less than we possibly can, it affects our self-confidence. If we keep doing a little less every day, we are also becoming a little less every day. Can you imagine what you’d end up being after ten years of doing a little less every day? It’s devastating! Think about it… doing less could ruin your life!

You can reverse this process by using your self-direction, your self-reliance, your self-discipline. You can alter your life by doing a little more each day. Pretty soon, you’ll develop a new habit of doing rather than not doing. And what will days and weeks and months of doing a little more ultimately do for you? It will increase your confidence, your courage, your creativity, and your self-worth—your enterprising nature.

**Time Management**

Here’s what I call the best-kept secret of the rich. It’s an interesting discovery that I made one day. Rich people have about twenty-four hours a day. And poor people have about twenty-four hours a day. Imagine that! The difference between them is in the management of the time.

Practicing a few simple disciplines every day can change your whole life. Your future can change. Your income can change. But you must get a handle on the management of your time. As with everything worthwhile, discipline must be practiced. Discipline is a very important factor in how you manage your time, the twenty-four hours given to you every day.

I have four approaches that might help you get a handle on the management of time. Here’s the first one: keep it in perspective. Nobody’s ideas of success and time management are right unless you can apply them to your own life. Don’t let somebody pressure you by saying, “Here’s what you’ve got to do with your time.” Resist all of that. You can take advice, but you don’t want to take orders. Resist all attempts of other people to pressure you into becoming the model of their definition of success. Do it on your own time and in the way that’s right for you.

My second time-management approach is this: work longer, harder, and smarter. That can be an effective approach to managing time. However, there are certain limits to working longer and harder. One of those limits is your health.

When I first started with all this, I really poured it on. I got so excited about changing my life, revolutionizing my whole future, that I went bonkers. I could hardly sleep nights, especially that first ninety days. And that first year, I was on such an absolute, dead rush toward revolutionizing everything—my income, my bank account, my future, my relationship with my family… everything. And by the end of that first year, I was a walking shadow. I’ve been pretty skinny all my life. In high school I turned sideways and they called me absent. And for that first year, I practically disappeared. I put in incredibly long hours. I worked six or seven days a week. If I couldn’t do it in eight hours, I’d work ten. And if I couldn’t do it in ten, I’d work twelve, fourteen, or sixteen hours. Toward the end of that year, it was affecting my health.

Then it suddenly dawned on me: What if I got rich and was too ill to spend it? Wouldn’t that be silly? Then I started to say, “Hey, I’ve got to pull back to a normal workload.”

If you’re not doing much, I would suggest that you work a little longer and work a little harder. After a while, though, there comes a point where, physically, you’ve just got to pull back. Sometimes the answer is to work harder and longer, but at a certain point, working smarter is the key.

Here’s a third approach to time management: step down to an easier task, to something more manageable. Find something that doesn’t require that much time, that much effort. That’s an alternative. Don’t let yourself be pressured into taking on more than you can handle when stepping down might give you a better lifestyle. You’ve got to weigh the consequences. Can you make everything fit? Sometimes that extra money isn’t worth it if it pressures you into losing touch with somebody you really care about. Doing less can be more.

The fourth approach to time management is the one I like the best: getting more out of you. If we just get more from ourselves, we can make an hour as valuable as ten hours used to be. We can get as much done in a day as we used to get
done in a week. It’s a matter of increasing our efficiency, honing our skills, expanding our knowledge, broadening our awareness and limiting distractions.

Set Careful Priorities

Enjoying true business success requires you to set careful priorities. It’s easy to keep going from nine to five, year in and year out, and lose a natural sense of priorities and appropriate time. Don’t let one year just blend into the next.

Part of setting priorities is learning to separate major activities from minor activities. This is a whole skill in itself, but once you have learned it, it will pay dividends you won’t believe! So learn to put everything on your mental scales to be fully weighed before you spend time or money.

Here’s a good question to ask yourself constantly: Is this a major or minor activity? By asking that question, you will reduce the amazingly natural tendency to spend major time on minor things.

In sales training, we are taught that major time is the time spent in the presence of the prospect, while minor time is the time spent on the way to the prospect. If you’re not careful, you will spend more time “on the way to” than “in the presence of.” So in sales, we teach, “Don’t go across town until you’ve gone across the street.” Wouldn’t it be wise to ask yourself, “How much time am I spending ‘in the presence of’ and how much time ‘on the way to’?”

You also don’t want to spend minor time on major things. It’s easy to get values mixed up. If a man spends three hours watching TV and only thirty minutes playing with his kids, something is probably out of line there, right?

Don’t spend major money on minor things. If you spend more on candy than on programs or books, wouldn’t that be foolish? So set careful priorities. Do it like your life depends on it… because it does.

Thoughts on Managing Your Time

Run the day, or it will run you.
• Prioritize your goals and decide which are important.
• Constantly review your goals, then make them a part of a good written game plan.

Don’t mistake movement for achievement.
• You’ve got to be busy being productive.
• Evaluate the hours in your days, and see if there’s not a lot of wasted time that you could manage better.

Concentrate
• Zero in on the job at hand.
• Wherever you are, be there. Give whatever you’re doing the gift of attention. Give people the gift of attention.

Say No
• Don’t say yes too quickly. It’s better to say, “I don’t know if I can make it, but I’ll give you a call.”
• Being too eager to please can be dangerous. You need to appreciate yourself, your time, and your limits.
• Be eager to please yourself and your family. Don’t be so eager to please everybody else.

You don’t have to fill up every second of the day; take time to appreciate what you’ve accomplished. Take time to enjoy the fruits of your labor.
**ACTION STEPS**

Get more out of this SUCCESS Book Summary by applying what you've learned to your life. Here are a few thoughts and questions to get you started today!

1. Do you live in the present? Practice the art of concentration. Today, when someone speaks to you, look them in the eye and listen. Don’t jot notes about things you have to do, or check your phone for messages. Just listen.

2. What habit do you want to change? Do you want to stop smoking or start exercising? Do you want to call five prospects every day? Whatever habit you want to pick up or eliminate from your life, begin tracking that behavior today. Start small, but start today.

3. Are you majoring in the minors? What are your priorities? Does your behavior reflect what you say you desire?

4. Are you working smart? Get creative about how you could earn more in fewer hours.

5. Do you work hard enough? Are you expecting too much success from too little effort?

6. Are you living up to your full potential? If not, what do you need to change?

7. Are you willing to apply what you’ve learned? Knowledge isn’t enough; it must be paired with the proper actions.

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**About the Author**

Jim Rohn was a highly respected speaker and business philosopher. During his lifetime, Rohn addressed more than 6,000 audiences worldwide. He authored more than 25 books and audio and video programs. In 1985, he received the National Speakers Association CPAE Award, and in 2009, SUCCESS magazine honored Rohn for his passion and lifelong commitment to helping people achieve. Rohn passed away in 2010, but his legacy and message continue to inspire a multigenerational audience to live their best possible life.

**Recommended Reading**

*If you enjoyed the summary of Leading an Inspired Life, you may also like:*

- The Art of Exceptional Living by Jim Rohn
- Empires of the Mind: Lessons to Lead and Succeed by Denis Waitley
- How Successful People Think by John C. Maxwell