Live Your Dreams

by Les Brown

Say Yes to Life
Strategies for Overcoming Challenges and Staying Motivated

QUICK OVERVIEW

Master motivator Les Brown offers a powerful pep talk in Live Your Dreams. Liberally sprinkled with personal stories and accounts of others Brown has encountered through the years, this energizing book resonates with readers on a fundamental level. Raised in near-poverty conditions in a rough Miami neighborhood, Brown’s chances of reaching adulthood unscathed were slim. He credits the influence of schoolteachers, mentors and his tough but loving adoptive mother for providing a foundation for a better way of life.

In Live Your Dreams, Brown teaches readers the basic, timeless principles of personal development. He offers practical tips and strategies for pulling yourself out of discouraging situations. He explains how to dream, how to set goals, and how to equip yourself to succeed. Part psychology, part how-to manual, and all motivation, this book is both a pick-me-up and an implementation guide for creating the life you desire.

APPLY AND ACHIEVE

As a child, Les Brown was pulled out of a rowdy fifth-grade class (he admits to being one of the rowdier students) and put back into fourth grade. He was labeled a “special-education” student, which might not have been so bad had the principal not pointed at him and several other children in the class that day and, in anger and disgust, called them stupid, dumb and retarded. Imagine the hurt and emotional trauma of that embarrassment. Luckily for Brown, a teacher reached into the young boy’s life with this bit of wisdom: “Someone’s opinion of you does not have to become your reality.”

With those words, the chains that shackled Brown to a life of low expectations loosened. Eventually he shook them off permanently.

The question for you is, Are you allowing someone’s negative opinion of you to determine your reality? Others will have a different vision for your life. They may not believe...
in themselves or their own ability to achieve, and as a result they may try to hold you back as well. Pay attention to the people with whom you associate. If they’re not building you up and helping you move toward your goals, determine today to limit your exposure to their negativity.

I am convinced that all of us need to find and nurture our goodness to unlock the keys to achievement. By tapping into your goodness, you can make a difference on this earth. I believe you are born with the responsibility and the obligation to make a positive impact. When you decide to pursue greatness, you are taking responsibility for your life. This means that you are choosing to accept the consequences of your actions, and to become the agent of your mental, physical, spiritual and material success. You may not always be able to control what life puts in your path, but I believe you can always control who you are.

YOU’VE GOTTA BE HUNGRY

I believe that you have to have a powerful reason to get up and fight back in life. That is why you must find a powerful motivation to drive you. It has to matter deeply; otherwise, you may not have the strength of purpose to persevere.

I asked a friend recently why he was not working on his dream to have his own business. He said that by the time he got through working sixty-five hours a week he didn’t have enough energy left to act on his goal. He had put it aside.

He is not alone. There have been numerous studies and reports indicating that Americans are working longer hours, enjoying their work less and living in fear that they might lose their jobs any day. If you live like that, you need to stoke the fires of your hunger. That’s not living!

Feeding a fire within you—living FOR a dream—is REAL living. In the course of my conversation with this friend, I got him thinking about his dream of having his own restaurant. I added some coals to his fires. I fanned them too. His hunger was rekindled because he realized that starting his own business was the way to get off the treadmill.

Life does not always present us with an ideal situation in which to pursue our dreams. That is where HUNGER comes in. We must motivate ourselves to do what we MUST do to get on and go on with our lives.

My friend is still working those long sixty-five-hour weeks, but he has found the time to go after his dream. He is hungry again, so he goes deep within and finds the strength to stay after it. He focuses on his goal. He stays motivated by remembering his dream. He has his life in gear again and his dream back in his sights.

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When you get discouraged—and you will—it takes hunger to develop the courage to try again and again and never quit. Some people are naturally hungry. Some have hunger imposed upon them by circumstances. If you are not naturally motivated, you are going to have to learn how to make yourself hungry. I can help. I’m a GOOD cook.

To help you build hunger, I suggest you try these steps:

• Develop hunger by taking responsibility for your life.

• Review your goals twice every day. Be focused on achieving them. Reflect on what truly motivates you.

• Develop a sense of urgency in your life. Take actions now that will move you toward your goals.

• Develop courage. Let yourself feel the fears that are holding you back and mentally push them aside. Afraid of water? Enroll in swimming lessons now. Master that fear.

• Devote yourself to operating on a massive, relentless scale in order to accomplish your goals. Instead of making ten sales calls, make fifty and watch the rewards come in.

• Develop the conviction that you can accomplish your goal. Your level of belief in yourself will inevitably manifest itself in what you do.

• Read inspirational material such as the biographies of people who overcame great odds to succeed. If they can do it, you can do it.

• Tap into your spiritual awareness and contemplate your mortality. There are few motivations as compelling as
the concept that sooner or later death awaits you. No one wants to die with his or her potential unfulfilled.

• Get acquainted with successful people and ask what drives them and how they achieve their goals. Listen to their ideas and experiences. Make them your role models.

• Develop your communications skills. Take public speaking courses or courses on leadership and communication. We live in a society in which these skills are perhaps the most important of all.

• SMILE! Project a positive image. Say “YES!” to your life. A person’s smile reflects how he or she feels inside. Your smile will give you a positive countenance that will make people feel comfortable around you. Did you know that the muscles that create a smile trigger a chemical in the brain that makes you feel good all over? So SMILE! Feel GOOD about your dreams!

THE POWER TO CHANGE

Hurtful memories can stifle your development and growth. How do we break through this insidious mental conditioning? How do we grow and develop beyond hurtful episodes that bury themselves in our subconscious and influence our lives? How do we change and grow so that we can live our dreams?

The first step is to break the hold of these inhibiting influences from the past. Recognize them and then either get rid of them or turn them into a positive force that pushes you ahead rather than holds you back.

Identify these inhibiting memories in your life so that you control them rather than allowing them to control you. Did someone hurt your feelings? Forgive them and forget it. Move on. Did someone punish you unfairly? It’s over. It’s done. Go on.

Here are a few of the most common emotions that burrow into the subconscious and impede our growth as individuals:

• Anger. This is a natural response to a perceived attack or injury. It makes energy flow. But when allowed to simmer, it depletes energy that could be used to improve your life. If you hold your anger for more than a week, it is only hurting you. Make yourself let go. Envision yourself throwing it out. Ease your mind. Transform your anger into positive motivation. Don’t get mad, get motivated.

• Revenge. The first cousin of anger. It also robs you of strength in the long run. The person who has injured you has probably gone on with life; so should you. Don’t let the injury hurt you further by inhibiting your growth. Lose it or use it. Instead of saying, “I’ll get them,” say, “I’ll show them. I’LL BE SOMEBODY!”

• Sadness. This is more crippling than anger because it drains you from the start, sapping your will to go on. You probably will have to let this drain away slowly at its own pace. Time heals, but if the sadness seems to linger, consciously force it out. Seek out things that make you laugh and feel positive about life. Realize that feeling sad will not change anything. Seek peace of mind as your right.

• Resentment. Life is not always fair. It is unrealistic to feel any other way, and holding on to resentment is no way to fight back. Drop it and get back into the battle.

Nine Principles of Life Enrichment

I. I can achieve far beyond my horizons, and in avenues of life I have never explored.

II. I possess a basic goodness, which is the foundation for the greatness I can ultimately achieve.

III. I must take responsibility for my actions, my well-being and the attainment of my maximum potential.

IV. I must seek self-awareness, self-approval and self-commitment in order to attain self-fulfillment.

V. I must commit myself to building and maintaining relationships that are critical to the social development of my family and community.

VI. I must manifest the belief that mutual respect is the fundamental element of all relationships.

VII. I will heighten my life by helping others heighten theirs.

VIII. I will work toward my goals by planning, executing and measuring my progress.

IX. I will make commitments with care and honor them with integrity.
• Guilt. All of us have done things we feel bad about and regret. Things we would do differently. Many of us carry that guilt around and it keeps us from moving forward. Don’t let people put you on a guilt trip. Say to yourself when someone is putting you on the defensive, “No matter what you do or say to me, I am still a worthwhile person.”

To rid yourself of these past emotions, put them in a perspective that is positive rather than negative and thereby cut off their painful roots in your subconscious. Reinterpret the past with these methods:

• Get better, not bitter. Find a quiet, comfortable place. Sit back and relax. Think about something or someone who caused you pain or disappointment. Now take a mental step back from that feeling and the situation. Assess it. Did the emotions that resulted make you stronger? Did they give you determination? Can you use those memories to empower you rather than drain you? Why let them hurt you further?

• Envision those hurtful emotions as a sword held by an enemy. In your mind, see yourself snatching the sword away and using it to cut away the emotional snares that have tied you up.

• Get rid of regret. If you are burdened by something you did, analyze it. Was it a business failure? Was it something foolish you said or did that hurt someone you care about? If so, apologize. That often clears the air, but use discretion if you think it might make matters worse. If you owe money to someone, pay them. Or tell them you intend to pay them a little at a time.

Whatever the cost, it is worth it to clear away burdensome emotions. If you have feelings of unworthiness because of something you did, let them go. Realize that we usually do the best we can, according to our level of consciousness at the time. If you would not do the same thing again, you have changed. You are no longer the same person. That person is gone, so forgive yourself.

Love yourself unconditionally, just as you love those closest to you despite their faults. Let it go so you can grow. You have the power to change.

WORK ON YOUR DREAMS

It troubles me that we spend years in school learning about the lives of other people, but we devote hardly any time at all to studying ourselves. Too many of us understand the forces of American or European history but not the forces behind our personal histories. A sense of self-knowledge grows out of contemplation and reflection, of questioning yourself and welcoming feedback from others. By knowing yourself, by consciously striving to understand how your personality was formed, you can free yourself to grow beyond your past experiences. You can live for the grand possibilities of the future, rather than be tied to the restrictive influences of the past.

I once heard it said that everyone is born unique but most of us die copies. Learn who you are and work on bringing your true self out. Reflect on who you are and how you relate to the world. Look carefully at your past and you will come to a fuller understanding of who you presently are. You can do this by honestly examining the events, people and circumstances that have shaped you.

When you know yourself and understand your motivations, you become more aware of the tools that you possess—your unique mix of talents and abilities—and also the limitations you have. Understand that most of your limitations are self-imposed because of your history and that your field of vision is too often limited by your experience instead of being guided by your imagination.

Change, Change, Change

I jokingly tell my audiences that once you begin to really know yourself and know the truth of who you are, you will not even need an alarm clock anymore. You will wake up in the morning eager for the brand-new day. You will start walking 25 percent faster. You will be excited about YOU. About your unfolding future. Instead of being in the way, you will be on your way.

To assist your growth in self-knowledge, try these steps. Write down the results and review them at least once a year so that you can begin to measure your progress at different points in your life.
Live Your Dreams

• Get to know what other people like about you. Ask someone close to you to tell you honestly how he or she views you. Have that person rate you and your specific traits on a scale of one to five. Do people describe you as your own worst enemy? If they do, you need to work on your self-knowledge to understand why.

• Determine what you expect to achieve in life. This is what you expect, not what you hope or dream for.

• Consider your life for a moment. What drives you? What inhibits you?

• Evaluate how you handle compliments. This is a good barometer of how you feel about yourself because if you accept them naturally without seeking them out you have strong self-approval and a sense of worthiness. Can you accept compliments without discomfort, or do you always have to take exception or deflect them? Do you crave compliments to the point that you will do anything to get them?

Pursue the Dream

To have dreams is the first step toward making them realities. Once you have dared to dream, I believe you MUST pursue that dream. If you do not pursue your dreams they will consume you; the knowledge that you had a dream but did not pursue it is killing knowledge. Consider it absolutely necessary to go after your dreams. Jose Ortega y Gasset said “Human life, by its very nature, has to be dedicated to something.”

You cannot gain on your goal with an attitude that you will pursue it only if it is convenient, or as long as there are no hassles, or no hoops to jump through. Life is not that kind of party. It is a rough go out there.

**Solid Goals**

You must see your goals clearly and specifically before you can set out for them. Hold them in your mind until they become second nature. Before you go to bed each night visualize yourself accomplishing your goal. Do the same while you brush your teeth or take a shower in the morning. Goals are not dreamy, pie-in-the-sky ideals. They have everyday practical applications and they should be practical. Your goals should be:

• Well-defined. You won’t know if you’ve reached them if you haven’t established exactly what they are.

• Realistic. Not that you can’t be president someday, but shooting for state representative might be a wiser first step.

• Exciting and meaningful to you. Otherwise, where will your motivation come from?

• Locked into your mind.

• Acted upon. There is no sense in having a goal if you aren’t going to go after it.

Go after your dream with a sense of entitlement. Know that you have the power to achieve it and that you deserve it. Be willing to get up into life’s face, grab it by the collar and say “Give it UP! It’s my dream.” You have to focus on yourself and sell yourself on your ability to perform, to achieve your objectives and to deserve them. Tell yourself when you review your goals each day that you deserve them. Say to yourself, “I’m capable, talented; I’m committed. I DESERVE my goals.”

**IT’S YOU**

When you are absolutely convinced of the possibility and necessity of pursuing your dream, you take on a different kind of driving energy. You add years to your life, but more important, you add purpose and meaning to it.

How do you make this dream come true? What necessary actions should be taken? The determining factor is you. You will make the difference. You will make it happen. No one else is going to take care of your business. It would be great if our relatives and friends would all support us, or co-sign for us, or loan us some money. It would be great if people said “Is that your dream? C’mon, let’s go get it.” But it isn’t that kind of party. You must take on the responsibility for making your dream reality. The major factor in helping you achieve your dreams is YOU.

Be an innovator. Be creative. Take your particular talents and interests to a level where they have never been taken before. Feel that you are THE ONE.
ACTION STEPS

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

1. Write down (or re-write) your specific goals today.
2. List one action that will move you toward each goal today.
3. Consider how hurtful memories may be stifling your ability to grow and achieve. What do you need to do today to forgive the person who hurt you?
4. Recognize that the past is past and forgive yourself. If you need to apologize to someone, do it today.
6. Realize that others may not support you in your goals, and that’s OK! Become your own champion.
7. Make a plan of action and a time line for achieving your dream. Write down obstacles you may face and list solutions overcoming those challenges.

Recommended Reading

If you enjoyed the summary of Live Your Dreams, you may also want to check out:

A Setback Is a Setup for a Comeback by Willie Jolley
Awaken the Giant Within by Anthony Robbins
The Five Major Pieces to the Life Puzzle by Jim Rohn

About the Author

Les Brown is a leading motivational speaker and speech coach. Enchanted with fast-talking radio DJs at an early age, Brown began his career as a hip-talking morning DJ and later became a broadcast manager. He’s been a community leader, a political commentator and has served three terms as a state legislator in Ohio. Today, Brown is a popular keynote speaker who has addressed crowds as large as 80,000 people, and spoken to Fortune 500 companies and organizations all over the world.

Brown’s passion and speaking talent has earned him the National Speakers Association’s highest honor: the Council of Peers Award of Excellence. In addition, he has been honored at the International Convention of the National Speakers Association with the organization’s most prestigious award for excellence in the field of communication and leadership: The Golden Gavel.

Brown is also the author of the highly acclaimed and successful books Live Your Dreams and It’s Not Over Until You Win, and former host of The Les Brown Show, a nationally syndicated daily television talk show. He hosts a daily talk radio show on KFWB News Talk 980.