

tools of the trade

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Making Your Own Luck

Effective Decisions and Emotional Fulfillment. Rolland S. Parker. Chicago: Nelson-Hall, Inc., 1977. 308 pp. \$15.95.

In a time of diminishing resources, it's common to look around and see people who are "down on their luck." Even professionals become discouraged, sinking into despair and depression.

Sometimes we feel we just don't have the resources to manage the situation in which we find ourselves.

It's important to remember that human qualities like optimism, persistence, and determination are resources. Furthermore, at times they do more for us than the money or material resources we tend to rely on.

The best manager will be the one who has a positive outlook and is able to keep working at goals for self and family despite the inevitable setbacks. And when success comes, "good luck" may get the credit, but it's actually the result of a management process that took advantage of those inner, human resources we all possess.

Parker believes that self-destructiveness is the "most frequent contributor to poor decision making." He indicates that we "self-destruct" in three ways:

1. We don't set priorities.
2. We're willing to settle for momentary gratifications.
3. We take other people's opinions *too* seriously.

So much despair, anger, and stress exist today that many people wonder if life is worth it. After a while, people may develop a nagging inability to believe in the truth, importance, usefulness, or value of any of the things they do. Negative

individuals sink into indifference, apathy, and aimlessness, and no longer make any effort to attain some sense of meaning. Maddi (in Parker, p. 34) defines this existential sickness as a failure in the search for meaning in life. It's close kin to burn-out, but can be overcome through clarifying your values and improving your motivation and goals.

Parker doesn't leave us mired in self-destructiveness. He goes on to prescribe six steps he believes will prevent poor decision making.

1. "Distinguish between your current needs and the unfulfilled deprivations of the past." He explains the importance of setting aside the unfulfilling past and focusing on the present.
2. "Develop self-esteem." While that's no easy task, Parker's concrete suggestions include removing from your circle of friends anyone who makes it a practice of degrading you. Who needs it?
3. "Obtain a realistic assessment of your personal and professional assets." Recognize and accept your inadequacies, then work to strengthen what you do well.
4. "See people as they are." Learn to be realistic in your assessments and expectations of others. Acknowledge the fact that there are people who can't or won't perform as you expect.
5. "Accept people for what they are." Good decision making involves cooperation. Know who's important to the success of every decision. Request his/her cooperation.
6. "Understand your values." What's worth struggling for? What results are rewarding? Parker defines values as emotional reactions. Your feelings will tell you what you value.

Taking action is the bottom line on making your own luck. Don't wait for miracles. Create your own.

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