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## The Slight Edge Philosophy

by Jeff Olson

When you were a tiny, little child, you made your way around the world on your hands and knees crawling. Everyone around you was walking and one day you got it into your head to give that a try.

So, little by little, you worked on developing the skills you needed to walk. You grabbed on to something above you and pulled yourself upright. You stood up, holding on to a table or chair or big stuffed animal. Wobbly and unsure, you let go, fell down, and tried again and again, until you stood up all by yourself. Then, you took a step.

The older people you watched took one step after another: right foot, left foot, right foot, left ...but you managed only one step-and you crashed.

After days of side-stepping around the coffee table, awkwardly bringing one little foot out from behind the other while you held on to Mom's or Dad's fingers, you eventually took your first couple of steps... all alone...all by yourself...and (hopefully) to the cheers and applause of your family.

Baby steps. One at a time. And you were WALKING!

IN THE PROCESS OF LEARNING HOW TO WALK, you probably spent more time failing than you did succeeding. But did you ever have the thought of quitting? Did you ever tell yourself, "I'm not cut out for walking-guess I'll crawl for the rest of my life?" No, of course you didn't. So, why do you do that now?

What's different today with any goal you want and desire you have for accomplishing anything? When did you lose the ability to make a goal, go for it, and get it? How come you don't do what you did when you were one or two years old?

The answer is alarming, yet simple:

Somewhere along the way in your life, you became unwilling to take baby steps. You lost faith in the universal truth that the simple little disciplines done again and again over time would move the mightiest mountains.

Shakespeare said "to climb steep hills requires slow pace at first," but now you put your trust in achieving breakthroughs...making quantum leaps ...instant this, instant that...hitting the lottery. You began a habit of settling for less, just because more was so far out of your reach. You forgot about the most proven, powerful success philosophy on Earth - "The Slight Edge."

WINNING IS ALWAYS A MATTER OF SLIGHT EDGE. Who can forget that moving moment of triumph in the '94 Olympics when American speed-skater Dan Jansen at last overcame years of discouragement, disappointment, and frustration to finally win the gold medal in the 1000 meters, setting a world record of one minute, 12.43 seconds?

Do you know by how much of a margin Jansen won? Do you know what the difference was between the winning world record gold medal and the virtual oblivion of second place?

Twenty-nine hundredths of a second! That's a very Slight Edge!

No matter where you look, no matter in what area of accomplishment, life, work, or play-the difference between winning and losing, between going down in the record books as first and best...or not at all-the gap that separates success and failure is always measured as ... THE SLIGHT EDGE.

And the best news of all is that it's not just the winning goal that's THE SLIGHT EDGE. The Slight Edge is the process itself that all winners use to achieve their goals.

A PENNY A DAY, DOUBLED FOR A MONTH... If you were offered \$1,000,000 (one million dollars) right now, or a penny a day, doubled each day, for one month, which would you choose? Unless you've read this illustration before, like most people, you'll probably choose the right-now million. But you'd be making the wrong choice. One penny, doubled every day for a month adds up to \$10,737,418...and 24cents. Compound interest. Leverage. Doubling. Geometric growth. It all adds up-and that's YOUR SLIGHT EDGE.

With THE SLIGHT EDGE, time is on your side. What if you gave yourself five years to become twice the person you are today: to earn twice the income, have twice the personal relationships and contacts, make twice the impact on the world, enjoy twice the quality of life? Could you do it? How would you do it?! Ask yourself honestly, "If I doubled my efforts ...if I had twice as much time...if I became twice as smart.. if I worked twice as hard as I do today ...could I really become twice as productive as I am right now? No, you couldn't, and you know it. But wait! There is a way to become two, three, four, and more times as productive as you are today. THE SLIGHT EDGE.

IF YOU WERE TO IMPROVE just .003 each day- that's only 3/10 of one percent, a very Slight Edge-and you kept that up for the next five years, here's what would happen to you:

The first year, you would improve 100 percent (you would already be twice what you are today) The second, you would improve 200 percent. The third year, 400 percent. And the fourth, 800 percent. And by the end of year five-by simply improving 3/10 of one percent each day-you will have magnified your value, your skills, and the results you accomplished 1,600 percent. That's 22 times more than you are today.

Just 3/10 of one percent per day-and that's NOT compounded. That's just adding on 3/10 of

one percent each day. That's the awesome power of The Slight Edge. If all of this is so, then why isn't everybody using The Slight Edge? We are. All the time. Everyone. The Slight Edge is always operating. It never stops. It's either working FOR you or AGAINST you. And that's up to you. It's your choice.

THE SLIGHT EDGE IS EASY TO DO-and it is easy not to do. Now, I'm defining EASY here as simply "something you can do." The Slight Edge philosophy is based on doing things that are easy-little disciplines, which, done consistently over time, add up to the biggest accomplishments. The problem is that all those things that are easy to do are just as easy not to do. Why is something easy not to do? Because if you don't do it, it won't kill you today. But, that simple, seemingly insignificant error in judgment, compounded over time, will kill you, destroy you, ruin your chances for success, and demolish your dreams. You can count on it.

Take, for example, the health issue of fat and cholesterol in your diet. Would you say that it's a good idea to eat at least a pound and a half of butter each day? How about drinking a quart of saturated oil? "Hey, my cholesterol's way down to 200-got to get it up above 300." Crazy, right? Sure it is-but millions and millions of people are doing it every day. Why? We know what's good for us: fresh fruit and vegetables, complex carbohydrates like whole grains, unsaturated fats and oils, fish and chicken instead of beef. So why do we keep digging our graves with our teeth? It's easy to eat well-right? It's easy not to-right? And when you eat that hamburger, you won't die, will you? No, of course not. But that simple error in judgment compounded over time will ruin the quality of your life and eventually take you out of your life forever!

If you ate that hamburger and you had a heart attack-would you ever eat another one? No way! Eating a hamburger won't kill you today, but compound all those greasy, dead-animal patties over 10 or 20 years-as many as 5,000 of them!-and one day your clogged-up, stressed- out, overworked ol' heart just quits! It's not the one hamburger, it's the thousands! That one hamburger is just a simple, little error in judgment. But compounded over time, it can and will destroy you. It's easy to do! It's easy not to do! Either way, The Slight Edge is at work and at play. You've got to choose which way to go with The Slight Edge. And here is what makes doing the right thing such a hard choice for most people-

**THE ODDS ARE NOT IN YOUR FAVOR!**

DID YOU KNOW that only five percent of people succeed and 95 percent of the people fail, no matter what realm of life or work you're looking at. It's true. Just one out of 20 people will ever achieve their goals in life. That's how the numbers crunch out; it's just the way it is. Back in the early 1950s, the Hartford Insurance Company did a survey of 100 brand new college graduates-all approximately 25 years old. They asked them this question:

"Will you achieve your financial goals within your working lives-within 40 years?" Every single one of them answered, "Yes!" Forty years later, in the early 1990s, the Hartford went back and checked out what had happened to all those now-65-years-old people. Here's what they found:

One was wealthy, Four were financially secure, Six were still working, 35 were dead, and 54 were "dead broke," having \$200 or less left to spend each month after paying off their bills.

Five out of 100 had become successful. That's only one out of 20. Why? What was missing for those 95 others? The answer has to do with GRAVITY-and the downward pull of life. REMEMBER WHEN YOU WERE in the fourth grade? It was expected that you'd graduate and go on to fifth grade, wasn't it? Your teachers, your parents, and all your classmates expected you to graduate. The whole system was geared to you moving from fourth, to fifth, to sixth grade and so on.

But what if nobody cared whether or not you graduated? What if the entire educational system, our society, and culture had absolutely no interest or expectation that kids would ever graduate to fifth grade? Would you have done it? If the structure were not in place for children to learn all the fourth grade stuff and pass the test, graduating and moving up to the new challenges of fifth grade, only five percent of us would ever do it! Ask yourself this question: Where is the expectation and the structure to support me in being a success in my life and work? The alarming fact is that outside of our formal system of education, which most experts believe to be fatally flawed anyway, there is no expectation and no structure for your success-none. We get what we expect-and only five percent of us ever expects to win and keep on expecting that. Plus, we have no structure, no system to support us succeeding in life. Isn't that heavy? Well, life is heavy. And it's heavy because the predominant force in life is gravity and it's always pulling us DOWN. It pulls 19 out of 20 people DOWN.

The Slight Edge is a success system ANYONE can use to break free of the downward pull of life and become the best you can be. Here's how you can make it work for you- FIRST, DON'T GO "WHERE THE ACTION IS!" Here's a chart you've probably seen before:

ACTIONS > RESULTS > QUALITY OF LIFE

Your ACTIONS create your RESULTS, which in turn create the QUALITY OF LIFE you live and enjoy. Simple, powerful, and true. The problem is, your actions are not the source of your problem. That's why diets don't work. You see, there's another side to the equation, and that's the place where your actions come from.

Take a look at this:

ATTITUDE > Actions > Results > Quality of Life

Your actions are created by your attitudes-but attitudes aren't the heart of the matter, either. There is one thing more fundamental and essential ...Your Philosophy. Your philosophy is your paradigm of the way life is, how life works (or doesn't), and what's the best way to live your life. Simply put, there's nothing more fundamental than your philosophy. Frank Lloyd Wright said this:

No stream rises higher than its source. Whatever man might build could never express or reflect more than he was... He could record neither more nor less than he had learned of life when the buildings were built... His philosophy, true or false, is there.

Human beings are builders by nature. Your philosophy is the foundation upon which you build your life. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus Christ spoke of The Two Foundations. The Master spoke of a wise man who built his house upon the rock:

And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew and burst against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded upon the rock.

And Christ told of another man-a "foolish man"-who built his house on sand:

And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew and burst against that house; and it fell and great was its fall.

Your philosophy is the source of your failure or success. And the philosophy I recommend you adopt is The Slight Edge.

PHILOSOPHY > Attitude > Actions > Results > Quality of Life

WHAT DO YOU THINK is the key that unlocks The Slight Edge?

When I ask this question in seminars and training, here's the answer I get back most often: "The key is knowledge." To a point, that's correct. But there's more. Educating yourself is the critical ingredient in The Slight Edge philosophy. You must acquire the knowledge you need to master any subject, and pursue that will contribute to your personal and professional growth and development.

There are three ways for you to get this knowledge:

- 1) Studied Knowledge
- 2) Activity Knowledge
- 3) Modeled Knowledge

**STUDIED KNOWLEDGE.** Books, tapes, seminars, training; read, listen, and attend everything you can; then, read, listen, and attend some more...study. **READ 20 PAGES OF AN INSPIRING, INFORMATION - RICH BOOK EVERY DAY.** Pick books that make a contribution to your goals. You're either building someone else's dream or building your own. When you read romance, mystery, or detective novels, whose dream are you building-yours, or the author's and publisher's? When you read Napoleon Hill's Think and Grow Rich-a book that took 20 years to write, that interviews the richest and most successful men and women in the world and reveals their 13 success secrets-whose dream are you building? Read 20 pages per day of an empowering book. Is that easy to do? Sure. And that simple discipline compounded over time, like a penny doubled daily for a month, will send you to the top! Is it easy not to do? SURE. And if you don't do it, will you destroy your life and work today? No way. But that simple error in judgment, compounded over time, will pull you down and take you out of your life!

Listen to a self-improvement cassette tape for 15 minutes every day. You can listen to music on the radio in your car, building Michael Jackson's dream or Barbara Streisand's. Why not choose instead to build your own dreams? Listen to Jim Rohn's tapes. He's a master-and he'll help you build YOUR dreams. Is listening to a tape for 15 minutes a day easy to do? Of course. Is it easy not to do?...And if you don't do it, will that ruin your life right now?...

Do a self-improvement seminar or training every few months.

Better yet, do one every month. Take a course. Take two. If you don't have the time to do that, because you're playing softball every Tuesday and Thursday night, you just don't get it! If your bowling average is over 180-you're losing your Edge, right now! Skip the bowling league. Take a class instead. Is that easy to do?... Is it easy not to do?...And if you don't do it, what will happen today?... But that simple error in judgment, compounded over time WILL kill you! You'll end up a willing participant in the "conspiracy of mediocrity" that 's destroying 95 percent of the people in this country!

ACTIVITY KNOWLEDGE. Life is not a spectator sport-fish or cut bait. Lead, follow, or get out of the way. And life is not a result, either. Life is not the goal-it's the PROCESS. The road to success is always under construction. Marx was wrong: Life is both the ends and the means. Emerson said, "Do the thing and you'll have the power." You can't just go get the power and then do the thing. The only way to have the power is to do it, just do it. People constantly ask me for the key to success. "What's the one thing I can do to guarantee my success?" My answer is always the same: Be here- actively immersed in the process-one year from now. That's the right answer-don't you agree? It's The Slight Edge answer. Commit to the process. The process is THE SLIGHT EDGE. Is it easy to do?... Is it easy not to do?

MODELED KNOWLEDGE. Did you know that your income will tend to be the average of your ten best friends' incomes? (If having more income is a goal of yours, either get new friends or raise the income of the friends you have now!) If you want to raise the quality of your life, hang out with people who have been there and done that. If you want to be a great public speaker, hang out with great speakers. If you want to be a success in business, hang around successful business people. If you want to be a terrific parent, spend lots of time with men and women who have mastered parenting. Do you know why birds of a feather flock together? Because they're all going in the same direction. They share a common vision. If you're after a goal-any goal-go find the people who have achieved that goal, or who are well along the path to attaining that goal, and be with them, hang out with them, camp on their doorstep. It's called the Law of Association. It's a Law because it always works. The first commandment of The Slight Edge:

Thou shalt educate thyself.

Is it easy to do? Is it easy not to do? And if you don't do it, will you fail today? But that simple error in judgment, compounded over time, will ABSOLUTELY, POSITIVELY, GUARANTEE YOUR FAILURE! LEARNING TO LEARN is committing to the process. The Slight Edge is the process.

"The only person who is educated is the one who has learned how to learn." -Carl Rogers  
Freedom

To make The Slight Edge work for you, you must learn how to learn.

Alvin Toffler, author of Future Shock, wrote:

"Learning is an approach, both to knowledge and to life, that emphasizes human initiative. It encompasses the acquisition and practice of new methodologies, new skills, new attitudes, and new values necessary to live in a world of change. Learning is a process of preparing to deal with new situations."

Clearly, we live in a world of change. Constant change. Rapid change. Today, we accomplish in five years what our grandparents and parents took 50 years to do. And everything's getting faster! Learning to learn is a mandatory for success today-and especially for tomorrow. Learning to learn is committing to the process. The Slight Edge is the process. Learning to learn is a choice. You make that choice moment to moment-not just once and then you're done with it for the rest of your life. Each new moment will present you with a new choice. Choose to read 20 pages a day-and you'll have to make that choice every day. Choose to model and associate with winners-and you'll have to make that choice every day as well. You have to choose to make The Slight Edge work for you-moment to moment.

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