



Humility: Don't Let Success Go to Your Head

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Their stories are all too common: After years of hard work pursuing the American Dream, these self-motivated high achievers reach the pinnacle of success that's so richly deserved. And — you guessed it; they let success go to their head. Whatever happened to being humble?

These folks think they're so special. They buy expensive "toys" to show how successful they've become, and they push aside colleagues who've helped them achieve success. They abandon the values and principles that have made them successful. And worse yet, because they're successful in one area of their life, they come to think they're experts in everything. Why? They're so enamored with their own PR that their ego hardly fits in the room. Unfortunately, a swelled ego can cut short the payoff that these folks worked so hard to attain.

The simple truth is that not everyone treats success the same. Some people who achieve success remain humble, never forgetting who they are and from whence they came. The others? Well, we can learn from their mistakes:

From Humble Beginnings

Success is temporary. Success is a journey, not a destination. When you become successful, don't rest on your laurels. As soon as you take your eye off the ball, you risk losing your edge.

Stop feeding your ego. Don't isolate yourself from reality by building relationships with people who stroke your ego. Surrounding yourself with "yes people" is just like talking to yourself.

Compete against yourself. When you compete against others, it's easy to emphasize winning over self-improvement. However, when you compete against yourself, you both win.

Even experts have room to learn. Never stop growing. Know your limitations and admit when you don't know something. It'll help to keep you grounded.

Listen up. Discover what others have to offer and ask for their opinions before opening your mouth. It shows that you value their opinions as well as their insight.

No one's perfect. Don't let success go to your head. Be quick to apologize for your mistakes. You'll never learn anything or impress anyone by making excuses and diverting blame. And a little humility will remind you that you're human.

Share your success. You may be successful, but there's a good chance others helped you along the way. Find creative ways to share the credit and pull people up the ladder of success along with you.

Remember your roots. Remember where you came from and what you've learned along the way. Help others by mentoring them.

Get off your high horse. Treat everyone with dignity and respect. You may be successful, but that doesn't make you better than anyone else.

Bragging is ugly. There's a difference between excitement and bragging. We know you're thrilled about your new "toy," but others may be cutting back on their basic needs — be sensitive. As John Wooden said, "Talent is God given. Be humble. Fame is man-given. Be grateful. Conceit is self-given. Be careful."

Trust me. Money and success can't buy a person's trust or guarantee a good reputation. You earn these through your **words AND actions**. There's nothing more valuable in life than integrity. Trust me.

In My Humble Opinion

Many of us come from humble beginnings. We make something of ourselves through pursuit of knowledge, integrity, **hard work**, and a bit of good fortune. Yes, people have every right to be proud of the success that they've earned. But that doesn't give them the right to be rude or disrespectful to others.

Don't let success go to your head. Humility is a sign of strength, not weakness.

Some people get a big thrill from boasting about their accomplishments or showing off their possessions. They've convinced themselves that they're better than others are. The fact is, some folks let success go to their head, and they gain a weird satisfaction from pushing people around. That's wrong. On the other hand, just as it's disgusting for the "haves" to look down on others, it's equally disdainful for "have-nots" to resent those who've worked hard and have rightfully earned their success.

The truth is, all the money in the world doesn't make you a better person. It simply means that you have more money. Real wealth is achieved by appreciating what you already have in life. After all, [money can't buy everything](#). It can't buy a close-knit family, good friends, a clear conscience, work-life balance, a happy home, a second chance in life, or good karma, among other things.

So, don't let success go to your head. Be humble. Humility is a sign of strength, not weakness. People with humility possess an inner peace. They're modest about their achievements, grounded in their values, and they have nothing to prove to others. They're down to earth, comfortable in their

own skin, and quietly proud. Humble people shift their focus from taking to giving, from talking about themselves to listening to others, from hoarding the credit to deflecting the praise, and from being a "know-it-all" to knowing there's so much more in life worth [learning](#). There's no ego, no pretense, and certainly no gamesmanship. Humble people are authentic. As C.S. Lewis said, "Humility is not thinking less of yourself, it's thinking of yourself less." ●

Frank Sonnenberg, a marketing strategist, has written four books and published over 300 articles. [Managing with a Conscience \(2nd edition\)](#) is recognized as one of the top 10 Small Business Books of 2012 • Trust Across America named Sonnenberg one of the Top 100 Thought Leaders of 2011, 2012 and 2013 • Sonnenberg was nominated as one of America's Most Influential Small Business Experts of 2012 • In 2011, *Social Media Marketing Magazine* (SMM) selected Sonnenberg as one of the top marketing authors in the world on Twitter. www.franksonnenbergonline.com | Personal Values • Personal Responsibility ©2013 Frank Sonnenberg. All rights reserved.