



## Dealing With Discouragement

by Bob Whipple, MBA, CPLP

One of my favorite authors is Napoleon Hill. I have studied his work for many years, because my observation is that nearly all of the self improvement philosophers in modern times owe the basis of their techniques to fundamental truths uncovered by Hill back in the 1920s.

In 1908, Napoleon was commissioned by the great Andrew Carnegie to spend the bulk of his adult life working for him for a salary of zero. What Carnegie did offer to Napoleon Hill was to introduce to him all of the great leaders of that period for the purpose of learning and capturing their philosophies of life and leadership so that they could be made available to the common man. The resulting book by Napoleon Hill in 1937 was ***Think and Grow Rich***. Actually, Napoleon wrote a total of 11 books and did several audio tapes of his ideas. My favorite program is "The Science of Personal Achievement," available through Nightingale Conant.

I have received infinite benefits from studying and applying Napoleon's ideas in my life. One of the most useful is how to deal with discouragement. He wrote that when you have a time of great failure or disappointment, there is always a seed of equivalent benefit involved. He said that our job is to find that seed of equivalent benefit and focus on that because soon our disappointment will turn to gratitude and joy. What an amazing gift to have a specific process for turning our darkest moments into victories in our lives. I continue to apply this technique, and while not yet perfect at it, I have found it works well in nearly every case thus far.

One example is when I wanted a particular job. The opportunity occurred after the completion of my main career, and I was doing some consulting and writing, as I do today. The job was to work in a large organization helping to teach leadership to developing executives. I really liked that idea and felt it was right for me to pursue the job. I worked hard at the application process, but in the end was not selected for the position. I felt deflated and depressed. Not only did I lose some welcome income, I was

not able to influence the leaders in that organization. I was miserable, but set out to find an equivalent benefit.

As I reflected on the opportunity, I quickly saw that I would have been extremely unhappy with the job. It would have required me to be away from home for about 30% of the time (which causes me great stress), and I would be forced to teach leadership from someone else's script with firm orders to stick to the material. I am an excellent teacher of leadership, as I am told by my former students, but the reason is that I speak from my own experience and in my own tongue. In the past when I was forced to teach the materials provided by others, my performance was acceptable but not excellent. The inspiration was missing.

Shortly after my rejection, my elderly father needed to move out of his own apartment into an assisted living situation. It took me about 4 months working hard to accomplish the move and get dad situated for the rest of his life. If I had gotten the job I was pursuing, I would have been unable to serve my father's needs and would have likely died trying to accomplish both tasks. Now, as I look back, it really is a blessing that I did not get the job. So I did find an equivalent benefit from not getting the position I wanted. I just needed a few weeks to find it.

The tricky part of applying Napoleon Hill's advice is to focus energy on the seed of an equivalent benefit at the time when we are down. That can be hard to do. The genius of his advice is that by having faith that there *is a benefit yet to be revealed*, it takes our focus away from the depression and greatly accelerates the pathway toward feeling great again. It really works, and if you will just try this technique, you will find the quality of your life is significantly enhanced.

This method will not prevent unhappy things from happening in your life. The cosmos has a few curve-balls to throw at each of us every year. That is just the way things are. When you follow Napoleon Hill's prescription and look for the seed of an equivalent benefit, you vastly increase the chances of coming through the low times with less pain and more joy. What a blessing that is.

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