Big Potential by Shawn Achor  
- - a great Leadership book

It has been 8 years since Shawn Achor published Happiness Advantage in 2010 – a great book for your success. He has been incredibly busy since then. He has spoken at more than 500 sales conferences, and consulted all over.

He realizes now that if you significantly increase your own happiness, but if you make things only about your happiness, you reach an invisible limit where happiness can neither be sustained nor grow. Happiness is only the tip of the iceberg.

We spend the first 21 years of our life being judged and praised for our individual attributes and what we can achieve alone, when, for the rest of our life, our success is almost entirely interconnected with that of others. Small Potential is the success you can achieve alone and Big Potential is the success you can achieve only by making others better. The biggest growth is achieved when you tap into the potential of those around you.

Your potential is way bigger than you - - when you work to help make others more successful. For many years we have been measuring success and potential in a limited way. With the help of Big Data, for the first time in history we have begun to quantify the impact that each of us has on those around us; and in turn the influence others have on us as well. It’s about working to become better together.

The key to achieving your highest potential starts by helping others achieve theirs. “Man is not meant to be alone.” Even in prison – one of the worst places in the world – the strongest form of punishment is putting someone in isolation. “The main ingredient of stardom is the rest of the team.”

The consulting firm Deloitte reports that cultivating leadership at every level is the No. 1 talent issue facing organizations around the world. You don’t have to be in an official leadership role in order to empower and inspire others to do the same. The size of your dreams must always exceed your current capacity to achieve them, or they are not big enough.

Do not compliment at the expense of others. Eliminate superlatives from your vocabulary – the best, the fastest, the smartest, the prettiest, - - all these undercut others. Just say “pretty”, or “smart.”

“Gratitude is not only the greatest of virtues, but the parent of all the others.” Start every meeting by talking about the things for which you are grateful. This helps defend against stress, adversity, or sadness. Also try spending two minutes a day simply watching your breath go in and out and being present in your surroundings.

Defend yourself. Thanks to 24/7 news you now have the ability to instantly find out something bad is going on anywhere in the world, anywhere, any time of the day. For the first time in human history, someone you don’t know and will never meet can have an immediate impact on your life. Watch just three minutes of negative news in the morning and be 27% more likely to report your day as unhappy six to eight hours later. When your mood is toxic, your potential suffers. In psychology, this belief that our behavior is irreverent in the face of world challenges is called “learned helplessness” and it has been connected with low performance and a higher likelihood of depression. Best strategy – no media in early morning, and no media after lying in bed – these are your most vulnerable times during the day.

Power down all media technology thirty minutes before attempting to sleep. Unfortunately, 72% of kids ages six to seventeen go to sleep with their phones - - at a huge expense to our kid’s energy, attention, and success at school.

Extraordinary levels of teamwork and loyalty can come from the effort invested in helping others overcome stress. Help your team see stress as a group challenge, not as an individual burden. Ask yourself, “Who is in the trenches with me?” One final to do, create vivid pictures of what a meaningful future could look like. The mind thinks in pictures. “We don’t remember days, we remember moments.” Moments in time, best captured with a photo. The magic is in the details, the power of visualization, and a dream circle. Visualizing a success makes it more likely to become reality. Merely visualizing healthy behaviors – such as exercise – can have effects similar to those of the behaviors themselves. You have not fully tapped into the power of your brain when it comes to visualization. Dress- rehearse success with your team, friends, and family. We are magnetically drawn toward vivid pictures of the future. Draw out the circles.

Finally, as things start to move forward - - celebrate the wins. If you rob life of celebration, you are not really living. Don’t wait until something momentous happens, celebrating the small steps is much more important. Celebrate the small successes and strengths of others, don’t mention their weaknesses and pull the energy in the wrong direction. Celebrate dinner and lunch with others. May the force of others be with you.