



Little Book of Success: How to Conquer Your Fears

By Arlene Garcia, Ph.D.

©Copyright 2017. All rights reserved. No contents of this book may be reproduced in any manner without consent of the owner. For inquiries, email: bittersweetcoaching@outlook.com or visit www.bittersweetcoaching.com

Table of Contents

How to Conquer Your Fears.....	2
How Do You Define Success?.....	4
Manifesting Your Destiny	8
Importance of Parental & Student Advocacy.....	11
What Else Do You Need to be Successful?.....	13
Credit, Investing and more	13
Preparing for College	16
Should Everyone Go to College?	20
Exam Prep Advice	23
Inspirational Quotes to Keep You Going	25
About the Author	28

How to Conquer Your Fears

Fear can hinder your growth and stop you from achieving success. It can cripple your daily activities and reduce the quality of your life. Some live a productive life, but some struggle and live so painfully. There is nothing wrong if you're afraid of something or someone. It's normal. Fear makes you human. The important thing is that you are willing to overcome or conquer your fears, so you can achieve your dreams and become successful.

What are your heart's desires? Every person in this world has different desires that motivate him or her to get on a higher plane. The manifestation of wanting someone or something will motivate you to become successful. However, it's not an easy thing to do. Life is full of challenges that can make you fall down on your knees, but those challenges and problems will make you even stronger.

How can you fulfill them? Fulfilling your heart's desires is not an easy thing to do, and there is someone or something that may try to stop you. The important thing is to persevere, never back down and have the will to fight so you can achieve anything.

What is stopping you? Is the fear of failure, of something or someone stopping you from moving forward? No human in this world is capable of doing everything. Sometimes you fail and sometimes you succeed. Every failure or a mistake is a lesson and will make you stronger. Think of Steve Jobs with Apple. He was marginalized from his own company but persevered and pioneered accessible technology.



There are many definitions of success, depending on your focus in life. Maybe it defines your achievements, wealth, position in the society, performance, or much more. Nonetheless, it's important to define clear goals and keep a positive attitude.

It is necessary to give a clear description of your desires. For example, you may desire to become successful in life and to give back to the ones you love. Some people desire to become rich and respected, but the most important thing is to stay motivated and help others who are in need. You can never achieve success without the help of others, so learning to give back is important



How Do You Define Success?

Your definition of success may derive from your accomplishments, your goals or your purpose in life. Everyone in this world has a purpose. If you have not found yours, ask yourself, “What do I enjoy doing?”

What would you do all day everyday if you could? How can you save the world, your family, yourself? What would make your ten-year-old self cry? As a child, I read all day and night. I loved reading so much that my mother would tell me it was time to turn off the lights and go to bed. I would still attempt to read with a night light. Reading and writing are my passion and my way to heal and inspire others.

Write down what success means to you. Success is everything that you have gained with a purpose and aim. It can be anything from wealth, position, fame and much more. You can never call yourself successful if you don't have a goal,

purpose and aim in life. Success must be earned by setting a goal with the intention of achieving it. Create action. Get off your butt and just do it.

Ask yourself the following questions:

- How many times were you absent from school or work in the past (year, semester, month, etc.)?
- Do you show up to class or work on time?
- Are you prepared for work or class? (dressed appropriately for work, carry necessary items, e.g. textbook, notebook, pen, assignment due completed)
- Do you read ahead to prepare for what's coming up in class? Is it necessary to plan for work?
- How much time do you spend on homework or preparing for the next day?

Merriam-Webster defines success as a “favorable or desired outcome; *also*: the attainment of wealth, favor, or eminence. Successful people avoid negative energy and thinking. Successful people rise above challenges and know how to control their thoughts and emotions. Successful people support others and remain humble.

What are you willing to give up to become successful? Are you willing to give up your dependency on other people? Constantly relying on your friends and family will only make you weaker. We all need assistance from time to time, but it's important to be independent. Are you willing to give up the idea of being fearful of failure? Fear of failure can prevent you from achieving your goals and will drag you down. Letting go of fear and overcoming it will help you to become successful.



Listening to people like Napoleon Hill and Robert Kiyosaki can help you to define your future goals.

Oprah Winfrey said, “You become what you believe.” Follow simple instructions given by Napoleon Hill. Conquer your fears. Speak your desires as facts. This is how you will achieve your future goals and major desires in life. For example, my major desire in life is to be a prominent inspirational speaker. A speaker who gives inspiration to the masses to turn adversity into triumph and live their best life now can greatly impact society.

The first step to achievement is identifying a goal. Once a goal is identified, you have to believe that you can do it. Believing in yourself is key! We all remember the story of *The Little Engine That Could*. Larger engines were given the arduous task of pulling a train over a high mountain and refused.

A small engine agreed to try and succeeded, citing “I think I can.” The word “can’t” should not be in your vocabulary. You can do whatever you put your mind to. The mind is the most powerful tool you own. Think positively! One example of this is the challenge/bet that I had between my mother and younger sister regarding the publication of a book. I told them that I could write a book in a month. Then it became a dare and a challenge. I couldn’t back down. I have always been a woman of my word, so the challenge began.

Every day and night, I wrote and wrote. It was also my first year teaching; hence the pressure was on. In addition to teaching daily, which involved creating lesson plans, teaching five Global History classes a day, and completing administrative tasks, I would retire to writing in the evening or commence on the weekends. I loved reading romance novels and fictional accounts in general. Because of my love for reading and living through my own trials and tribulations, from dating to attending college and ultimately the work force, why wouldn’t I be able to write my own account?!

I wrote the book in one month, but the publishing process took a lot longer. It did fairly well considering it was written on a bet. I was invited to speak on several local radio stations in New York and Connecticut and television. The book, *A Coed With a Will, Keeps it Real*, was available on Amazon and sold well at local book events.

Napoleon Hill said, “Any idea, plan, or purpose may be placed in the mind through repetition of thought.” The next step is to write down what you are willing to give in return. In order to achieve your goals, you must sacrifice time, immediate desires and stability. In order to be a successful entrepreneur, you have to take risks. Will you give love, confidence, consistency and friendship to the people around you? Will you cite the things that you are thankful for and be sure to always give thanks? The second book is my dissertation called *The*

Gatekeeping Behind Meritocracy: Voices of NYC High School Students and it explores the variables that attribute to a successful versus unsuccessful student in our nation's schools. The third book, and first children's book, I authored is a motivational book that explores countless career options in rhyming prose. *Oh What Will You Do?* inspires our young people to dream bigger and achieve greater. Encouraging positive attitudes, instilling the love of learning, and striving for success are at the core of this book.

We have the power to control our words and frame our narratives. Examples of how I used the power of words to overcome an autoimmune illness are remaining faithful and consistent. I researched my illness and contacted numerous doctors until a diagnosis was given. I was diagnosed with Grave's Disease in late 2008 which proved difficult to treat due to my later diagnosis of a genetic mutation (MTHFR) in 2014.

Years of misdiagnoses led to depression and anxiety, but I refused to be beaten. My mission now is to inspire others to turn adversity into triumph and live their best life now.

Manifesting Your Destiny

Writing is used as a way to heal. The universe is made up of energy, and everything has energy; our thoughts are the most dynamic and fluid. We can control our words and frame our narrative. Napoleon Hill once said, "Whatever the mind of a [person] can conceive and believe, he can achieve." If you say your situation is dreadful, it will be. Remember to remove doubt, don't vocalize doubt as fact, and work on a solution. The only thing that is constant is change. You make your world with the words you choose. Thoughts become words and words become deeds.



Take a moment to jot down some things that you desire. State them as fact to yourself in the mirror or with a friend. This is a great exercise to do with someone close to you. Turn to them and state one of your facts. Provide each other suggestions to achieve one new fact. For example, “I will bring national attention to chronic illnesses. I am a chronic illness warrior.” My friend may respond, “You are a chronic illness warrior! You’re raising awareness by blogging and increasing your social media presence.”

My friend then states, “In three years, I will be able to fire my boss.” I respond, “Absolutely, you will leave your job and fire your boss. Recently, you started hosting workshops on empowerment and owning your own life. This along with your lifestyle club will be your vehicle for change.”

Manifestation is defined by Google as “an event, action, or object that clearly shows or embodies something, especially a theory or an abstract idea.”

There needs to be a manifestation shift where you speak about your possibilities and desires. As a little girl, I always said that I wanted to be a doctor because I adored my pediatrician. As I got older, I realized that I didn't like science and blood. However, I spoke doctor into my future, so I received my doctorate in criminology in 2009 at 29 years of age. I said that I would become a doctor and I did. My words were manifested subconsciously.

Next steps include infusing positive energy into your life. Ask yourself, "What if all my needs are met, what would I be doing with my life? What if God is really on my side?" Ask "what if" questions and things begin to manifest. Finally, an expression of gratitude:

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight." Proverbs 3:6

"May he give you the desire of your heart and make all your plans succeed." Psalm 20:4

"O Divine Providence, I ask not for more riches but more wisdom with which to make wiser use of the riches you gave me at birth, consisting in the power to control and direct my own mind to whatever ends I might desire." Napoleon Hill

So... there you go!

Of course there are still many things to do before your goals are accomplished. For example, in order for me to become a full-time inspirational speaker, I need to overcome my health issues and depart from secure employment as an educator. The road to success isn't easy, but I know where I am going and the desires of my heart.

“Before success comes in any man's life, he's sure to meet with much temporary defeat and, perhaps some failures. When defeat overtakes a man, the easiest and the most logical thing to do is to quit. That's exactly what the majority of men do.” Napoleon Hill

Importance of Parental and Student Advocacy

Gatekeeping involves the process of course selection that begins in early years and continues throughout high school, limiting access to challenging curriculum; it increases the divide between black males and other groups of students (Civil Rights Project Harvard University, 2008). Because school districts have developed systems that determine course placement, this systemic design serves as a gatekeeper (Civil Rights Project HU, 2008).

For instance, some schools use a number of predictors such as recommendations, guidance, parents' choice, test scores and grades received, while others use a rigid tracking system. Gatekeeping can be a result of parent and student choice input, but also persists if there is a lack of prerequisite courses in schools limiting enrollment in advanced courses. Lack of knowledge can also affect gatekeeping, where some students aren't properly informed of their options or are steered to lower tracking. The Civil Rights Project at Harvard University (2008) reports that racial and ethnic makeup can adversely affect gatekeeping because some guidance counselors may encourage people of color to take lower level courses. I can attest to the former.

When I moved from an urban school district to a suburban district in seventh grade, the school decided that a lower placement was in my best interest. Fortunately, my mother, my report card and my academic ability only landed me in that environment for approximately two weeks. I do remember there was no learning occurring. It was the most fun that I had. All my friends were in the

class, and I enjoyed their short-lived company. That experience was quite a revelation, for it was clear that the teachers' expectations had been extremely low. Once I moved to the appropriate level, learning returned as did increased teacher expectation, albeit that was not my only experience with racism, gatekeeping and education.

Another instance would be during class registration in the library three years later, when my guidance counselor attempted to place me in a lower level science course for the upcoming year. Because I saw how my mother handled it several years earlier, I was equipped to handle the situation. I simply approached my science teacher to inform him of my guidance counselor's decision. My science teacher marched over to the table and informed my guidance counselor at once that I was an excellent student, and the rest is history.

A similar scenario occurred to a friend several years later involving the same guidance counselor, ironically. She had been classified with a learning disability, but was denied access to college preparatory classes. One summer in the upward bound program at the local college during the SAT preparation course that I was teaching, she revealed that she would be taking recordkeeping her senior year. I told her to talk to her guidance counselor, still unfamiliar to our shared connection, to take algebra and other college preparatory courses.

Years later at dinner, she told me that her guidance counselor refused to place her in an algebra class. She then pleaded with her father, who like the some Black parents due to cultural differences left such decisions to the school, to speak to her counselor. After being cajoled, her father agreed. She ended up taking algebra along with a geometry course. She did well in both courses receiving Bs and better. After high school she went off to college, graduated with honors, and now teaches English to special education students.

What else do you need to be successful?

Eating healthy, positive values, good manners and an education are other important items you need to be successful in addition to believing in yourself. Having identification, a driver's license, and partaking in our civic society by registering to vote are key. It is important to know the world around you and how policies will affect your future, your social security, and your healthcare.

Credit, Investing and More

Start saving money while you are young, even a teenager. Open a savings account and put in at least 20% of every paycheck. If you make \$500 every two weeks, then you should save \$100 from each check. If 20% seems too steep, start with 10% of each check. The goal is to start saving and to get into a habit of saving.

An emergency fund that includes three to six months of your income is imperative and should be used only in real emergencies, like a job loss. Saving accounts are safe ways to have fast access to cash. Investing money involves using your money to buy stocks, bonds, or other assets that require long term investing and yield higher returns. Investing in an IRA and a 401K are great ways to save for retirement and offer tax advantages.

Traditional IRAs offer tax deductions on both state and federal tax returns, while withdrawals at retirement are taxed at normal tax rates. Roth IRAs offer tax-free withdrawals and earnings generally, but no tax break for contributions. 401K plans offer pre-tax savings.

Your contributions are taken from your paycheck before taxes are deducted. Basically, you lower the amount of income you pay in taxes. Investing usually embraces compound interest, where your money from investment creates more earnings, which includes interest from the principal investment in addition to accumulated interest over time. It is earning interest on interest, which accelerates wealth building.



Time is your friend here. The earlier you start investing the better. For instance, a 25-year-old invests \$5000 per year for ten years with an annual return of 8% and then stops; he or she will have invested a total of \$55,000 and will accumulate \$615, 580 by age 60. If a 35-year-old starts with the same \$5000 and invests until age 60 which totals \$130,000, he or she will have \$431, 754 by age 60. He does not save as much even though he invests more money in a longer time frame.

Living within your means, saving money, and investing are essential to your growth. Establishing and maintaining good credit are vital to your existence in this country. First things first, credit is everything in this country. Securing loans for college, a home, or personal use depends on your credit history. Your interest rate depends on your credit score.

When purchasing items with a credit card, it is essential to pay more than the minimum fees on credit card statements and loans. You should live within your means, which means not buying a house or clothes that you cannot afford, otherwise you can become trapped in debt. Learn to shop on consignment if fashion is important to you. Credit card companies make their money off charging you interest. Pay off balances in full at the end of the month. If you cannot afford to do so, then reflect on your purchases and items bought. Remember Jordan sneakers and Louis Vuitton belts don't pay the rent. Ask yourself if you want it or need it. Our needs are sometimes masked by our wants. The only things that humans need are shelter, water, air, food and basic clothing. The rest become things we desire. Avoid making purchases you cannot afford to pay for and be aware of introductory interest rates and balance transfer offers with credit cards. Read the fine print.

Invest in dividend stocks and other ways to earn residual or passive income. Look for companies with long histories. Warren Buffett is a master at dividend investing. Earning residual or passive income usually requires both upfront monetary and time investments.

Over time money is continually earned without much effort from you. There are many ways to earn this type of income from selling e-books and t-shirts, investing in annuities and REITs, renting properties and learning about network marketing. Remember you cannot expect to earn wealth without an investment.

Finding gainful employment is also essential to your survival and what most people do. The wealthy learn how to make money in their sleep by investing in passive and residual income opportunities. The masses go to work. You have to ask yourself who you want to be like. What do you want from the one life given to you? This goes back to your desires. Do you want to work for yourself or someone else? Do you want to be an engineer, doctor, or teacher? We all have a purpose and everyone has a role to play in this world. Everyone cannot be wealthy just like everyone cannot be a doctor, nor will everyone go to college. Are there other ways to be successful? Of course, there are many options.

Preparing for college:

Graduating from high school is quite a feat and marks the time of new beginnings. “What next,” some may ask themselves? Others might not have a plan and find themselves shifting with the sand, but planning is essential. Remember the old adage: Failure to plan on your part, does not constitute an emergency on my part. As a high school teacher, I’ve taught over 1000 students in the last ten years and have seen it all in regards to preparation. I see students who plan accordingly and submit requests for recommendations from teachers, including myself, as early as September and October of their senior year. I’ve also talked to students who in May have no idea what they are doing after graduation or are still in limbo when it comes to choosing a college.

One day I was sitting in the teachers' work area and a student who I had in both her sophomore and senior year was taking a makeup test for my colleague. I asked, "Suzy, what are you doing after graduation?" She replied, "I don't know. I have a free ride to Cases College, but I want to go to Hoover Institute¹." My colleagues and I looked bewildered and asked her to repeat herself. She chuckled because she knew where we were going with the conversation. Suzy then repeated, "I have a free ride to Cases², but I want to go to Hoover." At this point, I couldn't believe what I just heard and said, "Are you serious? Did you just say F-R-E-E as in free?" She laughed and said, "Yes." We shook our heads, and the teacher whom she was taking a makeup test for said, "I'm still paying back college loans. Dr. Garcia, are you still paying back college loans?" I replied, "Yes, I am." He said, "And I'm 31 years old."

He and I are not alone. Close to 40 million Americans owe tens of thousands of dollars in student debt due to inadequate savings and increased costs associated with going to college. The national student debt has skyrocketed to \$1.2 trillion dollars, an 84% increase since 2008.³

Students such as Suzy should take into account the advice of others who have experience with funding a college education. Fortunately for her, there were she had others to give her advice. I, on the other hand, had to figure it out on my own as a first generation college student. Thankfully, I had mentors and others from the community who knew my financial situation and assisted me in securing funds for school. I also had the foresight to understand how loans and credit worked because I got my first credit card at age 14. I had a job and applied for a department store card. I still remember my mom finding it. She wasn't too upset but told me to be mindful because that was money that had to be repaid. I bought

¹ Names have been changed to preserve anonymity.

² Fictitious college and student name but real scenario.

³ See <http://money.cnn.com/2014/09/10/pf/college/student-loans/index.html>.

a big screen T.V. and VCR at 16 and remember how long it took me to pay it off because of the interest that accrued each month. When it was time for college, I had already danced in the loan and interest world and am grateful that I didn't graduate with enormous debt. As a recipient of numerous local scholarships including the Hord Foundation and academic grants, I started off with a low debt-ratio. During my junior year I received the Gates Scholarship, the year of its inception, which helped fund my Master Degree in Teaching. If only the scholarship had begun sooner, I would be debt free today, minus my mortgage.

Therefore when I speak to students such as Suzy, I convey the importance of scholarships and grants. Loans are instrumental too, but should not be the sole payment for college if possible. Later on while talking to Suzy, she said, "My mother told me she didn't have any money for school and I better go to Cases." We responded almost in unison, "Well you better listen to your mother. Did you say free?" Another colleague who knows her said, "Did you hear back from Hoover?" She said, "No, I called and they haven't gotten back to me." "So what college should you attend?" "I guess Cases," she laughed.

Two weeks later, Suzy saw me in the hallway. She walked by with a big grin on her face. "Hi, Suzy. How are you? So what did we decide?" I asked. "I still don't know where I'm going," she replied. I said, "Ok, well you have time to decide, but you don't want to wait too long." At prom about three weeks later, as I circled the catering hall, I saw Suzy sitting at the table with her prom date. She said, "Hey Dr. Garcia." I replied, "Hello, and don't you look lovely." "Thank you." We both smiled. I said, "So where are you going this fall." "I got a full ride to LTI too." We both exchanged high fives. "Congrats, you go girl." "Thanks, I am so happy; that's where I'll be this fall," she sang in a melodic fashion. She chuckled and so did I.

Autonomy (Off on your own)

Off to college, here I come. It was a warm August day in 1997. I remember it like yesterday. Sitting in my dorm room after my parents and two sisters helped move me in to my freshman single room. I made sure to get a single; I didn't want to share a room. I got lucky. I remember sitting in the room surrounded by four pale walls. I asked myself, "What now?" It was an awkward and lonely feeling. I went over to the café in attempt to socialize and adjust. Over the course of the semester, I cultivated friendships and the loneliness feeling subsided. One good friend of mine had a full ride; I had a partial ride and private scholarships supporting my education.

As the semester went along, we got used to the autonomy: waking up on our own, making sure we showed up for class and doing our homework, not like high school at all. I did well with the autonomy. I strived off independence and did well with structuring my time. I was able to go to class, complete my homework and have some college fun: hanging out or going to parties on campus. Not everyone was able to thrive off of this new found freedom. Parents weren't there to make sure you were doing the right thing, and teachers didn't hound you. The friend who had the full ride did not have the same luck as I. She was very bright, but came from a very strict and religious family, so when she arrived at college, she broke loose. She got a new boyfriend, stopped going to class, didn't complete her homework, flunked out of school and lost her scholarship. Before she knew it, she was back at home working full time and had a \$30,000 bill from school. When she tried to enroll in another school, she was told she could only enroll as a non-matriculating student until her debt to her former school was paid off. For ten years she worked to pay off her debt, and finally graduated with her BA at close to 30, a very proud moment. Her story is one of mistakes and redemption.

Should Everyone Go to College?

Graduating from high school is a big fear for most! Now what? Should everyone go to college? It's normal to explore multiple options after high school, and that's okay because a major chapter in your life has just been completed. The opportunity to embark on a new journey and accomplish new endeavors is present. Whether someone goes to college, the military, takes a gap year or starts working depends on the individual. There is no "one size fit all" solution.



Still, it is important to assess the current situation and make the best choice based on the conditions. Some things to consider while choosing are grades, extracurricular activities, finances, and personal motivation. Ask yourself if you're ready to go to college. The worst thing to do is enroll in school, not be mentally prepared, disregard classes and leave school with thousands of dollars in debt that will need to be repaid within six months of leaving school. Thinking of defaulting? That's not a good idea, unless you want the government to take

your tax refund. Yes, this has been done countless times before. The one institution you never want to owe money is the federal government.

I've also seen college students become sidetracked and leave school with massive debt. In reality, prior to enrolling in school, they weren't ready mentally and lacked proper support. And guess what? They're not alone. There is a high number of students who enroll in school with tons of loans that need to be repaid whether college is finished or not. According to the National Clearinghouse Research Center, 55% of undergraduates who matriculated in 2008 graduated within six years. Not to mention, it's the lowest graduation rate in the developed world. These statistics aren't often spoken about beyond the educational world, but the dropout crisis is a real problem.

As a high school teacher, I often tell students they're better off traveling around the world than enrolling in school and accumulating massive debt that would need to be paid regardless of income and earnings. Often chuckles and laughs ensue, but this is a real issue. I am not here to discredit higher education, being an individual who has six degrees, a Ph.D. in criminology included. I'm only here to say that individuals must be ready mentally and financially. I came from a very modest home; neither of my parents went to college. For me, I had always known since childhood that I would go to college, so higher education was evident. When the time came, I applied for more scholarships than anyone I had known. My high school guidance counselor said he had never seen anyone apply for so many scholarships in his 20 plus years as a counselor. I was determined and had good people behind me propelling me forward. I was also fortunate to intern at the local news times, where I interviewed a woman who gave me advice on how to write an amazing college essay.

She said, “Show, don’t tell.” That is exactly what I did. I had been through many trials and tribulations, including going from an honor student in grade school to receiving my first F and hanging out with the wrong crowd my freshman year in high school. I told stories of my high school administrator suspending me from school and calling my mom, which became a huge eye opener.

My mother couldn’t believe I was in danger of failing 9th grade, and to be honest, neither could I. Was I the same girl who made the honor roll every year? I was, but just very confused. I eventually pulled it together and went on to teach high school and become a motivational speaker.

It wasn’t easy; it took motivation and the three Ds, which became my motto: Desire, Determination and the Dedication to achieving in life. I was going to create a better life for myself than my parents and many family members had if I had to die trying. I came to learn that if you have the motivation and the desire to go to college, you can make it happen. If you are not a big fan of college, perhaps a trade school may be your thing. We need plumbers and service technicians in our society. Everyone plays a crucial role in this world.

College is not for everyone. In fact, many plumbers make more than college professors. I remember my sociology professor pointing out that surprising fact to me my freshman year. Perhaps a gap year may be an option for some. When is the next time you will have an opportunity to travel the world or do something extraordinary? You have your whole life to work. Take it from someone who has been working since she was 14 years old. If you take a gap year, do something instrumental such as a tour of Europe, Africa, or Asia. Volunteer in a foreign country. Don’t just sit home. The former will be life changing and far more informative than staying home.

If you have to work full time, be careful not to get lured away from college by making money.

Making \$30,000 may sound good when you're 18, but not at 40 while trying to support a family. Nonetheless, there are options. Make a list of the pros and cons of going to college, the military or taking a gap year and go for it. In time you will figure out your passion and future career goals.

The important thing is to make a decision on your next chapter. If you asked me in a high school if I wanted to become a teacher, my response would have been no. Life took its course and I followed with the three Ds. Remember you can do anything you put your mind to, including believing in yourself.

Exam Prep Advice: Conquer the Test, Conquer Your Fears

To get the best possible score on either the SAT or ACT, it is necessary for the individual to prepare just as a basketball player would do warm-ups before a big game. One should not take any standardized test without adequate preparation. This dispels the popular myth of standardized tests measuring intelligence, for if they did this, one would not need preparation. There are ways to tackle these tests. Some students benefit from taking a course or studying and practicing with an exam preparation book, such as Princeton Review or Barron's. With adequate test preparation, a couple of diagnostic tests, and a good night's sleep (don't forget breakfast) before the test, students are on their way to conquering the test and gaining admission to the college of their choice. You can improve your score

by at least 100 points by utilizing the following strategies. Here are 10 ways to improve your score:

Try free test prep sites as well. One such site is <http://www.number2.com>.

1. Improve your vocabulary: read, read, read. Read newspapers, your favorite magazines and books. Look up unfamiliar words, write them down, and make flashcards.
2. Practice makes perfect: just like you would practice before that big game or before a recital, you need to practice. Take the SAT more than once. Take the ACT, too.
3. Use a guessing strategy: remember, the correct answer is staring you in the face. Use process of elimination (POE). Start with multiple choice “C” (for math it's the middle number, then use POE). Attempt to answer all questions and not leave any blank. The test only scores correct answers.
4. Set a goal: write it down, type it, place it on your mirror. What colleges are you applying to and what is the average score needed? Tell your best friend or parents your goal.
5. Get a good night's rest (very important and yet so simple). You do not want to be tired during this long and not so appealing test.
6. Eat a nutritious breakfast in the morning. You don't want your stomach growling as you test. You may scare your fellow test takers. In all seriousness, breakfast is crucial and will help you be more alert and less distracted.

7. Be prepared: print directions from the test site the night before. Bring several pencils, your ID, wear layered clothing in case the testing site is too cold or hot. Bring a snack for the break. Turn your cell phone off (you do not want any distractions or your scores invalidated, which may occur if you look at your phone).

8. Set a goal and pace yourself: you should not spend longer than a minute per question. All questions are worth the same. Set a reasonable goal. Ivy league schools are not for everyone, but everyone can get into college with the proper work ethic and preparation. A 500 is average for each section. Aim for this range if you are a C student. If you are an A or B student aim for a 600 on each section. The total score you can get is 1600.

9. Think Positively: when in doubt, don't panic. Close your eyes and think of a place or something that makes you happy. Don't close your eyes for too long though (10-20 seconds should be long enough).

10. Relax: especially the day before the test. A marathon runner would not run a practice marathon the night before, so neither should you. Remember, you can do it. You are the boss. Believe in yourself. The mind is the most powerful tool owned by humans. Don't doubt yourself. Good Luck.

Inspirational Quotes to Keep You Going

Lastly, here are 10 inspiring quotes by Maya Angelou that will pick you up whenever you may be feeling low and can help you live a more fulfilled life. Maya Angelou, a famous poet, writer, performer, and civil rights activist, most famous for her autobiography *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, was a true inspiration and Renaissance woman. Angelou was a three-time Grammy winner and

recipient of over 30 honorary awards who rose from very humble beginnings to make her mark on this world.

It can be argued that she was one of the most influential people to have walked this earth. She received the Presidential Medal of Freedom from Barack Obama in 2010 and recited “On the Pulse of Morning” at Bill Clinton’s 1993 inauguration ceremony. Angelou’s tenacity and resolve are to be admired.

1. *“My mission in life is not merely to survive, but to thrive; and to do so with some passion, some compassion, some humor, and some style.”*
2. *“If you don’t like something, change it. If you can’t change it, change your attitude.”*
3. *“It is one of the greatest gifts you can give yourself, to forgive. Forgive everybody.”* (I still struggle with this one, but am working on improving.)
4. *“We may encounter many defeats but we must not be defeated.”*
5. *“You may not control all the events that happen to you, but you can decide not to be reduced by them.”*
6. *“You may write me down in history with your bitter, twisted lines. You may trod me in the very dirt, but still, like dust, I’ll rise.”* (One of her most famous and powerful quotes).
7. *“Find a beautiful piece of art. If you fall in love with Van Gogh or Matisse or John Oliver Killens, or if you fall love with the music of Coltrane, the music of Aretha Franklin, or the music of Chopin – find some beautiful art and admire it, and realize that that was created by human beings just like you, no more human, no less.”* (One of my favorites).
8. *“I learned a long time ago the wisest thing I can do is be on my own side, be an advocate for myself and others like me.”* (As an educator, I encourage students to be their own advocate. This is an essential skill.)

9. *“Courage is the most important of all the virtues, because without courage you can’t practice any other virtue consistently. You can practice any virtue erratically, but nothing consistently without courage.”*
10. *“I’ve learned that you shouldn’t go through life with a catcher’s mitt on both hands; you need to be able to throw something back.”*

Angelou’s words are empowering and her actions discerning. At times we may feel defeated, but we cannot give up. It is equally important to treat other people with respect and to give back. At the end of the day we are all human beings. We all eat, shit, and die. While we’re here on Earth, let’s give it a good run and add value and positivity to our days.



About Dr. Arlene Garcia

Dr. Arlene Garcia was born and raised in Connecticut. She attended the school system in Danbury CT, where she learned at a young age the importance of education. She was an avid learner and Honor Roll student until her teen years, where she took a turn for the worse and began hanging out with the wrong crowd, which led Garcia to eventually receiving her first F! Now Dr. Garcia teaches social studies in NY.

Dr. Garcia, a Gates and Hord Scholar, obtained her Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts in Teaching through a dual degree honors program from Manhattanville College. She completed her doctorate in criminal justice at the Graduate Center, CUNY. Her research interests include: legal and social issues relating to crime and delinquency, education and gender, corrections and issues relating to prison reentry, theory and deviance, and drug policy. She also completed the Educational Leadership program with the College of Saint Rose and has her School Building Leadership (SBL) Certificate.

She has worked for multiple learning centers, such as Huntington Learning Center and Score!Prep which is a division of Kaplan. She has tutored students

privately as well and instructed college prep, PSAT, SAT, ACT courses for the ConnCap /Upward Bound Program at Western Connecticut State University. She also instructed criminology courses at John Jay College of Criminal Justice and political science courses at Mercy College and Bronx Community College. As a speaker, Garcia has worked with former Secretary of State Colin Powell, Senator Ted Kennedy and Miss America in Washington, D.C. She has also spoken at local and community functions in Connecticut and New York.

Dr. Garcia has authored three books. *The Gatekeeping Behind Meritocracy: Voices of NYC High School Students* used survey and focus group samplings of students in high achieving schools compared to lower achieving schools to examine why there are fewer black men graduating from high schools compared to other groups of students. The second book is a semi-autobiographical text titled, *A Coed With a Will, Keeps It Real, Bonus Ten Ways to Improve Your SAT Score*, which chronicles a young girl's trials and tribulations into adulthood with bonus features at the end. The third is an inspirational children's book to help young girls find their way titled, *Oh What Will You Do?*