

# Teaching For Success

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ALL NEW



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Talk about success: launched April 24, 1994, the Hubble telescope transmits more than 120 gigabytes of new data every week creating images that add immeasurably to our understanding and appreciation of the universe. <http://hubblesite.org/>

## "Success is the Only Option"

—David Borges, DC  
South Lake Tahoe, CA

### Contents: (Click to Go!)

- The Self-Discipline Option, p. 2
- The Responsibility Option, p. 2
- The Lifelong Success Option, p. 3
- The Assessment Option, p. 3
- The Listening Fitness Option, pp. 4-6
- Student Insights on the Impact of Teachers, p. 6
- Success Keys of Coach Mike Krzyzewski, p. 8

### The Good Fight

Jack H. Shrawder  
Executive Director, TFS

**D**o you feel like I do? Do you possess a passionate desire to accomplish personal and professional tasks at top-notch levels? Do you eschew the mediocre and the good-enough-for-government level of accomplishment and achievement?



If you do, we are on the same wavelength, and I'll bet you enjoy reading each issue of *Teaching For Success Spectrum*.

As *TFS Spectrum* begins its eighteenth year of publication, finding new and refining old success paths is still an exciting endeavor that produces positive change in all who sign on for the journey.

What journey? Why, the lifetime one where success is the only option, of course. Success is the only option no matter who you are and what you teach.

Your students deserve successful teaching, and you deserve to find teaching a challenging and satisfying primary or secondary occupation or personal gift to your community.

### Hype or Proven?

*Isn't this success stuff just hype?* you ask. Good question. I consider myself a hard-headed realist. I insist the elements of my personal philosophy and beliefs stand up to the test of sound logic and reason and, ultimately, practical-use tests.

What I suggest in the pages of *Spectrum* has passed my personal battery of reason-and-use tests and has proven effective for me. Therefore, the information in the pages of all TFS resources is practical and based on solid ground. I screen out what is not efficacious to save you time and effort and to speed you on your success path.

At this point in my success studies, it still is a mystery to me why typically only 10 to 20 percent of the members or employees of any given organization are passionate enough to strive continuously for improvement, innovation, and excellence.

But I do know as a TFS reader you are in the top 20 percent of your college, university, or other educational institution and you concur success is the only option. I pledge to join with you this year to help spread a practical philosophy of success in teaching and learning, because it really is the only option. ✨

## The Self-Discipline Option

Jack H. Shrawder

“Self-discipline is the most important personal quality for assuring long-term success,” writes Brian Tracy, International Business Consultant in *The 100 Absolutely Unbreakable Laws of Business Success*.

My business and teaching experience certainly verifies his assertion. Self-discipline, a leadership critical success factor, is an absolute necessity for breaking through success barriers in life, education, and business.

What is self-discipline? The working definition that I like the best is the following: *Self-discipline is having the ability to do what your goal requires whether you feel like it or not.* In an age of going with the flow and demanding immediate gratification, this definition may seem a bit harsh.

Positive self-discipline implies pushing oneself to accomplish; but as we have learned in the 1990s and again in this decade, pushing and accomplishing without regard to one’s health, family, and spiritual values leads nowhere. Self-discipline requires clarity and balance in all areas of life.

### Living Ideals

Perhaps the thought of practicing self-discipline brings to mind a negative image such as a monk stoically depriving himself of pleasure, friendship, and adequate food,



rest, or health to demonstrate this value. This picture of discipline may turn us off as being too impractical and confining. So, does self-discipline equate with self-denial? No; on the contrary, self-discipline liberates us to move toward our goals, not away from them.

### Action Follows

But possessing self-discipline is useless unless we use this trait to inspire action. What kind of action? The first action step is to set goals—daily, weekly, monthly, yearly, and lifetime.

With an intense, powerful, and personal goal in mind, self-discipline suddenly becomes an ally rather than a task master.

A burning desire to become, do, accomplish, and create bears the need for an effective code of behavior. Self-discipline is like the high-torque engine in a four-wheel-drive vehicle in low gear. It carries us slowly but steadily forward through sand, mud, snow, over steep and rough terrain.

Without passionate goals, developing such a powerful engine as self-discipline may seem frivolous or even a waste of time.

### Action Steps:

- Grow self-discipline daily.
- Identify the changes you desire.
- Set goals with time limits.
- Review self-discipline principles with your class weekly. ✨



## The Responsibility Option

Jack H. Shrawder

When asked who is responsible, the success-conscious instructor answers without doubt, equivocation, or hesitation: “I am.”

The mediocre, on the other hand, quickly lay blame on some other person, entity, agency, government, or even deity.

If you want to make the single most positive and powerful change to your professional and personal life, start today to make it a habit to accept full responsibility all of the time.

For example, I’m totally responsible for the success of this resource. I may receive feedback from time to time indicating changes that customers and readers would like to see made in TFS. But ultimately, I’m responsible.

I find that it’s not good enough to accept a premise of taking responsibility once and then forgetting it in the heat of coping with everyday problems. After thirty-five years of work experience, it’s quite clear to me that taking responsibility needs to become an everyday, every-situation habit.

As a successful instructor, the chances are that you formed a responsibility habit early in life, and probably no later than in graduate school. However, even if you hold several advanced degrees it’s worth

a periodic self-check in this area to determine your current responsibility-acceptance index. For example, you can ask yourself as you begin each new term, who do you feel is responsible for your courses? Is it you, your institution, the administration, politicians, counselors, parents, or the students themselves? Who is responsible for how much and how fast learning occurs?

Another way of looking at the same issue is by asking, who is in control? Successful instructors believe and act as if the locus of control is internal, not external.

For example, if you are unhappy with your students’ lack of participation and respect for you and other learners, do you accept responsibility? Do you take control and act? Or do you feel the students are in control?

Generally, the more you feel in control and the more quickly you take corrective action, the more you will enjoy teaching.

Here are three *action steps* that encourage taking responsibility:

- Stop blaming.
- Accept ownership.
- Improvise and implement trial solutions.

Remember, there are many effective measures you can take to improve your course. In fact, *The TFS Solutionary* provides more than 500 pages of ideas on hundreds of teaching improvement issues. (*The Solutionary* is free to institutions with a Premium TFS membership.) ✨

## The Lifelong Success Option

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**L**ifelong learning offers students the opportunity for a lifetime of keeping their knowledge of their disciplines up to date.



Brian R. Shmaefsky

People with lifelong learning skills are more likely to make rational judgments about many of the decisions they have to make. It also gives them the upper hand in their careers because they are more likely to be proactive and a team player. The teaching of lifelong learning skills should be woven into every college course.

The skills needed for lifelong learning are not instilled by lecturing; they are best worked into the daily routines of your course. In addition, you can most effectively teach them by modeling them. Lifelong learning provides students with the following learning skills:

- Students seek and evaluate many information sources.
- Students learn from others and their environment.
- Students communicate an understanding to others.

- Students reflect on and assess their own learning.
- Students pose questions about the concepts they do not understand.
- Students take responsibility for their learning.

Lifelong learners feel good about themselves as learners. They go through life feeling passionate about learning and do not feel defeated by what they do not understand.

### Results

Lifelong learning outcomes include:

- Students recognize a need for information to resolve specific issues and global concerns.
- Students identify and locate appropriate information sources to seek resolution in pertinent case studies.
- Students access accurate and valid information.
- Students gain the ability to evaluate the quality of information they obtain.
- Students easily organize information and use it effectively.

In addition, they must expand their cognitive repertoire of competencies and skills throughout their life.

Simply put, this is the growth and development of a human being into a global citizen.

Finally, lifelong learners tend to become productive agents for advancement and change in their societies. ✨

## The Assessment Option

Deb Hill, PhD

**A**re mid-terms, finals, term papers, and pop quizzes burying you under piles of papers? And all for what—a course grade? Are you wondering just why we need to assess learning and ultimately what is good assessment?

Good assessment involves the examination of the processes and products of learning. Congruent with instructional goals, assessment is holistic and complex. Multiple measures taken over time provide assessment systems with the most comprehensive feedback.

### Complexity, Rebellion, and Consequences

Assessment is not an end in itself. The process facilitates appropriate instructional decision-making. Assessment should be multidimensional across time and domains.

This complexity often begets bureaucracy; rubrics for every task, tests for discreet knowledge, checklists for observable behaviors—the assessment buries the student and instructor.

Faculty rebel, returning to old practices, leaving students focused on technical performance void of critical thinking.

These consequences can be avoided through discourse and planning for



assessment. It begins with the purpose: *Why are we here? What are we doing?*

Piaget argued that the principal goal of education should be the creation of “men and women who are capable of doing new things, not simply repeating what other generations have done—men and women who are creative, inventive, and discoverers... who can be critical, can verify, and not accept everything they are offered.”

### Action Steps

Accepting Piaget’s analysis as our purpose, we turn to the what-are-we-doing question.

When planning a course and lessons, ask yourself, “What do I want my students to know, do, and be like following the course or lesson?” And most importantly, “How will I know this?”

Assessment is too important to be an afterthought.

Furthermore, ask these questions:

- What does it mean to succeed academically in this course?
- What does it look like when my students are making progress toward success?

*continued on page 6*

## The Listening Fitness Option

Kay Roof-Steffen,  
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**A** quick communication quiz: Which of the four communication skills—reading, writing, speaking, and listening—is sometimes called the forgotten skill?

Hint: it's the one we automatically practice more than any of the others but is rarely taught in the classroom.

The answer is: **effective listening!**

I bet you agree, but just why is that? Effective listening is often ranked as the most important skill in becoming a manager, doctor, nurse, teacher, and mediator of any kind. Other professions simply include this vital ability in the general category of communication skills.

### The Five Functions

When you listen, you can more easily and accurately:

- **Recall information**, such as from a research project or exam at school, to build better customer relations at work.
- **Make distinctive judgments**, such as hearing from fellow students about the best class or toughest professor, or even listening to find out which route to avoid on the commute home.

- **Effectively counsel and advise** others; it's necessary to hear and understand the problem before you can offer any support.
- **Empathize with others**, like serving as a sounding board for another adult student with stress that you can relate to as well.
- **Entertainment**: Yes, indeed this is a function of listening—from mood music for relaxation to energizing yourself conducting an animated personal conversation with a friend or family member.

Experts tend to agree that a person's ability to listen affects her or his ability to learn. While this might sound obvious, many people overlook the fact that this essential skill helps them to develop intellectually and professionally.

Asking people if they consider themselves good listeners is like asking them if they consider themselves physically fit. Many people say yes to both, but actually perform poorly when put to the test.

### Check Your Listening Behaviors

How's your listening IQ? Here are ten listening behaviors to avoid, especially with your students:

- **Allowing your mind to wander** when listening and thinking, "This is so boring; I've heard this a thousand times before."
- **Becoming critical of the speaker's person or delivery**,



Experts tend to agree that a person's ability to listen affects her or his ability to learn.

noticing appearance or dress, vocal quirks, accents, or even facial expressions and allowing them to distract you from the message being sent.

- **Forming an opinion too early** and beginning to construct a retort mentally, missing the next key point made.
- **Allowing your personal life to intrude**, such as your worries, upcoming agenda for the day, chronic problems, or an event you're looking forward to—none of which has anything to do with what the speaker is saying.
- **Letting emotion-laden words throw you off center** and stop listening.
- **Constantly anticipating** what the speaker's next point will be.

- **Listening only for isolated facts** of specific interest to you, like, "What's on the test?" or, "How will this affect my job?"
- **Ceasing to listen when you believe the information is too technical** or the concepts too abstract for you to grasp easily.
- **Tolerating—or even creating—distractions** that force you to tune out instead of continuing to tune in to what the speaker is conveying.
- **Faking attention** to the speaker, even to include giving false feedback, like head-nodding, eye contact, or doodling as if you were taking notes.

### It's Not Genetics

"Listening is not a genetically

*continued on page 5*

## The Listening Fitness Option

*continued from page 4*

determined trait,” authors James R. DiSanza and Nancy J. Legge (2002) agree. Everyone practices one or more of these bad habits from time to time.

When you are aware of some bad listening behaviors, you can direct your energy (and good listening takes continuous energy) toward improving your listening fitness.

Here are ten tips to increase your attention span and help you retain information longer.

### 1. Prepare to Listen

Realize that you must motivate yourself to exert effort, not only to hear the whole message, but also to understand its meaning.

Before a three- or four-hour night class—after a full day’s work—include some protein in a light dinner, take a ten- to fifteen-minute walk if possible, and wake yourself up mentally.

Take advantage of any breaks in the class to get up, leave the classroom, and get a drink of water and possibly some fresh air to help reenergize yourself.

### 2. Check Your Biases

Set aside any personal feelings toward the speaker and stop yourself from allowing trigger words to interfere with your attention.

It’s easy to isolate one point and mentally form your counterargument,

thereby completely missing the rest of the speaker’s message.

### 3. Control Distracting Actions

Although sometimes you cannot avoid outside interruptions, such as a latecomer entering the classroom or a phone call while you are in conference with someone at the office, you need to limit the effect of the interruptions and not add your own, such as clicking your pen, looking at the clock or shuffling your papers.

Deliberately focus on giving the speaker your full attention or you will likely miss a key point and wonder why you were not able to understand the message.

The ability to listen when there is activity and noise around you—as well as intruding thoughts vying for your attention—requires “commitment to concentration,” says Myles Martel, PhD, author of *The Persuasive Edge: The Executive’s Guide to Speaking and Presenting* (1989, p. 8).

### 4. Mentally Analyze What You Hear

Ask yourself: Is the speaker credible? Has he or she presented adequate and accurate reasoning? If the speaker uses any emotional appeals, are these legitimate or only used to push the listener’s hot buttons?



Deliberately focus on giving the speaker your full attention.

This is an important element of active listening and involves critical thinking and feedback checks throughout a lengthy or potentially ambiguous message. For example:

The professor says, “I want your outline before the presentation.”

You ask, “Do you want a formal outline or just a rough draft showing our organizational pattern?”

Professor: “It needs to be a formal outline.”

You: “Do you want it the class before our presentation or just before we get up to speak?”

Professor: “I want to see it the class before so I know if you need to revise or add something and to be sure you have adequate source citations.”

### 5. Take in the Whole Picture

Along with your critical analysis, be sure you have listened with your feelings as well as your mind.

Does the speaker sound honest? Is he or she demonstrating sincere conviction in this issue or belief and showing credible

evidence to back it up? What do you expect from the speaker and what do you think the speaker expects from you?

For instance, if a supervisor begins to complain about letting you off work ten minutes early one night a week so you can get to your night class on time, try to figure out why this has suddenly become a problem. Is it just a stressful time at work that in a couple of weeks will calm down?

By listening actively to the whole message you can begin to read and know people better, and you will avoid misinterpretations and frustration.

### 6. Don’t Interrupt

New York-based consultant Dee Soder, PhD, says people often cannot resist breaking into someone else’s message because they are bright and feel that they have already grasped the speaker’s point and “want to show off how much [they] know.” From the speaker’s perspective, she adds, “Interrupters are perceived as being arrogant and interested only in themselves.” It’s best to allow the speaker to complete a thought before adding your insights.

### 7. Enjoy Eye Contact

Particularly in meetings or classes, this not only shows the speaker you are actively listening, but it helps you, the listener, focus your attention and reduce distractions.

No need to stare or gaze longingly into the speaker’s eyes, but maintain

*continued on page 6*

## The Listening Fitness Option

*continued from page 5*

contact by watching expressions, gestures, movement, or posture changes that add interesting emphases or hidden meanings.

### 8. Provide Verbal Feedback

Ask questions to encourage the speaker to either further explain or clarify a point you want to fully understand.

Also paraphrase to be certain that the message you received was indeed the one the speaker meant to send.

Communication expert Joseph DeVito (2002) of Hunter College of the City University of New York writes, “When you paraphrase the speaker’s meanings, you give the speaker a kind of green light to go into more detail, to elaborate.”

He cautions the listener not to “lead the speaker in the direction you think best.” (DeVito 2002) From the speaker’s perspective, this verbal feedback is also encouraging and lets him or her know that you are interested in the message.

### 9. Tune in to What’s Not Being Said

According to Soder, sometimes it’s important to “hear between the lines.” If a speaker seems evasive on a delicate point that you would like to better understand, Soder suggests that you directly ask for more information or explanation on that point. Also remember that all communication experts agree that substantially more than half of the meaning of a message is nonverbal.

How many times have you heard (or said), “It’s not what you say, but how you say it?” Vocal tone, volume, emphases on certain words over others, all shape a message, as do nonverbal cues like expressions, gestures, posture, and eye contact or eye movement.

### 10. Integrate Empathy into Your Listening

Empathic listening positively reinforces any relationship. It involves keeping an open mind and being able to understand the speaker’s feelings, attitudes, experiences, and needs.

Putting yourself in the speaker’s shoes to better understand where she or he is coming from involves appropriate verbal and nonverbal feedback. It also shows an attitude of acceptance of the speaker’s message (DiSanza 2002).

Listening with empathy takes the most energy of all types of listening (Gamble and Gamble 2002). It is also the most rewarding part of this skill as far as relationship building is concerned.

Consider this scenario: You hear a coworker you have rarely spoken with voicing frustration about trying to juggle work, family, and continuing education classes and wondering if she will ever see a degree in her future.

You totally understand and share your common situation. After that you both have something in common and can begin conversations more easily and possibly serve as sympathetic (or at least empathetic) ears to each other.

### Action Steps for Listening Success

By realizing that we are all challenged daily to become better listeners, we have taken the first step toward honing this essential communication skill.

Key in to your bad habits and purposefully focus on enhancing your active listening behavior. When this is accomplished you will take in, understand, and retain messages better than when your listening is allowed to veer freely from one thought or message to another with no direction.

People in charge notice good listeners. Good listeners notice everything (and tend to become people in charge).

### About the Author

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## Assessment

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Now, transform that vision of success into assessment exercises that provide dependable information about student success. But wait a minute—can success be measured using selected response assessment (multiple choice, true/false, matching, short answer, etc.)? Now what?

If you have defined success as “applying knowledge and skills,” then your assessments should be performance checks. They should include an opportunity for the student to produce a product with multiple facets or solutions to the given problem.

### In the Beginning

To set the stage for this type of assessment, begin your course with an overview as well as a description of the successful student:

- What they know.
- What they are able to do.
- Generally, what they are like.

Ask your students to help specify the evidence that best indicates success mastery. Can they determine the artifacts needed to confirm success? You may now find that assessment becomes a tool that engages students in learning and is not the scary four-letter word test.

### Bottom Line

When students really know what it means to be competent, assessment becomes meaningful and ingrained in the learning process. ✨

## Student Insights on the Impact of Teachers

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One of the things that you probably don't think about is the lasting impact you have on your students.

Since most of us can still name our first-grade teacher, I thought it would be interesting to have my composition students write about some of their former teachers.

Therefore, I created this topical assignment, since virtually all college students have experienced at least twelve years of knowing teachers; writing on this topic, I thought, would not be difficult.

### Long Lasting and In-depth

What I didn't count on was the depth, variety, and intensity of my students' insights and comments about how teachers affected their lives.

I asked students not to use real names—and since this essay focused on “classification,” they became very creative with names, like “Mr. Monotone,” “Mr. Sports Center,” “Ms. Grammar,” and “Miss Perfect.”

Names often reflected the distinguishing characteristic or student nickname of the teacher, but the bottom line, in many cases, is that the teachers were quite memorable in one way or another.

One student's essay recounted how three of his teachers became more than just teachers; they had become friends too.

### Course Difficulty

Yet another student related that he learned the most from the strictest and most demanding of the instructors—and that the ones considered easy were not ones that he learned from.

### Quirkiness

Still another student stated, “We will look back and thank the teachers who were just crazy enough to put up with us.”

Some examples were humorous. For example, one teacher had formed a habit of using nasal spray to help eliminate a nicotine habit. Apparently, the teacher then became addicted to nasal spray, much to the amusement of her students.

Another teacher experienced some sort of mid-life emotional crisis; at the end of the story, the student flatly stated, “I am happy to say she is now medicated and close to normal.” As preparation for a potential crisis, one teacher's obsession for snack food was obvious, and the student wrote, “She kept a storeroom full of food in case of nuclear winter.”

### Hostility

Unfortunately, not all the examples were positive. In one particular case, as

I reviewed a draft with the student, I could sense the hostility in his attitude; the underlying theme of his essay was that the teacher he was writing about had a general lack of respect for his students. Sensing the student was unsure of my reaction, I told him the subject of his essay also showed a general disregard and lack of respect for his colleagues as well. Another negative example came from a student who said one of his teachers “had vast amounts of knowledge but didn't want the students to know this information.” In contrast, a classmate wrote, “the one thing [my teacher] did different is making sure he teaches you everything he knows.”

### Humiliation

Perhaps the most negative example came from a student who recounted how the teacher humiliated her in front of the classroom; her experience, she said, made her “not answer another question for the rest of the year.”

### An Impactive Profession

From that, and all the other examples, we need to recognize, as teachers, that we do not work in isolation; in addition, we cannot afford to be overwhelmingly egocentric or react to students in an unprofessional manner.

The nonverbal messages transmitted to our students and colleagues may be far stronger than we realize. Nonverbal messages also

extend to such basic issues as personal hygiene. In one case, this took the form of a student asking teachers to remember that they “are involved with many young minds, and bad hygiene will not go unnoticed.”

Paraphrasing, the majority of students writing about teachers said, “I learned from all of them.” Some said “they've all had an impact on my life.” One main idea that presented itself in different forms was “all of these teachers must love what they do—otherwise, how could they tolerate all the students they have to deal with on a daily basis?”

Another comment offered was “whether these teachers are liked or disliked, they will be known by the way they talk and look, the way they teach their class, and most of all they will be remembered by their quirky habits.”

### Assignment Assessment

Overall, I was pleased with the way the writing assignment generated interesting and insightful observations and comments. However, what I learned from students about their perceptions of teachers was even more important.

As one essay pointed out, “It is teachers who, in the end, no matter how bad you think they are, will leave you with great memories, experiences, and information to help you make the best of your life.”

How will you be remembered? ✨

## Success Keys of Coach, Mike Krzyzewski

Jack Shrawder  
Publisher, TFS

**I** recently learned some important success keys from Coach Mike Krzyzewski while I listened to a Nightingale-Conant interview of this famous coach. This interview is available to Nightingale Insider's Club Members. (More information on their library of interviews can be seen at [https://nightingale.com/tInsiders-Club\\_tour.asp](https://nightingale.com/tInsiders-Club_tour.asp).)

Coach Krzyzewski is of course a highly respected basketball coach for Duke University. He is adamant about never living in the past; he reasons people are never the same, moment to moment.

### First Key

This is the first success key: People don't stay the same. Everyone changes from term to term and what worked last year with a group may not work this year. People act differently because they are different people. Change is forever present.

### Second Key

We learn by meeting tough challenges, especially those that create anxiety and fear.

Coach Krzyzewski's point meshes nicely with my favorite Eleanor Roosevelt quote, "You must do the things you think you cannot do."

And as I gain experience, I develop greater and greater respect for the value of surmounting the difficult along the path to success. The following metaphor may be overused, but the truth is so compelling: People often become more successful in the same way gold becomes more pure as the dross is burned out.

### Third Key

Work gives you dignity and a sense of fulfillment. Coach Krzyzewski stresses that a leader must create ownership so everyone on the team feels like the goal is theirs. He learned a great deal about leadership from attending West Point. He learned there that you have to fail to learn more, and that failure is only temporary. Failure is part of the learning process.

I concur with this assessment and argue strongly that A students should be those who boldly attempt things beyond their present capabilities, push the envelope, and even fail the most and learn the most from these failures.

### Fourth Key

Coach Krzyzewski defines success as a daily journey: doing the very best you can each day. Change the expression, "Oh man, I have to do this," to, "Oh man, I get to do this!" Become unafraid of failure, enjoy the journey, and you'll experience fulfillment. Finally, he admonishes listeners to pursue success, be yourself, and look for ways of improving. ✨