

CHRIS'LL DEAL WITH IT

episode notes




EP 44 - Principle #12 - Success is found in the effort

Status	Published ✨
Publication Date	@September 10, 2023

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This is part 12 of our summer PRINCIPLES series. It can be listened to by itself, but for greater context refer back to the intro Episode #32.

Note that the principles in this series are what work for me. They allow me to thrive and live my values as best as I can. I'm not advocating the adoption of my specific set of principles. Rather I'm attempting to showcase the power of principles by providing more context on how they can be defined, codified, and embedded into the thoughts & actions of our lives.

Principle #12 - Success is found in the effort

Where does the principle come from?

- If success is judged through external metrics, such as:
 - The amount of sales

- Critical praise
- More opportunities stemming from your brilliant work
- Then you're letting externalities drive your relationship to your own work.
- No doubt we all love praise and would love for the world to fawn over our work. But if that's your sole definition of success, you're taking a massive risk of ending up disappointed.
- Which is why I put this principle right after the previous one (#11 - Make beneficial things with passion) - To keep my expectations in check.
- This principle doesn't just apply to creative pursuits: It also reflects the need for consistent, constant effort.
 - I'll only be successful if I put in the work: Pursuing a goal with inconsistency, half measures or giving 50% isn't going to cut it.
 - I'm unlikely to ever be the best writer in the world, or produce incredible results with every project. But I can strive to write as the best writer I can be.
 - It's far better to pour your soul into each work, having a continuous improvement mindset, and refusing to get outworked.
 - The harder you work, over a long enough time scale, is going to create better odds of long-term, reliable success (or luck) than trying to capture lightning in a bottle (or going 'viral').

Why is it important?

- Whenever I browse a used bookstore, I'll have a moment where I pause and take in all the shelves. Bookstores, especially used ones, are magical places.
 - Shelf after shelf is filled with a massive variety of human effort.
 - Many have only been read once, some never at all. And among those with pristine spines may be some beloved works that have passed through many hands over time.
 - Regardless, consider all those different books.
 - Each one represents years of effort: The writing, the effort to get it through publication, printing, and their unknown journey to that used shelf. On that shelf

it may lay dormant for years. Even decades.

- So now, let's go with a super-low-end estimate, and say each book represents one full year of human effort.
 - For reference, each of my books took around two full years to write, edit, and produce. If you're curious about my process, go check out [Episode 15](#) where I talk about it in detail.
 - Let's say your local used bookstore is small, only 20,000 books. ([Some have as many as a million.](#))
 - But sticking with 20,000, that equates to a total human effort that exceeds the length of our recorded history.
 - Do you look upon all those books, all that effort, and feel the magnitude of it?
 - And with all that work dormant on shelves in front of you, gathering dust for long periods of time, would you define all that striving as wasted effort?
- Writing our books, playing our music, programming those spreadsheets, building our birdhouses: However amateur or ephemeral the resulting work, The act of creation always offers us the choice to take pleasure from the creative effort itself, before any potential result or impact is realized

And that's the importance of this principle: A reminder to pursue projects honestly, passionately, and consistently. To regularly choose to find success in the effort.

Episode 44 Quote:

I love this quote, which I picked up from one of [Shane Parrish's Farnam Street e-mail newsletters](#):

What looks like skill is often just a lot of work that no one sees. Long nights, early mornings, sweat, tears. If you want remarkable results, you need to work remarkably hard. Professionals go all in. They don't leave at five every day because that's 8 hours from

when they show up; they grind for small insights. Knowledge accumulates in drips and gets leveraged in buckets.