



BLISS IS OUR NATURAL STATE— WHEN WE LET GO

Human beings tend to get attached. People say, “I’m really attached to my job.” Or “I’m attached to my children.” Often they use the word *attach* in a positive sense. When they say that they are attached to something, people mean that they care about it a lot.

It’s also possible to carry attachment too far. Someone says, “I’m so attached to this job that I just can’t imagine doing anything else.” Or “Without my children, I’d be nothing.”

These statements are clues that an attachment has gone beyond caring into a demand that must be met at any cost. In effect, people are saying that they *must* have certain people or certain circumstances in their lives before they can be happy—the right job, the right children, or whatever else wins their attachment.

This type of attachment is one of the biggest obstacles to creating the life of our dreams. The things we habitually attach ourselves to are often fleeting and impermanent, so they’re bound to disappoint us. Jobs change or disappear. People leave or die. Fortunes are won, then lost.

The Success Strategy “Lighten your load” suggests that attachments are like baggage. If we lug two armfuls of suitcases with us wherever we go, we’ll feel heavy, tired, and even sad. But if let go of all that baggage, we’ll lighten up and feel relieved.

We can treat our attachments like excess baggage. We can stop demanding that we have certain people or things in our lives before we can be happy. We can enjoy our jobs *and* be happy even if we’re fired and forced to find a new one. We can love our children like mad *and* happily wave goodbye to them when they leave home. We can approach our accomplishments, relationships, skills, opinions, expectations, and just about anything else in life with the same willingness to let go.

Experience bliss

When we lighten our load of attachments, we can feel more than simple relief. We can start to experience a happiness that persists even when our circumstances change. This happiness can become so deep and so profound that some people call it bliss.

This Success Strategy suggests that bliss is the natural core of our being. Bliss is what’s left when we let go.

People with a lot of attachments tend to take life pretty seriously. They’re so afraid of losing something or someone that they feel stressed most of the time.

There is another option. We can stop being attached to circumstances. When it’s time for them to change, we can simply let them go. We can also stop being attached to people. When it’s time for them to leave, we can simply let them leave. We can even stop being attached to life when it’s time to die.

This chapter mentions a number of things that people get attached to—their thoughts, feelings, bodies, roles, and more. While reading, look for any excess baggage that you might be carrying around. Then experiment with letting go. See what happens when you're willing to lighten your load, even just a little.

Let go—and work hard

The suggestion to lighten your load brings other suggestions to mind: Loosen up. Be lighthearted. Take it easy. Let go. Laugh about it all. Go with the flow. Just accept it. Stand back and let it happen. Detach.

These are all great ideas. And a different set of suggestions can be just as useful: Work as if your life depended on it. Live each day as if it will be your last. Get off the sidelines. Give it your all. Everything you do matters. Take it seriously. If you don't like it, change it. Play full out.

If you want to get more of what you want in all areas of your life, then practice both suggestions. You can let go *and* work hard. Take it seriously *and* laugh about it all. Change what you can *and* accept what you cannot change. Go with the flow *and* create the flow. Give it your all *and* don't worry about winning or losing the game.

The trick is to hold both sets of ideas in balance. There is a time to laugh and a time to cry, a time to work and a time to rest, a time to fight and a time to surrender, a time to zoom in and a time to step out. We can play life full out and at the same time not take it too seriously. While we loosen up and let go, we can work hard and play hard. We can be lighthearted even as we stay fully involved.

Taking things lightly and letting them go doesn't mean that we get lazy, stand contentedly on the sidelines, let work slide, or refuse to get involved. When we're lighthearted, we can still perform our roles with flawless efficiency. Some people are lighthearted without being involved, and we often describe them as being irresponsible or childish. That's not the kind of attitude this Success Strategy is meant to promote.

Remember to distinguish attachments from preferences. When we're attached to something, our well-being depends on having it. When we have a preference for something, however, we can enjoy having it while knowing that we can be happy even without it.

Having preferences is wonderful, and one purpose of this book is to help you get in touch with your preferences in every area of life. We can work hard to turn those preferences into realities. We can also remember that sometimes we'll get exactly what we prefer and sometimes we won't. That's hardly a profound statement, but it's easy to forget. And when we do forget, we transform our preferences into an armful of attachments.

So even as we make a full effort to get what we want in life, we can lighten up about the results. We can work hard—*and* let go.

