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**31 Major Causes of Failure from *Think and Grow Rich* by Napoleon Hill**

<b>1. Unfavorable hereditary background</b>	<b>16. Over-caution</b>
<b>2. Lack of well-defined purpose in life</b>	<b>17. Wrong selection of Associates in business</b>
<b>3. Lack of ambition to aim above mediocrity</b>	<b>18. Superstition and prejudice</b>
<b>4. Insufficient education</b>	<b>19. Wrong selection of a vocation</b>
<b>5. Lack of self-discipline</b>	<b>20. Lack of concentration of effort</b>
<b>6. Ill health</b>	<b>21. The habit of indiscriminate spending</b>
<b>7. Unfavorable environmental influences during childhood</b>	<b>22. Lack of enthusiasm</b>
<b>8. Procrastination</b>	<b>23. Intolerance</b>
<b>9. Lack of persistence</b>	<b>24. Intemperance</b>
<b>10. Negative personality</b>	<b>25. Inability to cooperate with others</b>
<b>11. Lack of controlled sexual urge</b>	<b>26. Possession of power that was not acquired through self effort.</b>
<b>12. Uncontrolled desire for “something for nothing”</b>	<b>27. Intentional dishonesty</b>
<b>13. Lack of a well defined power of decision</b>	<b>28. Egotism and vanity</b>
<b>14. One or more of the six basic fears</b>	<b>29. Guessing instead of thinking</b>
<b>15. Wrong selection of mate in marriage</b>	<b>30. Lack of capital</b>
<b><i>31. Under this, name any particular cause of failure from which you have suffered that has not been included in the forgoing list.</i></b>	

## **Appendix A. 31 Major Causes of Failure with excerpts from *Think and Grow Rich* by Napoleon Hill**

*Life's greatest tragedy consists of men and women who earnestly try, and fail!*

*I have had the privilege of analyzing several thousand men and women, 98% of whom were classed as "failures."*

*My analysis proved that there are thirty major reasons for failure....As you go over the list, check yourself by it, point by point, for the purpose of discovering how many of these causes-of-failure stand between you and success. **Napoleon Hill, *Think and Grow Rich****

### **1. Unfavorable hereditary background**

There is but little, if anything, which can be done for people who are born with a deficiency in brain power. This philosophy offers but one method of bridging this weakness-through the aid of the Master Mind. Observe with profit, however, that this is the only one of the thirty-one causes of failure which may not be easily corrected by any individual.

### **2. Lack of a well-defined purpose in life**

There is no hope of success for the person who does not have a central purpose, or a definite goal at which to aim. Ninety-eight out of every hundred of those whom I have analyzed had no such aim. Perhaps this was the major cause of their failure.

### **3. Lack of ambition to aim above mediocrity**

We offer no hope for the person who is so indifferent as not to want to get ahead in life, and who is not willing to pay the price.

### **4. Insufficient education**

This is a handicap which may be overcome with comparative ease. Experience has proven that the best-educated people are often those who are known as "self-made," or self-educated. It takes more than a college degree to make one a person of education. Any person who is educated is one who has learned to get whatever he wants in life without violating the rights of others. Education consists, not so much of knowledge, but of knowledge effectively and persistently applied. Men are paid, not merely for what they know, but more particularly for what they do with that which they know.

### **5. Lack of self-discipline**

Discipline comes through self-control. This means that one must control all negative qualities. Before you can control conditions, you must first control yourself. Self-mastery is the hardest job you will ever tackle. If you do not conquer self, you will be conquered by self. You may see at one and the same time both your best friend and your greatest enemy, by stepping in front of a mirror.

### **6. Ill health**

No person may enjoy outstanding success without good health. Many of the causes of ill health are subject to mastery and control. These in the main are:

- a. Overeating of foods not conducive to health.
- b. Wrong habits of thoughts; giving expression to negatives.

#### **6. Ill health (continued)**

- c. Wrong use of, and over-indulgence in sex.
- d. Lack of proper physical exercise.
- e. An inadequate supply of fresh air, due to improper breathing.

#### **7. Unfavorable environmental influences during childhood**

“As the twig is bent, so shall the tree grow.” Most people who have criminal tendencies acquire them as the result of bad environment, and improper associates during childhood.

#### **8. Procrastination**

This is one of the most common causes of failure. “Old Man Procrastination” stands within the shadow of every human being, waiting his opportunity to spoil one’s chances of success. Most of us go through life as failures, because we are waiting for the “time to be right” to start doing something worthwhile. Do not wait. The time will never be “just right.” Start where you stand, and work with whatever tools you may have at your command, and better tools will be found as you go along.

#### **9. Lack of persistence**

Most of us are good “starters” but poor “finishers” of everything we begin. Moreover, people are prone to give up at the first signs of defeat. There is no substitute for persistence. The person who makes persistence his watch-word, discovers that “Old Man Failure” finally becomes tired, and makes his departure. Failure cannot cope with persistence.

#### **10. Negative personality**

There is no hope of success for the person who repels people through a negative personality. Success comes through the application of power, and power is attained through the cooperative efforts of other people. A negative personality will not induce cooperation.

#### **11. Lack of controlled sexual urge**

Sex energy is the most powerful of all the stimuli which move people into action. Because it is the most powerful of the emotions, it must be controlled, through transmutation, and converted into other channels.

#### **12. Uncontrolled desire for “*something for nothing*”**

The gambling instinct drives millions of people to failure. Evidence of this may be found in a study of the Wall Street crash of '29, during which millions of people tried to make money by gambling on stock margins.

#### **13. Lack of a well defined power of decision**

Men who succeed reach decisions promptly, and change them, if at all, very slowly. Men who fail reach decisions, if at all, very slowly, and change them frequently, and quickly. Indecision and procrastination are twin brothers. Where one is found, the other may usually be found also. Kill off this pair before they completely “hog-tie” you to the treadmill of failure.

**14. One or more of the six basic fears**

*The fear of poverty*

*The fear of criticism*

*The fear of ill health*

*The fear of loss of love of someone*

*The fear of old age*

*The fear of death*

They must be mastered before you can market your services effectively.

**15. Wrong selection of a mate in marriage**

This is a most common cause of failure. The relationship of marriage brings people intimately into contact. Unless this relationship is harmonious, failure is likely to follow. Moreover, it will be a form of failure that is marked by misery and unhappiness, destroying all signs of ambition.

**16. Over-caution**

The person who takes no chances generally has to take whatever is left when others are through choosing. Over-caution is as bad as under-caution. Both are extremes to be guarded against. Life itself is filled with the element of chance.

**17. Wrong selection of associates in business**

This is one of the most common causes of failure in business. In marketing personal services, one should use great care to select an employer who will be an inspiration, and who is, himself, intelligent and successful. We emulate those with whom we associate most closely. Pick an employer who is worth emulating.

**18. Superstition and prejudice**

Superstition is a form of fear. It is also a sign of ignorance. Men who succeed keep open minds and are afraid of nothing.

**19. Wrong selection of a vocation**

No man can succeed in a line of endeavor which he does not like. The most essential step in the marketing of personal services is that of selecting an occupation into which you can throw yourself wholeheartedly.

**20. Lack of concentration of effort**

The jack-of-all-trades seldom is good at any. Concentrate all of your efforts on one definite chief aim.

**21. The habit of indiscriminate spending**

The spendthrift cannot succeed, mainly because he stands eternally in fear of poverty. Form the habit of systematic saving by putting aside a definite percentage of your income. Money in the bank gives one a very safe foundation of courage when bargaining for the sale of personal services. Without money, one must take what one is offered, and be glad to get it.

**22. Lack of enthusiasm**

Without enthusiasm one cannot be convincing. Moreover, enthusiasm is contagious, and the person who has it, under control, is generally welcome in any group of people.

**23. Intolerance**

The person with a closed mind on any subject seldom gets ahead. Intolerance means that one has stopped acquiring knowledge. The most damaging forms of intolerance are those connected with religious, racial, and political differences of opinion.

**24. Intemperance**

The most damaging forms of intemperance are connected with eating, strong drink, and sexual activities. Over-indulgence in any of these is fatal to success.

**25. Inability to cooperate with others**

More people lose their positions and their big opportunities in life, because of this fault, than for all other reasons combined. It is a fault which no well-informed businessman or leader will tolerate.

**26. Possession of power that was not acquired through self effort.** (Sons and daughters of wealthy men, and others who inherit money which they did not earn)

Power in the hands of one who did not acquire it gradually is often fatal to success. Quick riches are more dangerous than poverty.

**27. Intentional dishonesty**

There is no substitute for honesty. One may be temporarily dishonest by force of circumstances over which one has no control, without permanent damage. But, there is no hope for the person who is dishonest by choice. Sooner or later, his deeds will catch up with him, and he will pay by loss of reputation, and perhaps even loss of liberty.

**28. Egotism and vanity**

These qualities serve as red lights which warn others to keep away. They are fatal to success.

**29. Guessing instead of thinking**

Most people are too indifferent or lazy to acquire facts with which to think accurately. They prefer to act on "opinions" created by guesswork or snap-judgments.

**30. Lack of capital**

This is a common cause of failure among those who start out in business for the first time, without sufficient reserve of capital to absorb the shock of their mistakes, and to carry them over until they have established a reputation.

**31. Under this, name any particular cause of failure from which you have suffered that has not been included in the forgoing list.**

– Napoleon Hill (Think and Grow Rich)