

## THE BIG IDEAS

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## The Slight Edge

Turning Simple Disciplines into Massive Success and Happiness

BY JEFF OLSON · GREENLEAF © 2013 · 280 PAGES

“That’s the only reason our lives follow that roller coaster. It’s that simple. As soon as we get away from failure and up past the line of survival, we quit doing the things that got us there.

You know what that means? It means *you already know* how to do everything it takes to make you an outrageous success. That’s how you’ve survived up to this point. And if you can survive, then you can succeed. You don’t need to do some brilliant, impossible thing. You don’t need to learn some insanely difficult skills, or have some genius-level brainstorm of an innovative idea. All you have to do is keep doing the things that got you this far.

Which is exactly what 99.9 percent of people don’t do.

What those things are, why most people don’t do them, and how you can live an outrageously happy and successful life by doing them, is what this book is all about.”

~ Jeff Olson from *The Slight Edge*

Imagine throwing Darren Hardy’s *The Compound Effect* + George Leonard’s *Mastery* + James Allen’s *As a Man Thinketh* + Napoleon Hill’s *Think and Grow Rich* into a blender.

You’d basically get this fun, empowering book! :)

Jeff Olson is a down-to-earth, super practical (and successful) guy who believes in the power of turning simple disciplines into massive success. He calls that power “The Slight Edge.”

In essence: You know those little things you know are good for you? Yah, those. They are, as Jeff says, “*Easy to do. And easy not to do.*” Well, if you want to experience massive success via The Slight Edge, you need to do those little things consistently. Day in and day out. Period.

The book is packed with Big Ideas on how we can integrate The Slight Edge into our lives on a consistent basis. If you like the Note, I think you’ll love the book. (Get a copy [here!](#))

For now, I’m excited to share some of my favorite Big Ideas so let’s jump straight in!

## WHAT IS THE SLIGHT EDGE?

“The things that take you out of failure and up toward survival and success are *simple*. So simple, in fact, that it’s easy to overlook them. *Extremely* easy to overlook them. It’s easy to overlook them because when you look at them, they seem insignificant. They’re not big, sweeping things that take huge effort. They’re not heroic or dramatic. Mostly they’re just little things you do every day and that nobody else even notices. They are things that are so simple to do—yet successful people actually *do* them, while unsuccessful people only look at them and don’t take action.

Things like taking a few dollars out of a paycheck, putting it into savings, and leaving it there. Or doing a few minutes of exercise every day—and not skipping it. Or reading ten pages of an

*“If we would just keep doing the things that got us from failure up to survival in the first place, the things we already know how to do and were already doing, they would eventually carry us all the way to success.”*

~ Jeff Olson

*"Consistently repeated daily actions + time = inconquerable results."*

~ Jeff Olson

inspiring, educational, life-changing book every day. Or taking a moment to tell someone how much you appreciate them, and doing that consistently, every day, for months and years. Little things that seem insignificant in the doing, yet when compounded over time yield very big results.

You could call these 'little virtues' or 'success habits.' I call them *simple daily disciplines*. Simple productive actions, repeated consistently over time.

That, in a nut shell, is the slight edge."

The Slight Edge.

Simple daily disciplines. Repeated consistently. Over time. Equals MASSIVE success.

Note: Please pay special attention to the frequency of "every day."

These aren't "once in a while" disciplines. Or "when you feel like it" disciplines. They are DAILY disciplines.

SUPER simple stuff. Really easy to do. And, as Jeff says throughout the book, also super easy \*not\* to do. Your life won't change magically the day you workout for 30 minutes. Nor will it blow up if you miss a day. But... If you were to do that little thing every day for a month? A year? A decade? Massive results.

What's most exciting about this is that YOU ALREADY KNOW what to do. You do it when you're on. All we need to do is to get you to more consistently rock it, eh?!

So, what are YOUR little virtues or success habits? Your simple daily disciplines?

Now a good time to start rockin' them day in and day out? :)

## INSTANT LIFE! (SEE: THE SEDUCTIVE MYTH OF)

*"In a constantly and rapidly changing world like ours, you simply cannot remain the same as you were yesterday. You are in motion—you have no choice in that. But motion in what direction? You have total choice in that."*

~ Jeff Olson

"Through a great film, you can experience the triumph of the human soul over adversity, the drama of a struggle between doing what's right and succumbing to the temptations of the world, a moving encounter between generations, the flowering of a powerful romance, the struggle and birth of a nation...."

But it all has to be finished in *two hours*.

Can you imagine a nation being born in two hours? Meeting the person who will become the love of your life—the dating, courtship, romance, struggle, triumph, wedding, and happy life thereafter—in two hours? Of course not. We expect to put out the effort of a thirty-second falling-in-love sequence, or fighter-in-training sequence, and get that same heroic ending. In a world filled with instant coffee, instant breakfast, instant credit, instant shopping, instant information, and 24/7 news, we have come dangerously close to losing touch with reality and believing we have access to *instant life*.

But life is not a clickable link."

*Instant life!*

Just push this button and BAM! Get everything you ever wanted. Ummmm... Yah.

If you haven't noticed, we're \*constantly\* bombarded by the idea that all things great should be accomplished pretty much instantaneously. Or, something is wrong with you.

Reminds me of George Leonard's brilliant comment from his equally brilliant book [Mastery](#) (see Notes): "In all of this, the specific content isn't nearly as destructive to mastery as is the rhythm. One epiphany follows another. One fantasy is crowded out by the next. Climax is piled upon climax. There's no plateau."

*"The difficult is what takes a little time; the impossible is what takes a little longer."*

~ Fritjof Nansen  
Nobel Peace Prize winner in 1922

*"A real-life quantum leap is not Superman leaping a tall building. A real quantum leap is Edison perfecting the electric bulb after a thousand patient efforts-and then transforming the world with it."*

~ Jeff Olson

Climax after climax after climax. Why isn't there ever a plateau?

As Jeff says, because practicing the slight edge looks BORING when you don't see the extraordinary power of it!

Darren Hardy puts it this way in *The Compound Effect* ([see Notes](#)): *"By the end of this book, or even before, I want you to know in your bones that your only path to success is through a continuum of mundane, unsexy, unexciting, and sometimes difficult daily disciplines compounded over time. Know, too, that the results, the life, and the lifestyle of your dreams can be yours when you put the Compound Effect to work for you. If you use the principles outlined in the *The Compound Effect*, you will create your fairy-tale ending."*

Mundane. Unsexy. Unexciting. Sometimes difficult.

Got it! That's what we're looking for in our daily disciplines. :)

Back to Leonard who tells us: *"If you're planning to embark on a master's journey, you might find yourself bucking current trends in American life. Our hyped-up consumerist society is engaged, in fact, in an all out war on mastery."*

Here's to embarking on the master's journey and fighting the good fight!

## THE ANTI-QUANTUM LEAP + CREATING OPPORTUNITIES

"There's a popular expression you've probably heard, 'Luck is preparedness meeting opportunity.' It's a handy idea, but it's not quite accurate. People who live by the slight edge understand how luck really works. It's not preparedness meeting opportunity; it's preparedness, period. Preparedness created by doing those simple, little, constructive, positive actions, over and over. Luck is when that constancy of preparedness eventually creates opportunity.

One reason the slight edge is so widely ignored, unnoticed, and undervalued is that our culture tends to worship the idea of the 'big break.' We celebrate that dramatic discovery, the big breakthrough that catapults the hero into a new place. In other words, we buy lottery tickets.

The truth of breakthroughs and lucky breaks is that, yes, they *do* happen—but they don't happen out of thin air. They are grown, like a crop: planted, cultivated, and ultimately harvested. The problem is, as I mentioned last chapter, that in our culture we're trained to think we can skip the middle step and leap directly from plant to harvest. We even have a term for it. We call it a *quantum leap*.

And it's a complete, utter myth."

Preparedness CREATES opportunity. I like it.

I also love the anti-quantum leap mojo.

Later in the chapter Jeff tells us: *"Now, I'm not saying that quantum leaps are a myth because they don't really happen. As a matter of fact, they do happen. Just not the way people think they do. The term comes from particle physics, and here's what it means in reality: a true quantum leap is what happens when a subatomic particle suddenly jumps to a higher level of energy. But it happens as a result of the gradual buildup of potential caused by energy being applied to that particle over time.*

*In other words, it doesn't 'just suddenly happen.' An actual quantum leap is something that \*finally\* happens after a lengthy accumulation of slight-edge effort."*

That's good.

A quantum leap isn't a random occurrence. It's the result of a buildup of potential!!

Here's to the slight-edge baby steps that build our potential in the direction of huge results! :)

*" One of the quickest and most direct routes to getting yourself up and onto the success curve is to get out of the past. Review the past, but only for the purpose of making a better plan."*

~ Jeff Olson

## CHOP DOWN ANY TREES LATELY?

"Give me six hours to chop down a tree,' goes the quote attributed to Abraham Lincoln, 'and I will spend the first four hours sharpening the axe.' Which left just two hours to do the actual chopping. In other words, he would spend twice as much time working on the tools of the job as he would on the task itself. And in the task called *your life*, what are the tools of the job? They are simply you: *you* are the axe. And no one knew that better than our sixteenth president, who poured enormous effort during his half-century life into making himself into the sharpest, strongest, truest axe he possibly could."

That's so good.

Got 6 hours to cut down a tree?

Lincoln says: Spend 4 of those hours sharpening the axe.

As Jeff tells us, YOU are the axe!!!

This is Stephen Covey's Habit #7. ([Check out the Notes](#) for all 7.) He tells us that we need to renew ourselves by investing in what he calls "Quadrant II" activities. Stuff like exercise, rest, time with our family, meditation, time in nature, etc.

(Sounds a lot like simple daily disciplines, eh?)

Unfortunately, most of us are trying to cut down the ol' tree with a (very) dull blade. Swinging and swinging and swinging when it would be much wiser to take a moment to sharpen the blade. Or, even better, see if we can pick up a chain saw. :)

Jeff's #1 tip in this domain: Start by dialing in your health. It drives the whole show. And, read 10 pages per day of inspiring self-development goodness. That's 3,500+ pages per year which is about 15 great books that can (literally!) change your life.

## SLIGHT EDGE COURSE CORRECTION IN ACTION

*" Plant, cultivate, harvest. And that second comma, the one between cultivate and harvest, often represents a loooooong period of time."*

~ Jeff Olson

"On its way to landing astronauts safely on the surface of the moon, the miracle of modern engineering that was an Apollo rocket was actually on course only 2 to 3 percent of the time. Which means that for at least 97 percent of the time it took to get from the Earth to the moon it was *off course*. In a journey of nearly a quarter of a million miles, the vehicle was actually on track for only 7,500 miles. Or to put it another way, for every half-hour the ship was in flight, it was on course for less than one minute. And it reached the moon—safely—and returned to tell the tale.

How was such a thing possible? Because modern space travel is a masterful example of slight edge course-correction in action.

If this machine, at the time one of the most sophisticated, expensive, and finely calibrated pieces of technology ever devised, was correcting its own off-course errors twenty-nine minutes out of every thirty, is it reasonable to expect that you could do better than that? Let's say you were able to match an Apollo rocket's degree of accuracy in the pursuit of your own goals: that would mean that you'd be perfectly on target and on course no more than ten days in any given year. The next time you're giving yourself a hard time because you feel like you've gotten off track, think about the Apollo program, and give yourself a break."

Imagine the Apollo mission.

A 250,000 mile trip to the moon. And they're only on course for 7,500 of those miles. Following the same math, you're likely to only be perfectly on course 10 days out of the whole year. (Hah!!)

Lesson 1: Allow yourself to feel a little off course.

*" People want to walk over coals, break boards, scream primally, and have their entire lives change because they wrote down a 'vision statement' on a piece of paper at a weekend seminar. But that's not how things really work."*

~ Jeff Olson

Lesson 2: Know where you're headed! And, in Jeff's words, have a burning desire backed by faith (a la Napoleon Hill) to get there.

Here's a little [Napoleon Hill](#) gem to capture the importance of our burning desire: *"The starting point of all achievement is desire. Keep this constantly in mind. Weak desires bring weak results, just as a small amount of fire makes a small amount of heat. If you find yourself lacking in persistence, this weakness may be removed by building a stronger fire under your desires."*

Plus: *"The majority of people are ready to throw their aims and purposes overboard, and give up at the first sign of opposition or misfortune. A few carry on despite all opposition, until they attain their goal. There may be no heroic connotation to the word 'persistence,' but the quality is to the character of man what carbon is to steel."*

So, let's remember: We need to know when we're off and then re-commit to our simple daily disciplines as we get back on track en route to our destination.

And we need to do that again and again and again. (And again and again and again.)

Here's to continuous course correction and embracing the mistakes and failures en route to our ultimate success!

## THE SLIGHT EDGE HABITS

*"You may think I'm exaggerating. I'm not. You are capable of great things. I know this, because I've observed the human condition, and every soul alive is capable of great things. Most will never achieve them or experience them. But anyone can, if they only understand how the process works."*

Show up.

Show up consistently.

Show up consistently with a positive outlook.

Be prepared for and committed to the long haul.

Cultivate a burning desire backed by faith.

Be willing to pay the price.

And do the things you've committed to doing—even when no one else is watching."

Jeff dedicates a chapter to showing us how to cultivate those 7 habits of highly effective slight edge masters.

The quick re-cap: Show up. Consistently. With a positive attitude. For the long haul. With a burning desire backed by faith. And a willingness to pay the price. As you live with slight edge integrity.

Master those habits and welcome magic.

## SLIGHT EDGE INTEGRITY

*"There are many definitions of integrity. Honesty. Truthfulness. Congruence between words and deeds. The aspect of integrity that is most applicable to the slight edge is this: what you do when no one is watching...."*

*It's in that moment's decision, when nobody else is watching and no one will ever know, when your choice is so slight, so subtle, so insignificant ... it's at that moment that you find out whether or not you have slight edge integrity."*

Slight edge integrity. This is a big one.

When no one's watching, do *you* do the little things you \*know\* are best for you?

*"The power of a plan is not that it will get you there. The power of a plan is that it will get you started."*

~ Jeff Olson

"Don't try to figure out the whole race. Just figure out where to put your foot for the starting line. Just start.

Take a bold step onto the path of mastery. The result looks incredibly complex, but it's not. It never is. It's always the simple little things that take you there."

~ Jeff Olson

## PLANS: STARTING GATE VS. FINISHING LINE

"This is the point where people are often thrown off track. It's easy to assume that you need to put together the plan that will get you there—in other words, the *right* plan. The plan that will work. No.

The point is not to come up with the brilliant blueprint that is guaranteed to take you all the way to the finish line. The point is simply to come up with a plan that will *get you out of the starting gate*. It's not even that your starting plan doesn't necessarily get you there—it *for sure* won't get you there, at least not the exact plan you conceive at first. Nobody has that degree of perfect precision in long-range planning, and there are too many variables and surprises along the way that will require adjustments to the plan. You have to start with a plan, but the plan you start with will not be the plan that gets you there. In fact, just for emphasis, I'm going to say that once more:

*You have to start with a plan, but the plan you start with will not be the plan that gets you there."*

Starting gates vs. finishing lines.

We want to focus on creating a plan that GETS US OUT OF THE STARTING GATE!

One sure way to make sure you never get started? Try to create a perfect plan that gets you all the way to the finish line. That's guaranteed to paralyze your little perfectionistic self.

As we discuss again and again: Ready, fire, aim! :)

Here's to getting to the starting gate and winning the race with our slight edge!



**Brian Johnson,**  
*Heroic Philosopher CEO*

If you liked this Note,  
you'll probably like...

[The Compound Effect](#)

[Mastery](#)

[As a Man Thinketh](#)

[Think and Grow Rich](#)

[The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People](#)

## About the Author of This Note

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Brian Johnson is the Founder + CEO of Heroic. He's spent half of the last 25 years as a Founder/CEO and the other half as a Philosopher. Brian loves integrating ancient wisdom and modern science to help YOU become the best, most heroic version of yourself so we can create a world in which 51% of humanity is flourishing by 2051. Learn more at [heroic.us](http://heroic.us).