

Outwitting the Devil Summary

By Napoleon Hill

If you could do anything in the world, what would it be? So what's standing in the way of pursuing this goal? Did you know that according to Napoleon Hill, 98% of us are governed by fear?

Outwitting the Devil was written in 1938 by the author known as "the maker of millionaires." It's a bid to answer the question as to why so many of us fail to reach our full potential, and how we can adopt strategies to achieve our goals.

Despite being written in 1938, it was only published in 2011. This was due to its controversial title and its critique of churches and schools. The book is structured as if Hill (Mr. Earthbound) is interviewing the devil, and it has an engaging Q and A structure. While the devil can be viewed from a Christian perspective, it's more pragmatic to consider the devil as the darkness within us – the doubts and anxieties that discourage us from realizing our full potential.

This summary is a brief guide to some of the factors that nag us and dissuade us from making the most of our lives. Why are so many people aimlessly going through the motions of their lives and not maximizing on opportunities? Hill argues that freedom and success are just around the corner, provided we use our imagination and get to know ourselves and the world around us. By role-playing and having conversations with ourselves, we can unlock a greater sense of purpose.

What's Hiding Under Your Bed?

What are you most afraid of?

All of us have things that we fear, some of us have rational fears, and some of us may have completely irrational fears. When Mr. Earthbound asks the devil about fear, according to the devil, 98% of humans are fearful. And, six significant fears prevent us from living full lives.

We fear poverty, criticism, becoming ill, losing loved ones, growing old, and death. While fear is a natural instinct, it's often the excuse we make to deny ourselves acting on our dreams and goals. We act on our fears rather than rationalizing them. Fear cripples us, it makes us procrastinate, and when we procrastinate, we stagnate.

What are some of the excuses you make for not fulfilling your goals? Perhaps it's not having enough time or enough money. Maybe it's that somebody is standing in your way, or that someone else has already achieved what you want to do, so what's the point?

Fear isn't an excuse, and we need to lean into fear, have the courage to fail, and then try again. If we view fear as an obstacle deliberately put in front of us by the devil, we can reframe it into something to overcome and triumph over.

The First Cause of Failure

Napoleon Hill says that 'Drifting, without aim or purpose, is the first cause of failure.'

When we hit a slump or fall into a particular type of depression, this is often from having a lack of purpose and feeling isolated and alone. In addition to this, we are governed by fear and avoid adversity. However, as we've learned from books such as *Black Box Thinking*, *Daring Greatly*, and *The Talent Code*, failure is essential. We should never be governed by our mistakes because, as Hill says, 'Every adversity, every failure, every heartache carries with it the seed of an equal or greater benefit.'

Napoleon Hill began by looking at failure and believed that the key to understanding it was talking to successful people. However, he shifted focus and started analyzing unsuccessful people. The idea was to learn about success through failure.

We all go through struggles, but Hill explains that failure comes with opportunities. It's up to us to reevaluate our goals and strategies when we fail so that we can improve. Being resilient is all about the power of positive thinking, and so we need to continuously strive towards moving forward. When we hit a slump it's up to us to change our direction and shift focus.

In Hill's own life, he went through a period where he entered into a dark state of paranoia and self-doubt. He was becoming a drifter, which often happens to us when we lose focus and motivation. Drifters have no sense of agency, and they live as if on autopilot. Drifters just cruise through life and allow themselves to be heavily influenced by external forces. They don't make decisions or take any risks, hence losing the power to think and act independently.

Hill argues that we're encouraged to be drifters from an early age, and in fact, it's the devil who encourages this. Early on in life, we're introduced to things that make us want to go through life robotically, and we lose the capacity to think for ourselves. Hill critiques the school system and says that it nurtures homogenous behavior. Outcomes-based education focuses on learning things off by heart and reciting information. Hill says we need to focus instead on encouraging critical and independent thinking. Parents and educators need to nurture uniqueness and creativity, rather than standardized testing and rote learning. Hill also critiques the church for fostering the same sort of homogeneity and suggests that we develop our inner voices and learn to think independently.

We're not only corrupted through institutions and indoctrination. We're also corrupted through substances such as alcohol, cigarettes, drugs, and unhealthy foods.

The Hypnotic Rhythm

As we know from *The Power of Habit*, we're very susceptible to forming both good and bad habits. We often get caught in patterns and create long-term habits based on this. Habitual behavior makes us act in a

hypnotic state where we live life as if on autopilot.

Drifting is one of the most dangerous habits we can get into, and Hill refers to it as a "hypnotic rhythm." To rid ourselves of being habitual drifters, we need to be more mindful and aware of our actions. We need to ask ourselves why we do the things we do, and listen to our internal voices.

The good news is the law of hypnotic rhythm can work in our favor if we encourage good habits. And, as we know from the creation of habits, we can replace bad habits with positive ones.

To become a non-drifter, we need to cultivate an engaged and present mindset. We also need to develop definite plans and goals. Non-drifters have a clear sense of purpose and never blame other people for their lack of success. It's important to be the main character in your own life, and act in a way that celebrates all of your talents and skills.

Listening to the Other Self

We often hear voices inside us telling us what we should be doing. This is our "intuitive self," and it usually presents itself when we're in a slump. During times when we're stagnating, our intuitive voice jumps in and tries to persuade us to change direction. This voice is readily distinguishable from the noise and chatter in our heads. If it's intuitive, we will know. We need to listen and get to know all the voices in our heads, and in so doing, we'll learn to master the self. The important thing regarding the intuitive voice is identifying when to say yes, and when to say no.

The story goes that Hil's intuition galvanized him into finishing his

manuscript for his first self-help book. He listened to his intuitive voice and was told that the first step to getting out of his hypnotic rhythm was to finish his manuscript. Once he finished the document, he was able to move onto the next step. He was guided to meet a publisher, and was given an advance and a publishing deal.

The lesson is always to keep moving forward and to have faith in our "Infinite Intelligence." If we listen to ourselves, we will learn how to take calculated risks and create a sense of purpose.

The Devil Is in the Details

Success isn't just about the self. We need to do things for other people. It's essential to serve our community and help those who are in need. Hill explains that true fulfillment comes from helping others because happiness isn't a solitary pursuit. Humans are social beings, and therefore we find meaning from connections.

There are always people who are worse off than ourselves; we need to acknowledge this by shifting focus from our own problems to focusing on others. This shift in focus allows us to have a greater sense of perspective and purpose.

We should also consider the "Average of Five." The Average of Five is the theory introduced by Jim Rohn, that states that we're the culmination of the five people we spend the most time with. The idea is the people we spend the most time with, have the most significant influence on us, so we must choose the people we hang out with very carefully. If we hang out with negative people, we will become more negative. Although this theory is controversial, Hill argues that our first loyalty is with ourselves.

Hence, we need to carefully choose our social circles, and spend time with positive people who bring out the best in us. We need to stop associating with people just because we feel a sense of duty and obligation. Instead, we need to foster relationships with people who encourage us to reach our full potential.

Hill provides an exercise where he suggests visualizing our heroes and role-playing conversations with them. We need to ask things like, 'What would my hero advise me to do?' 'What advice would they give me?' 'How would they tackle this situation?' By doing this, we'll emulate the good habits and qualities that we admire in other people.

In Conclusion

Benjamin Franklin said, 'Dost thou love life? Then do not squander time, for that is the stuff life is made of.'

Time can be our biggest friend or our biggest foe. We have the choice to use time wisely and grow, or we can squander time and stagnate. What we do with the time we're given is crucial, and the devil often tempts us into drifting and becoming aimless.

One of the critical insights of *Outwitting the Devil* is that it's okay to be self-serving. We don't have to please everyone, and we're more effective if we put our needs first. By keeping up with our own purpose and values, we're more likely to be in the position to serve and help others.

By harnessing the power of positive thinking, we can plan in advance, set clear goals, and develop a deep sense of purpose. We can do this by listening to our intuitive voice, relying on our infinite intelligence, and

avoiding the temptation to act impulsively.

Finally, to outwit the devil, we need to live a conscious and disciplined life, and realize that we're the ones who can alter the course of our destiny.