The 15 Invaluable Laws of Growth

Live Them and Reach Your Potential

by John C. Maxwell
Copyright @2012 by John C. Maxwell
288 pages

• Do everything you can to realize your full potential.
• Achieving your full potential requires an ambitious program of personal growth.
• You need sufficient self-esteem to believe that you are worth the effort.
• Change something in your life every day.
• Start with little changes and work up to bigger ones.
• Learn from negative experiences; always speak positively to yourself.
• Don’t get too cozy in your comfort zone.
• Extend yourself into new areas that challenge you to grow.
• Be curious about everything you encounter and find meaning in whatever intrigues you.
• Don’t ask, “Can I?” Instead, ask, “How can I?”

Rating (10 is best)

Overall  7  Applicability  7  Innovation  5  Style  7

If you enjoyed this abstract and would like to receive more information how you or your business can subscribe to the full getAbstract library, please contact Leigh-Ann Arendse on leighanna@lr.co.za or +27 78 407 9830.
Relevance

What You Will Learn
In this summary, you will learn: 1) Why you want to realize your full potential, 2) What the 15 laws of personal growth are and 3) How to apply them.

Recommendation
John C. Maxwell has sold more than 21 million books worldwide because he offers accessible advice that inspires, motivates and educates. In his latest offering, he packs each chapter with information on how to live a better life, develop sustaining relationships and lead others. Maxwell outlines his take on the important principles of personal growth. Read them, apply them, live better and grow. Despite some repetition – within this book and compared to his other books of friendly counsel – getAbstract recommends Maxwell’s uplifting guidance to his loyal constituency and to all self-help readers who want to visit with a master of the genre.

Summary

Your Full Potential
Your happiness depends on reaching your full potential. Psychologist Abraham Maslow believed that those burdened with “unfulfilled potential” feel as if they are leading an incomplete life.

Speaker and author Florence Littauer wrote about her father’s failed ambition to become a singer. As Littauer put it, he “died with the music still inside him.” Her metaphor is sad but it offers a powerful warning: Don’t die with your music inside, that is, don’t reach the end of your life without expressing your passion – whatever it may be – and reaching for your personal goals and happiness. To meet that objective, you must grow as a person by developing your character, your self-awareness, your skills and talents, your relationships and your spirituality.

Following the 15 “laws of growth” will help you. Study these laws. Apply their lessons. Make some sort of change every day. Chart your daily progress in a “growth journal.” If you take these steps, you will able to reach your potential:

Ask yourself, “Where do you want to go in life?” Personal growth does not occur automatically. You must make it happen and learn how to advance without waiting for the perfect time or motivation. Move yourself to take action, today. Don’t worry about making mistakes. Be inspired by Robert H. Schuller’s question: “What would you attempt to do if you knew you wouldn’t fail?” Be bold.

Growth is not easy. Everything worthwhile comes with a price. Be ready to pay that price, but always remember that faith trumps fear. Always believe that you will evolve and base your change process on solid intentions. Make the right choices for yourself as you take charge of your life. As Eleanor Roosevelt said: “In the long run, we shape our lives and we shape ourselves.”
2. **“The Law of Awareness”**

Do you know who you are? You cannot experience personal growth if you do not know yourself and understand what you want to do and achieve. This requires self-exploration. Philosopher Abraham Kaplan explains, “If, as Socrates said, ‘The unexamined life is not worth living,’ so [too] the unlived life is worth examining.” Find people who live the kind of life that you want for yourself, study them and pattern yourself after them. To become an accomplished public speaker, watch films of communication experts like “Johnny Carson, Ronald Reagan [and] Billy Graham.” Learn from your role models.

**“The Law of the Mirror”**

To work to improve yourself, you must deeply believe that you are worth the effort. Sales trainer Zig Ziglar wrote: “We can do very few things in a positive way if we feel negative about ourselves.” Most people with low self-esteem don’t try to grow. If lack of self-esteem is an issue for you, work on that before attempting to improve yourself in other areas. Understand that every human being has innate value; find that value in yourself. To improve your self-image, speak positively with yourself. Encourage, never discourage, yourself. Don’t measure yourself against people around you. Understand that it is OK to focus on yourself. Get rid of “limiting beliefs” – the restrictions you tell yourself you can’t surmount. Applaud for yourself when you do something well.

**“The Law of Reflection”**

Coca-Cola once advertised that its soft drink is “the pause that refreshes.” To grow, you need the same refreshing pause. Take time to reflect about what you are learning from your experiences. A thoughtful review of the lessons you’ve gained helps ensure that you are on the right track. Stopping to reflect is essential to achieving your dreams. This is true of every great person who made notable achievements. Everyone needs time to think things out. Business philosopher Jim Rohn advises, “At the end of each day, you should play back the tapes of your performance. The results should either applaud you or prod you.” When you reflect, ask yourself, “What is my biggest asset?” and “What is most fulfilling to me?” Find the answers.

**“The Law of Consistency”**

If you aren’t disciplined, all the motivation in the world won’t help you grow. Taking the steps necessary to grow each day requires discipline. George Lorimer said, “You’ve got to get up every morning with determination if you’re going to go to bed with satisfaction.” Give yourself a good chance to change inside. Start with the simplest challenges and move forward. “I work on the same principle as people who train horses,” says industrialist Ian MacGregor. “You start with low fences – easily achieved goals – and work up.”

**“The Law of Environment”**

You may be motivated, disciplined and ready to change. But your environment might be holding you back. Rearrange your surroundings in line with the formula “growth = change.” Examine your circumstances to determine how they might hinder you. Find new settings that will sustain, not inhibit, you. Your environment includes the people in your life. You can’t get ahead if the people around you keep you down. Harvard social psychologist David McClelland teaches that the people with whom you associate on a daily basis – your “reference group” – are 95% responsible for your success or failure. Choose them carefully.
“The Law of Design”
Approach personal growth as a mission that requires the utmost seriousness of purpose. Become proactive about your life in the areas in which you plan to grow. Every Christmas Day, after spending time with his family, author John Maxwell retreats to his study. He works there until New Year’s Eve, minutely examining his appointment calendar to determine how he spent his time the previous year. After this strategic review, Maxwell arranges exactly how he will spend his time in the coming year.

Carefully plan your life. Develop deliberate, repeatable disciplines to help you achieve your goals. Organize your work and leisure time. Become consistent in how you structure your days; use your precious time most efficiently.

“The Law of Pain”
Difficult events in your life are never fun, but you can learn and grow from painful experiences. The last thing you should do when tough times hit is to feel sorry for yourself. Everyone deals with negative circumstances at some time. Turn them into opportunities to learn. Gain something positive from the bad events in your life. Long-distance swimmer Diana Nyad says, “I am willing to put myself through anything; temporary pain or discomfort means nothing to me as long as I can see that the experience will take me to a new level.”

Awful experiences can lead you to new opportunities. Consider the chicken farmer whose farm flooded every spring – year after year – drowning his chickens. After one particularly bad flood, the farmer complained to his wife that he was at his wits’ end and didn’t know what to do. His wife said: “Buy ducks.” Be like the chicken farmer’s wife. Turn disaster into a brand-new start.

“The Law of the Ladder”
Anyone who ascends a ladder balanced on uneven ground is asking for trouble. The higher you go, the shakier things become. Trying to improve yourself without paying attention to your character will result in tears. Everything worthwhile depends on the foundation of character. How high you can climb depends on who you are.

Being of good character should matter more to you than success. Russian authorities imprisoned Alexander Solzhenitsyn because he was critical of Joseph Stalin. Solzhenitsyn wrote of his doleful experience: “I bless you, prison – I bless you for being in my life – for there lying on rotting prison straw, I learned the object of life is not prospering as I had grown up believing, but the maturing of the soul.”

“The Law of the Rubber Band”
Be prepared to step out of your comfort zone and stretch yourself like a rubber band. Many people find this so difficult that they cannot develop in any meaningful way. They remain less than what they could have been – if only they were willing or able to expand. Stretching yourself involves change, which is always potentially painful. Stretching also includes the taking of risk, which is a courageous act; the alternative is a dull and unfulfilling existence. As aviation photography pioneer A.G. Buckham said, “Monotony is the awful reward of the careful.” Successful people never want to remain in their comfort zones.
“The Law of Trade-Offs”
Personal development always involves trade-offs. To achieve your full potential, you must be willing to sacrifice some valued part of your life. The choices you make will have a direct bearing on which way your life will go. When you face tough choices, carefully assess all the associated pluses and minuses. Do not view the trade-offs you make as new problems you must endure, and don’t adopt an attitude of keeping your fingers crossed and just hoping that things work out. Welcome your tough choices and trade-offs. Accepting responsibility for your actions indicates maturity and growth.

“The Law of Curiosity”
You cannot grow if you do not learn. Make “why” your favorite word. The more curious you are, the more you can learn and the more you will grow. To enhance your curiosity, develop the mind-set of a beginner. Don’t be afraid to exhibit a lack of knowledge. “My greatest strength as a consultant is to be ignorant and ask a few questions,” management guru Peter Drucker once said. You will feel more comfortable asking questions if you spend your time with people who are as curious as you. Make it your goal to learn a new fact each day. Understand that failure gives you a special opportunity to learn. Always keep an open mind. Accept that any problem has numerous solutions.

“The Law of Modeling”
Personal growth becomes easier when someone knowledgeable guides you on your growth path. The numerous books available to help include Dale Carnegie’s classic on developing people skills, How to Win Friends and Influence People. Recruit a mentor who can advise you on what steps to take. If you are starting out in business, don’t expect to find a mentor at the top levels of the corporate world. Instead, find someone who operates a couple levels above you, and model yourself after him or her.

“The Law of Expansion”
Whatever you have done, whatever you have achieved, you can do more. Experts claim that people tap into only 10% of their potential. People can attain so much more than they have in the past. To accomplish more in your life, change your “Can I?” thinking to “How can I?” thinking. A “Can I?” question automatically limits you. A “How can I?” question assumes that a solution exists for any problem. You must discover that solution.

“The Law of Contribution”
Your life should not center on your personal growth. Be concerned about the needs of those you care about. Consider how you might contribute to their betterment. This is the best way to create internal satisfaction and joy.

American statesman and inventor Benjamin Franklin was always searching for the right answers to important questions. One of the greatest truths he discovered was that the best thing he could do was to help others. He began each day by asking, “What good shall I do today?” He ended each day with this question: “What good have I done today?”

About the Author

John C. Maxwell, founder of the John Maxwell Company and the EQUIP international leadership-training organization, is a motivation speaker. He has sold 21 million books.