

3. DEVELOP A PLAN FOR PERSONAL GROWTH

One of the things I enjoy most is doing conferences around the country. I especially love the five or six leadership conferences sponsored each year through our organization INJOY. One of the most important things I talk about at those conferences is personal growth. I often invite anyone in the audience who has already created a personal plan for growth to come up during the break to tell me about it. Do you know that in all the years I have been doing that, not once has anyone come up to me. Why? Because not one had created a personal growth plan for himself.

People think personal growth is a natural result of being alive. Well it's not. Growth is not automatic; it does not necessarily come with experience, nor simply as a result of gathering information. Personal growth must be deliberate, planned, and consistent.

One of the best things you can do for the people you are developing, besides modeling personal growth yourself, is to help them develop their own personal plans for growth. I want to emphasize that growth requires a *plan*. As my friend Zig Ziglar says, "You were born to be a winner, but to be a winner you must plan to win and prepare to win." Growing is the same. You have to create a plan and follow it.

I have devoted the greater part of my life to my own personal development and the creation of materials for the personal development of others. I have created leadership development tapes every month for the last nine years and sent them out to people across the country through INJOY, because my greatest desire is to help others reach their potential. That is why I hold leadership conferences. Let me outline for you a plan for growth that I give people at these conferences. Help your people adapt it to their needs. And use it yourself if you aren't already using another plan that works for you.

4. PRACTICAL STEPS FOR PERSONAL GROWTH

Set aside time daily for growth.

There are two important concepts in this step. First, time for growth must be *planned*. Getting sidetracked is one of the easiest things in the world to do. Growth time that is not strategically planned into the day soon disappears because our lives are busy. People must find a time that works for them and schedule it into their calendar. Then they must guard that time as they would any other appointment. Second, the time set aside must be set aside daily—for no fewer than five days a week. Educators report that people learn more effectively in shorter regular sessions than long infrequent blocks of time. A daily discipline pays dividends.

Here is the weekly plan that I recommend at my conferences:

- Monday:* One hour with God
- Tuesday:* One hour listening to a leadership tape
- Wednesday:* Another hour with the same tape (including time filing notes on highlights and reflecting on what has been learned)
- Thursday:* One hour reading a leadership book
- Friday:* Another hour with the same book (including time filing notes on highlights and reflecting on what has been learned)

Besides the daily plan, I also recommend going through materials during times that other people normally consider wasted time. For instance, whenever I travel, I take along books and magazines that may not be as meaty as my daily reading but that have good

material. If I'm waiting in an airport or flying on a plane, I'm also reviewing material and clipping out useful articles and quotes.

File quickly what you learn.

Every good piece of information a person finds needs to be processed and filed. I have used this system for over thirty years. As I find good articles or quotes, I clip and file them. This has two advantages. First, whenever I need materials for a talk or seminar, I have thirty years of collected resources to draw upon. Second, each time I reduce an article down to its one most relevant sentence or paragraph, I have processed through all the information, digested it, summarized it, and learned it.

Apply quickly what you learn.

Simply knowing a thing will not make it a part of you. To do that, you must apply it. Each time you learn something new, it's good to ask yourself, "Where, when, and how can I use this?" I prefer to do more than simply make a mental connection with the things I learn, so I use this system:

- Select one thing each week that I've learned.
- Put it on a 3 x 5 card. (I keep it in front of me for a week.)
- Share it with my wife.
- Share it with someone else within twenty-four hours.
- Teach it to someone else. (I put it in a lesson.)

Grow with someone.

I have a number of people around me who share things with me and whom I deliberately share things with. When you share what

you are learning with others, it increases your insight, builds your relationship with them, gives you a common vision, and holds you accountable. It also creates worthwhile conversation.

Plan your growth and follow it for a year.

The five-day plan outlined above was designed to be followed yearly. Using that plan, you can easily read twelve books and listen to fifty-two tapes per year. At the end of a year, you will have tremendous resources to draw on and will have grown tremendously. If you want to become an expert in a subject, according to Earl Nighthengale, spend an hour a day for five years focusing on that subject.

There's one more thing I must say about developing a plan for your people's growth: Start them today! People may tell you that they are too old to start now, that they're too busy to start now, or that the timing isn't right. Personal growth is like investing. It's not your timing. It's your time in. Get them going now.

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5. KEEP THE GROWTH GOING

We live in a competitive society that focuses on making it. Baseball players live for the day they make it to the big leagues. Business people climb the corporate ladder with the hope of someday being the CEO or chairman of the board. A few of the businesses that use network marketing techniques propose the idea that if a