

Why Do Some People Have The Midas Touch?

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Have you ever wondered why some people just seem to flow through life without back-breaking effort, and yet achieve amazing results? You've seen them, or maybe you know some of them – people who just seem to have “the knack”. Whatever they set out to do, they seem to accomplish with a “magic” sense of ease and flow, while so many others are often struggling to attain much more modest levels of success.

Have you ever wondered how this happens? Do these people have extraordinary talent in multiple areas of life? Are they so much more gifted than others? Can others learn to attain similar results? Are talent and natural gifts the answer?

Or might there be another explanation for the apparent ease with which these people produce awesome accomplishments? What if these “extraordinary” people are really not so different from the people we consider average? Could there be an entirely different explanation?

It turns out that there is a logical explanation that provides the key for any of us to experience similar accomplishments with that same ease and flow. This is not to say that significant achievements don't often require hard work and dedication – they usually do. And certainly talent can be an important factor.

However, it also is possible to work very hard, with great dedication and great intentions, and still achieve disappointing results. So how do we get the maximum results, while experiencing more joyful flow and ease in our endeavors?

Is there a secret to this that most of us do not know? Yes! To learn it we'll need some background about how our brains and minds function *. Currently, many neuroscientists estimate that approximately 5% of brain activity and capacity is devoted to conscious thought. The rest appears to be devoted to the unconscious.

What does the unconscious do? A good part of it, we still don't know, but let's look at what we do know. A major task of our unconscious brain is to keep us alive, protect us from danger of all sorts, and to take care of “mundane” physical tasks, that not only don't require our conscious thoughts, but would even be impeded by them.

For example, can you imagine how impossible it would be to scratch your nose if you had to consciously direct each of the 25 or so muscles involved? It would take years to learn how to scratch your nose, if you could even do it at all! It would be almost impossible to learn to walk if conscious control of the muscles involved was required. The unconscious quickly and easily learns to manage these complex physical functions with very little, if any, conscious intervention.

What else does the unconscious do? It makes sure that we breathe, although that is a function that we can consciously control if we choose. But without our unconscious to take care of that task, we would die from oxygen deprivation soon after falling asleep!

Our unconscious maintains and adjusts our heart beat, manages the digestion of our food, as well as a myriad of other practical tasks needed for us to live. In addition to maintaining those physical functions critical to our survival, our unconscious minds protect us from harm and guide us in the decisions we make in our everyday lives.

Our conscious and unconscious minds hold sets of beliefs that include our emotional, spiritual, and ethical codes and values. Again, remember that approximately 5% of our brain function is conscious and the other 95% is unconscious. So perhaps most of these controlling or guiding beliefs reside in the unconscious.

It is through the matrix of these largely unconscious beliefs that most of our decisions are made about what is safe and good for us to do and what is not. These behavior-determining beliefs are mostly held in the unconscious, where we are almost entirely unaware of them.

Most of our behavioral decisions also occur on the unconscious level. By the time the decision noticeably affects our behavior, the decision, but **not** the belief upon which it is based, has frequently percolated up to the conscious mind. Let me repeat that: The beliefs mostly remain at the unconscious level, even though the decision usually becomes conscious.

Because most of us do not know how to communicate back and forth between our conscious and unconscious, it is easy for the two to disagree quite radically. Further, we're often unaware of the conflict. Behavioral scientists often refer to this as "incongruity" between the conscious and unconscious.

For example, I may unconsciously believe that super wealthy people are unethical, that they must have taken advantage of others in order to acquire or retain such wealth. Yet, consciously, I may admire wealthy people and even yearn to become one. However, if my unconscious mind believes that wealthy

people are unethical or bad, it may seek to protect me from harm by not letting me become wealthy. With such a belief buried in my unconscious, becoming wealthy would put me at risk of being a “bad person”, which would be a form of harm to me. Therefore, my unconscious might try to protect me from harm, by preventing me from becoming wealthy.

Recall that current estimates are 5% of our brains are devoted to our conscious activities and functions and 95% to our unconscious. If I have 5% of my brain trying to attain wealth and 95% of my brain trying not to because it believes that being wealthy will compromise my ethics, does it seem likely that I will achieve wealth with any flow or efficiency?

Here’s another example: Perhaps I unconsciously feel that people who spend a lot of time and energy focusing on their appearances are shallow. My unconscious mind wants to protect me from being a “shallow person”, as that would conflict with my core values. So it sabotages my efforts to go to the gym on a regular basis and to stay in shape.

There are thousands of examples of our unconscious minds compelling us to act one way, even though we may have conscious intentions that point in another direction. Think New Year’s resolutions...

This lack of congruence between my conscious and my unconscious will likely make wealth unattainable for me. Maybe you can think of some other examples from someone you know, or perhaps from your own life.

If the job of our unconscious mind is to protect us, why does it formulate beliefs that impede our goals and interfere with accomplishments that we have set our conscious minds on? The unconscious mind, powerful as it is, is very literal and in some ways could be thought of as primitive. It certainly does not understand finances, for example. It probably does not understand the benefits of practicing a musical instrument for years, or learning a new language.

So it may not help us in any of these activities. It is not that our unconscious minds are subverting our efforts, but rather that they are trying to protect us from harm. It also may not help us to do things that we consciously know are for our good, but that it cannot see as beneficial. Likely it will see such things as a waste of our time and resources and will undermine our conscious motivation to do them. Based on the beliefs held by our unconscious, our conscious goals and intentions may frequently be at odds with its view of what is safe and beneficial for us.

From this discussion so far you may be tempted to think that our unconscious minds are quite dysfunctional. After all, they seem to hold many beliefs that limit or entirely block our conscious goals and aspirations.

However, our unconscious minds are not dysfunctional. They are doing exactly what they are supposed to do – protecting us, keeping us alive, and looking out for our best interests in a large number of areas.

The problem is that when our unconscious minds adopt a belief it is almost certainly functional and protective for us at the time, but these unconscious beliefs often outlive their usefulness. At the time that they are formed in the unconscious mind, they are entirely appropriate, and often even crucial to survival, either emotionally or physically.

But unless some event or other factor comes along in our lives to change these unconscious beliefs, they usually persist long past the time when they are actually helpful.

Here's a common example: Before we learn to swim, we are likely to have at least some fear of water. A good part of this belief, particularly in a young child, is likely unconscious. And it certainly is an important belief for our survival.

Because of this belief, unconscious though it mostly is, when we first start swimming lessons we may feel a sense of dread. We may even experience a strong fear. With proper teaching and experience of being safe in the water most of us can learn to overcome that fear and feel comfortable and safe.

But some of us never overcome that fear. We may not even know why we are so much more afraid of water than most other people. Yet we may break out in a cold sweat at just the thought of entering the water.

As young children we are so malleable and so readily adopt these unconscious beliefs, by the time we are just a few years old, we already have a huge warehouse of these beliefs. These beliefs are deeply embedded in our unconscious minds and already exerting enormous control over our behaviors.

As long as these beliefs are present and unchanged, they exert a tremendous influence over our behavior and the choices that we make. Except for events that have great impact and power in our lives, there is little else that will naturally change these long-held beliefs.

Please understand that these unconscious beliefs were almost certainly entirely appropriate and in our best interests when they are formed. This mechanism of forming unconscious, protective beliefs is absolutely essential to our survival.

Most of us go through our entire lives completely unaware of the set of unconscious beliefs that drives so much of our behavior and that controls so many of our decisions. And yet, many of these beliefs may go back to early childhood and no longer serve us well. They may be completely contrary to our adult goals and needs, or at least in need of major updating.

Living our lives controlled by these outdated beliefs is at best extremely disempowering.

Now, here comes the magic: What if there was a way to discover what beliefs were hidden in our unconscious minds and governing our choices and behaviors? Then what if there were effective and highly efficient tools that could be used to replace any such unconscious disempowering beliefs with ones that were empowering and that better supported our goals?

Suppose I could quickly and efficiently delve into my own unconscious and discover a hidden belief that was “protecting” me from becoming wealthy? What if I could replace it with beliefs that did not require wealth and ethics to be mutually exclusive? Then what if the new belief included ways in which being wealthy actually empowered me to be even more ethical and to better serve my fellow beings? If I held such a belief, my unconscious would no longer perceive my accumulation of wealth as a threat to my health, on the emotional and ethical playing field.

Now instead of 5% of my brain trying to help me build wealth and 95% of my brain trying to prevent this, I would have close to 100% of my brain helping me to become wealthy. Which way do you think I would have a better chance for success?

Think about an athlete doing something remarkable with only 5% of his brain helping him versus doing it with nearly 100% of his brain helping him. The examples are endless.

Recall that there really are two parts of our minds that control what we think, believe and do – the conscious mind and the unconscious mind. They may not always be in accord. In fact, in our everyday lives, often we are not even aware of the beliefs that are running our unconscious brains, much like the hidden software on a computer controls its behavior.

Fortunately, there has been a great deal of research into this aspect of human behavior over the last 50 years or so. And there have been several very significant breakthroughs that have profound practical implications.

Practical methods have been developed for discovering these unconscious beliefs. Then if we find that they are not congruent with our conscious goals, practical tools exist to provide us with highly effective methods for replacing those previously-unconscious beliefs with ones that better serve us.

A personal breakthrough: For many years I had been aware that I was sabotaging myself in several important areas of my life. I was working very hard, but enjoying relatively modest success. I could just feel the resistance I had to doing the things I knew I needed to do in order to raise my level of success.

Trying harder would work for a short time, but never for long enough to attain the results I was looking for. I knew that on some level I must have been sabotaging myself, but I could not figure out how or why.

Then in May of 2007, I was introduced to the science of “Neural Linguistic Programming”, or “NLP”. Simply put, NLP includes the science and practice of discovering what our unconscious beliefs are, particularly those that shape our perceptions of reality and those that control or strongly influence our behavior.

Equally importantly, NLP includes a set of tools that are designed to help us gain control of these unconscious beliefs once we have discovered what they are. The NLP tools provide a highly effective and efficient means for shifting these beliefs so that they better support our conscious goals and intentions.

NLP, as both a science and a practice, has been around for decades. During that time a number of researchers and practitioners have contributed dramatically to its development. The tools used for both discovery and for belief shifting have become stunningly powerful, while remaining remarkably accessible to anyone who wants to learn them and/or use them.

A number of practitioners and researchers stand out in the history of the development of NLP. You certainly have heard of some of them. You may know who Milton Erickson was. He is considered the father of hypnotherapy, but he was also instrumental in discovering and developing the principles that NLP is based on.

I’m sure you have heard of Tony Robbins, an internationally known leader in the field of personal development, as well as business and financial coaching. He would be the first to tell you that the core of his work is all based on the science and practice of NLP.

The awesome potential of NLP to help anyone who chooses to use it to overcome their own self-imposed limitations, (mostly unconscious), and to

maximize their results in realizing their potential, has attracted a great number of practitioners, as well as those just seeking its benefits in their own lives.

My first NLP experience: In May of 2007 I attended my first NLP weekend workshop, led by Christopher Howard, and called: "Breakthrough to Success™". I must admit that I was skeptical about this, but several people I trusted had highly recommended it. So I set aside the time and showed up. My skepticism was further fueled when I got to the event and realized I would be in a large hotel conference room with hundreds of people for the weekend. How could such a setting possibly lead to any kind of personal breakthrough? Was this just another example of the all-too-common big "brainwashing" sessions that have been popping up all over the place for a decade or so?

Well, I had set aside the time, had already made my arrangements, and had driven some distance to get there, so I figured I would stay long enough to find out if there was something of value for me to get.

Near the beginning of the weekend, we were told to pick an area of our lives to focus on. The idea was that the tools we were learning could be used to address just about any aspect of our lives, but that the best way to learn the tools would be to pick an area to start. It was suggested that we might want to each pick an area that was currently of greatest concern, or that might be causing us the most pain or discomfort in our lives.

The choices were: Relationships, Health, or Career. Of course, these were high-level, general categories, which we could adjust to fit our needs. For example, Career included finances, and Health could be mental, physical, emotional, spiritual or all four.

I chose Career because at that point in my life my finances were causing me a great deal of stress and I was very frustrated at my lack of progress in that area.

Chris Howard told us that because the unconscious does not necessarily divide things and separate them the way our conscious minds tend to, we should not be surprised if we start working on one area and experience a significant breakthrough in an entirely different area of our lives. Sure enough, that is exactly what happened.

Besides being frustrated and stressed over my finances at the time, I felt stuck in my relationship. My wife and I had been married for nearly 20 years, and while we got along very well, it felt like the much of the inspiration and some of the fire had been missing for a while. But I was much more aware of and felt more urgency about my finances.

So I picked Career and Finances and spent the first four hours of the weekend focused on that area of my life, being introduced to the tools, and going through the exercises, with that as my focus. At the end of four hours we had our first official 20 minute break. I found myself rushing outside, dialing my wife on my cell phone as I ran, and telling her that I had fallen madly in love with her all over again. I did not expect that, and I had no real idea of what had happened or why. I just knew that I had found something fantastic, that really worked, and that I was overjoyed and profoundly grateful.

Apparently there had been some unconscious beliefs that were holding me back in my relationship. While using the tools to release my restrictive beliefs about my finances, I had “accidentally” released these as well. What a miracle and great gift! Later in the weekend, I discovered just what that unconscious belief was that had been holding me back in my relationship. It was nice to notice that by the time I discovered it the belief was actually gone. I am sure the restrictive belief is still gone, as the love and fire remain.

By the second day of the workshop I was feeling tired in the morning, and felt like I needed a boost. I had been trying without success to kick my Starbucks Mocha habit for a couple of months. I really wanted to cut back on the caffeine, and eliminate as much sugar from my diet as I could. On the way to the first session of the second day, I walked to the local Starbucks and put my hand on the door handle. I started to pull it open. Then I paused. I found a voice inside asking me if I really wanted to do this. The answer was a resounding “No!”. I let go of the door and went on to the meeting room. The remarkable part of this experience was that it took virtually no effort. It did not feel like I was using willpower or denying myself something that I wanted.

Of course, since the workshop I have continued studying this remarkable set of tools for optimizing the results we get in our lives. The more I learn the better my life becomes.

One of the things I love about NLP is that major progress can be attained so quickly and often easily. For example, instead of spending 5 years in therapy to find out why I feel compelled to eat junk food, I can find out why, and eliminate the compulsion in a single session.

Milton Erickson once told a group of his students: “Your clients will be your clients because their conscious minds are not in congruence with their unconscious minds.” Even way back then, he knew the power of these unconscious, limiting beliefs to sabotage our conscious aspirations.

Perhaps the people who have the “Midas touch”, those who seem to flow through their lives, achieving great success and fulfillment, without back-breaking effort

and soul crushing stress, are not possessed of super talents and far greater intelligence than the rest of us. Maybe they simply have much greater congruence between their conscious and unconscious minds.

In this article I have barely scratched the surface of this powerful approach to optimizing our lives. I am still a student of this technology, myself, yet I have already experienced major positive changes in my life.

I am in awe of how much more there is to learn and what great ongoing potential NLP holds for humanity.

If you would like to learn more, I would be more than happy to talk with you, and to share in greater depth. So please feel free to send me an e-mail with your questions and comments.

There are many NLP schools and other sources of information and training, as well as many terrific practitioners. If you are interested, I can help you become involved with this rich and productive self-discovery process. It has become a vital tool in my own life, and I am excited to share it with everybody who is interested.

Thanks for taking the time to read this article!

Please send your e-mails to: jeff@myhealthoptimizer.com

To your empowerment and health!

Jeff Bell

* Please note that I have used mind and brain in some respects as interchangeable in this article. Of course, they are not. However the distinctions between mind and brain comprise a massive area of study, and is beyond the scope of this article. I trust that this concession to simplicity has not marred the intended clarity.

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