

# Success

Andrzej Stec JDPSN

Excerpt from Q & A at Kwan Um Daejeon Zen Group July, 2016

**Question:** There's one word in this life that has been helping me but at the same time also giving me suffering. That word is success. What is success? And what is a successful life?

**Andrzej Stec JDPSN:** What do you want? [Silence]

I heard that that 95 percent of people don't know what they want. Maybe 3 percent know what they want but can't get it. There's 2 percent left. The next 1 percent know what they want, and they get it, but are not happy. The last 1 percent of people know what they want, know how to get it, get it and they're happy with it. A teacher in our school taught, "Be careful what you want because you might get it. When you get it, you might not like it."

What is true success? If you ask Buddha, the greatest success is to become Buddha. The main Buddha halls in Korean temples are called, "Dae Woong Jeon", which means "Hall of Great Heroes"—the hall of first-place winners. From Buddha's point of view, you cannot get anything higher than becoming Buddha. Before getting enlightenment, Shakyamuni Buddha was the biggest loser in India. He had a kingdom and he lost it. He lost his wife, who was considered the most beautiful woman in India. He lost all his wealth. He lost his son. He didn't get enlightenment and he lost all his Dharma friends, five friends who just deserted him. When he finally sat alone under the bodhi tree, he was the number-one loser in India. That's the point. To become a great winner, one has to become a great loser first.

If you know what you want, it will become your dream. If it's a small dream, when you get it, it comes with small success. If you fulfill your small dream and get success, you should be happy with it. If you have a big dream, you get big success. Actually, you can get anything you want, but there's a catch—you cannot keep it. You will lose it and all your effort will be for nothing. That's why desire makes so much suffering.

Nowadays, some people make money by teaching others how to get what they want with less work. After World War II, if you were busy doing many things and multitasking, it was considered successful. Nowadays, this is number-one bad advice. If we are busy, maybe we are somewhat efficient. We are doing many things but they are not necessarily important. We are not necessarily productive. Being productive means doing less but doing the right things.

That means, first, what we want has to become clear.

We can decide: do many unimportant things and get busy, get tired, get stressed, get sick. We call that "living in

Shallowville"—nowadays we live in Shallowville. Of the six billion people on the planet, most of us are mediocre. In the end, perhaps we can get some small success but cannot keep it.

Or, do that one thing and do it well. Few people can do one thing and go really deep, do the deep work and a find very big success. Yet all those actions take a lot of energy and time. Maybe money and fame come along with it. Maybe also prestige and respect but still in the end, we cannot keep any of them.

In Zen we say, "Don't want anything, then you get everything"—but nobody believes that. Most people want some-

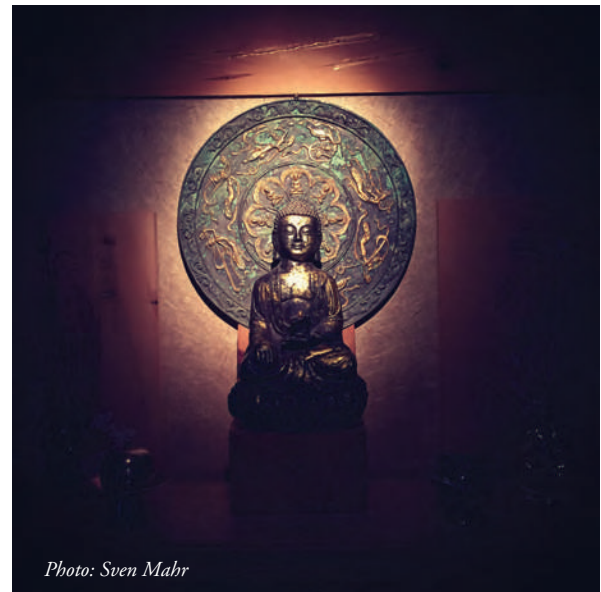


Photo: Sven Mahr

thing, not knowing that the very thing they want is not good for them. Now you have a choice—don't know what you want and get busy; know what you want 100 percent, go for it, get it and then lose it; or, don't want anything and get everything. Three kinds of success—which one do you like?

This is a serious question. Many of us here today [*indicating audience*] are mostly middle-aged, right? Nobody here today just graduated from high school. I see that some of us are getting gray hair. In the West, we say "over the hill." Einstein said, "A person who has not made his great contribution before the age of 30 will never do so." But I don't believe that because he didn't know about meditation. If you meditate, it's possible to keep young and fresh. It helps. Your brain's age

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doesn't matter. The question is, how do we want to spend the rest of the time that's left for each one of us?

Those who came here at six o'clock in the evening or later, all of us got closer to death by two hours. Actually that's true for everybody. Other people in this city spent these last two hours in different ways and this is a fact. This body will not stay forever. When we die and how we die, nobody knows, but time doesn't wait for anybody. We all got closer to our end on this planet by two hours. Then, for what kind of success will we spend the remaining precious time of our life? Where do we want to invest? In becoming famous? Making a little more money? Getting a house? Putting our energy into our children to help them get married well? Maybe you want to give the rest of your life to your country? That's a little better than just for yourself. Or maybe put the rest of our life toward stopping wanting anything, and to find the truth. Not the relative, human "truth," which is always changing. Everybody's confused because there are so many truths. One day a scientist will say, "Coffee is bad for you, don't drink it." Next a new researcher says that coffee is good for you and you can take two cups a day. Who will you believe? Even what we're saying now is also Buddhist truth, right? Subjective truth. Anybody can say anything. In Zen we say, "The tongue has no bone." Whatever I say now, don't believe it either.

Every human being has one big responsibility, though—you have to attain your truth. Have no doubt. Don't run around asking other people for advice. This is my personal definition of success. Everybody is different. Each of us who came here came with a different reason. Small happiness is better than big suffering. Zen doesn't say, "Don't go to work tomorrow, don't take care of your research, don't care about your company, give away all your money, or stop talking to your parents or your children." You can have it all. You can have small happiness and big happiness. Just follow Dharma. When you get small happiness, enjoy it but don't get attached to it. Don't stop working for the great success. Don't settle for small happiness. Go for the big one. Small happiness, big happiness: both are better than big suffering, and this practice will help you. If your mind is clear, you'll enjoy a cup of tea. It will give you great joy. If you share this cup of tea and nice conversation with your parents, husband, wife, children or friends, it will become bigger happiness. But don't forget to meditate, don't forget to practice. Then, whatever this world is going through, you will be able to deal with it and even use it to get more happiness and help others. You can get it all. It is said that in a revolution, there are always winners and losers. We have to become winners of our own revolution. The one thing that will help us is by keeping our bodhisattva direction—"not for me." ♦

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One million distractions.  
Ten thousand Dharmas.  
All come to one.

Where is one?  
Click.  
What is one?  
Smile.

Gate Gate..  
opinion  
Paragate...  
noise  
Parasamgate..  
tension  
Bodhi svah . . .

Come back.

—*Joanna Gruchot, Wrocław, Poland*

### Poem of the Garden Master

Sleep, eat, weed, walk,  
sow, watch, listen, think,  
feel, sense, laugh, dream,  
observe myself, look . . . . . inside . . . . .  
i am happy with this having nothing  
and be everything.

There is no I.

Only air, wind, light, drop of rain,  
croak of frog, whistle of bird,  
silent wingbeat of multicolor butterfly,  
seed that breaks and become sprout,  
moon that digs with silver light  
the dark night.

Brilliant sun that becomes drop of sweat...  
hands of soil and leaves on the plate,  
taste of fruit in the palate.

Silence . . . . .

Who am I?

Just don't know.

—*German Linares*  
*Musangsa Temple, Korea*  
*Summer 2016*