



The “I Can” Handbook

Introduction

Successful people often say that it was their drive to keep going, despite the desire to quit, that drove them to successful heights in their business or careers. That sentiment perfectly sums up the “*I can*” attitude.

In other words, even though the odds may be against you, keeping a positive mindset can give you the mental push and energy you need to stick to your plan and build your life the way you intended.

If you develop a negative “*I can't*” attitude, it can pervade nearly every situation you're in. It can affect your business plans, career track, or even personal family or social situations.

If you keep telling yourself you can't do things, eventually you'll believe yourself and you'll lose the desire to even try.

Have you ever wanted to attend an event or party, but chose not to go because you didn't know anyone? Was there ever an incredible opportunity to explore your passion, but you refused out of fear?

In these situations, I want you to face your fears, attack that negative attitude, and say “*I can*” – especially if there are distinct benefits that could help your business or personal life.

Instead of getting discouraged by setbacks or failure, think about your abilities and strengths, then push ahead!

Understanding What “I Can’t” Really Means

When someone says, “*I can’t*,” what they’re really saying is “*I’m afraid to fail, so I won’t try.*”

If there’s a breath in your body and a potential success that awaits you, why *wouldn’t* you want to try? If there’s a way to improve your life, career, or business, why *wouldn’t* you want to take that risk?

The answer is exactly that... trying new things involves a certain amount of risk and not all of us are risk takers. ***Most new situations don’t involve a life-threatening risk, but the simple fact of not knowing the outcome can paralyze people with fear.***

Unfortunately, fear prevents you from trying anything new and it’s often difficult to break this catch-22 cycle.

“*I can’t*” are the words that come out of someone’s mouth when they’re crowded by the doubters, plagued by low self-esteem, and they’ve stopped believing in their goals and aspirations.

A strong support system comprised of friends and family members who believe in your goals can help to change your mindset and reignite your passion. If you don’t feel like you have a support system, you can look for support online in social media groups and communities.

“I can’t” is a way of denying yourself success because you’re uncertain that you’ll be able to achieve your goal and you’re afraid to disappoint. But in the end, the only one you’ll disappoint is yourself if you don’t at least make an attempt.

Strong leaders don’t have this attitude – or if they do encounter it, they know the steps needed to combat these negative thoughts so they can continue with their plans.

Sure, it's human nature to doubt your ability or expertise, especially when faced with something brand new. *The difference, however, is what you do to combat this self-doubt.*

Those with a “go getter” attitude *know how to turn their negative thoughts into positive actions.* Rather than dismissing themselves from contention, they welcome the challenge to learn something new.

Here are some steps you can take to combat self-doubt and become action-oriented:

- 1. Don't take criticism or mistakes personally.** No one is perfect. Learn from your experiences and prepare yourself for the next time.
- 2. Find ways to improve your skills.** Take continuing education classes, e-courses, or read e-books to gain confidence in those skills you feel need improvement.
- 3. Think about past successes.** Success is sweet and words of praise can do wonders for your self-esteem. Think about the times when you were successful and find ways to regain that feeling.
- 4. Think about the problem or task logically and break it into pieces.** This can be overwhelming, so tackle smaller goals one at a time to avoid confusion and added stress.
- 5. Delegate what you can to other qualified experts.** Use the resources around you to help complete the job rather than tackling everything yourself.

The next time you're faced with the chance to try something new, take a deep breath, think about the benefits you could experience from this, and say “*I can!*”

The Automatic “I Can’t” Response

When challenges or road blocks get in our way, as they inevitably will, the automatic response for those who are weak in their resolve to succeed is “*I can’t*.” Rather than taking the time to explore how to overcome a specific hurdle, the default mindset is: “*I can’t*.”

After all, it’s much easier and less stressful to just *not* try, rather than to put in the effort with no guarantee of success. But think about all that you could be missing!

- Did you pass on the single’s club event because you were nervous? Perhaps you would have met a new friend or partner.
- Did you pass up the chance to make a presentation to your local Chamber of Commerce simply because you’re afraid of public speaking? You might have developed some new business contacts.
- Have you thought about owning your own company but talked yourself out of it because you don’t have enough experience? Maybe you would have increased your income enough to get your family out of debt.
- Do you want to lose weight but get frustrated with all the calorie counting and need for exercise? You might miss out on being heart healthy and medication free.

All of these scenarios are conscious decisions we make regarding our work, social life, or health.

Every day, we’re faced with decisions from the moment we wake up to the second our head hits the pillow at night. Do you really want to live with regrets about any of your decisions, all because you convinced yourself to say “*no*”? That “*I can’t*” attitude really can be harmful to your psyche!

Even when others try to encourage and boost you while you're still in that doubting phase, the automatic "*I can't*" is a ready and willing response designed to shut down their attempts.

The people who care and support you the most can't force you to take action. They can offer advice and provide the steps you need to take, but it's up to *you* to take action.

Without action, your thoughts remain daydreams.

The Media's Mind Trap

Every day we spend at least a dozen hours in front of some form of media: television, internet, radio, magazines, and newspapers. We live in the land of instant information and it's enough to make your brain go into overload.

Have you ever thought about how all these media messages play a role in our negative attitudes? It stands to reason that, with so many media images hitting our senses every-day, we'd be influenced to some extent. After all, why would companies spend millions of dollars each year on advertising if we weren't influenced?

For example, let's take a look at the health and beauty market. Airbrushed super models grace the covers of magazines in skimpy bathing suits or dresses. Multiple television shows showcase plastic surgery. The paparazzi torment the celebrity crowd because we're obsessed with the *"beautiful people"* and their lifestyles.

Then, every year cosmetic companies unveil the latest and greatest concoctions that promise to be the fountain of youth.

What does all this ogling do to our minds?

It causes us to revisit those negative "I can't" thoughts every day:

- *"I can't"* get that supermodel body because *"I can't"* afford the personal trainer.
- *"I can't"* get my picture perfect body without surgery.
- *"I can't"* be happy without millions of dollars and expensive cars and toys.
- *"I can't"* get old so I'll fight the natural signs of aging, no matter the cost.
- *"I can't"* afford this trendy gadget, but my favorite celeb is wearing it, so I'll just add it to my insurmountable credit card debt.

What happens when people try to achieve those unrealistic expectations put into their minds by the media? Sure enough, when they realize they can never achieve those results, they decide that they aren't good enough. It's a vicious cycle.

What Can You Do To Change Your Mind?

Now the mind games begin. You've convinced yourself – and anyone that will listen – that you *can't* do what you need to do for your success. Yet in the back of your mind, you still desire success, but you're just afraid to go after your dream.

- Maybe you've had one too many disappointments and you aren't ready to experience another.
- Maybe you're just physically tired of trying.
- Maybe you think the competition is just too great and you'd rather stop now than be embarrassed later on.

Whatever the reason for your latest “*I can't*” attitude, the reasons why “*You can*” still remain strong.

Here are some actions you can take to help change your negative mindset:

1. **Avoid exposure to negative images when possible.** If your mood plummets when looking at the perfect bodies in fashion magazines, find another magazine of interest or read a book instead.
2. **Pull out your action plan and examine your goals.** Are they realistic? Have they changed from when you first wrote them down? Are these actually *your* goals, or are you trying to live up to other people's expectations?
3. **Examine your strategy for achieving those goals.** Is it still valid? Can you delegate any of this work to others to help you achieve these goals?
4. **What are you lacking in your life?** How can you fix this? Write out small short-term goals – or baby steps – to make your goals more achievable.

- 5. Lean on your support groups.** Share your concerns and determine if your chosen support people can give you what you need.

Once you've identified an area that needs support, improvement, or fixing, make that your focus with new action steps to aid you in your quest.

When You Need Something More

If, after reviewing your plans, you discover that the stumbling block to your success is simply that you need to learn a necessary skill, then your path is straightforward again. Simply determine what you can do to gain this knowledge, then take action.

See? The steps to success now seem a little more achievable and less complicated!

Isolate what needs to be done, the time you need, and the resources you require, and then go after it. To give up now has to be considered a non-option.

If financial resources are an issue, dig down and look at what's really available. Can you save the funds needed? Can you push back your goals just long enough to raise the funds required? Is there a less expensive alternative that's just as good? Any of these strategies are a far better alternative than to quit at this stage.

Learn what you need to know and implement it.

There are actually two steps listed here but they work in tandem with each other. Yes, you can learn all there is to know about your chosen subject, but it does no good just sitting in your head. ***You must do something with that knowledge in order to be successful.***

On every college campus there are the “*career students*” who study for years on end in hopes of earning every degree possible. Are they really using their knowledge wisely? Or do they stay in school because they don't think they can be successful in their chosen career?

The same holds true for those who start internet businesses. All the hype tells us how easy it is to earn money from home; there are thousands of “*gurus*” who charge hefty sums to teach their students how to find this “*easy money*.” You can pay millions of dollars for all this training, but how will you make that money back? What's the next step after learning all these different internet marketing strategies?

Action.

Learning is wonderful but you ***must put that knowledge into action*** in order to reap the rewards of your learning. Sure, it's risky, but there's also a risk in not taking action. Taking that first step toward success can be enough to get your "*I can*" attitude back again.

Having an "*I can*" attitude supports the notion that there's always something you can do when you reach an obstacle – it's just a matter of going after your goal again, and again, and again...

Summary

Once you change your attitude from one of resignation to one of hope and confidence, you've won half the battle. Keeping a positive attitude in your business and personal life can be difficult; very often it's a mind game and a test of wills.

There are countless stories of people who quit just days or months before they would have realized success. They put 2 or 3 years into building their dreams, and then quit just when they're about to reach their stride.

For example, there are many *potential* business owners who never take that leap of faith to start their businesses. Instead, they continue to daydream about what it would be like to be their own boss and never fully realize their potential. This is a result of the “*I can't*” attitude. After all, it's easier to daydream than to take action!

If your outlook is positive and you continue to believe in the abilities that got you this far, your journey becomes easier and within reach.

By continuing your skill development and pushing yourself out of your comfort zone, you'll consistently be challenged. Once you meet that first challenge successfully, working to meet the next challenges will become easier.

Try the following tips to discover your positive attitude:

- 1. Be thankful.** Rather than always seeing the negative parts of a situation, think about the positive benefits. Even if you're in the midst of a struggle and stressed about a particular challenge, take the time to notice the nice weather, your comfortable home, your good health, or even that sentimental picture from your child.
 - ***Life is good but sometimes we forget this fact when we focus so intensely on the stressors.***

2. **Be flexible.** Routines are great for improving productivity, but you can avoid unnecessary stress if you learn to be flexible when complications arise. Take some deep breaths and learn to go with the flow.
 - If something isn't turning out the way you expected, ***take a break and focus your efforts on another project.***

3. **Journal your thoughts.** Personal journals can help you sort out your feelings and help you relieve stress.
 - If you're upset with someone, write out your feelings in your journal. ***This can be a cathartic experience to get all those feelings out.***
 - Use a journal for business, too. Frustrations with a client may seem more trivial once you write it all down. It also helps you see solutions more clearly.

4. **Use personal mantras or positive affirmations daily.** Keep a favorite positive quote in your office or in a place where it's noticeable so you can see it and remember the quote throughout the day.
 - When you feel your blood pressure increasing, focus on your affirmation, take a deep breath, and walk away from your desk for a few minutes.

If you have dreams you'd like to reach, you have every right to go for it. ***No one should be talking you out of realizing your dreams – not even you!***

Changing your negative mindset into a positive one won't happen overnight, but if you work through these tips one at a time, you'll soon wake up with the self-confidence to exclaim: ***"I CAN!"*** And you will!

The “I Can” Worksheet

Combating Self-Doubt

What are some of my past successes?

Changing The Negative Mindset

What do I feel that I’m lacking in my life?

What can I do to add these things to my life? Put this in terms of specific, realistic goals.

Who can I invite into my support group?

How can I be more flexible?

Write a personal mantra or affirmation that will serve as daily motivation.

Mini-Journal: What are some of my thoughts, feelings, or issues about my relationships, work, or home life that I'd like to release?

The “I Can” Checklist

Use this checklist as a reminder of the important steps you can take to develop an “*I Can*” attitude. You’ll soon discover that you’ve become action-oriented, saying “*I Can*” instead of “*I Can’t!*”

Combating Self-Doubt

- Don't take criticism personally.
- Find ways to improve your skills.
- Think about past successes.
- Break the problem or task into manageable pieces.
- Delegate what you can.

Changing The Negative Mindset

- Avoid exposure to negative images.
- Pull out your action plan and examine your goals.
- Examine your strategy for achieving those goals.
- Decide how to get what you're life is lacking.
- Make new goals to get what you want.
- Divide your goals into achievable steps.
- Establish support groups and lean on them when necessary.

Finding Your Positive Attitude

- Be thankful.
- Be flexible.
- Journal your thoughts.
- Use personal mantras or positive affirmations daily.