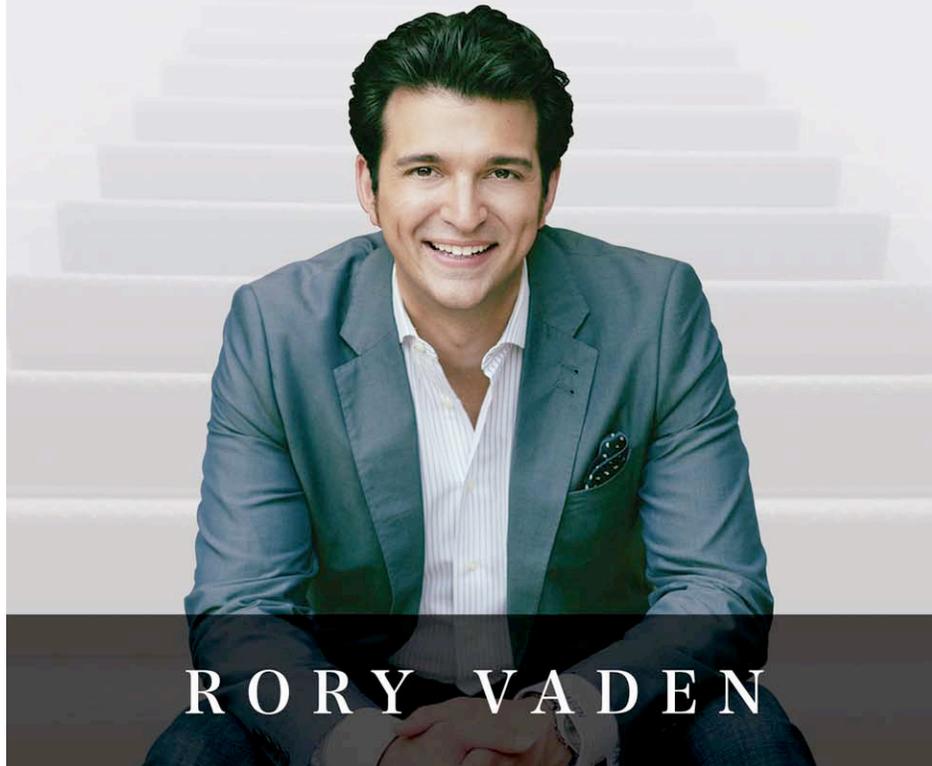


“THIS BOOK IS A COMPELLING AND CHALLENGING
CALL FOR ALL OF US TO ACCOMPLISH GREATNESS.”

—Andy Andrews, *New York Times* bestselling
author of *The Traveler’s Gift* & *The Noticer*

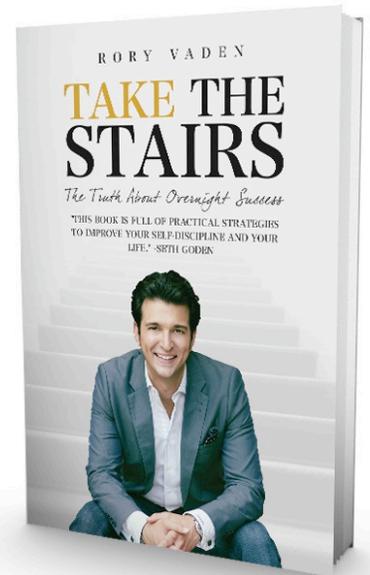
TAKE THE STAIRS

7 Steps to Achieving True Success



RORY VADEN

What other authors are saying about the new book *“Take the Stairs”*



"This book is a compelling and challenging call for all of us to accomplish greatness. It not only shows you how to make self-discipline more sustainable, it will reignite your passion to achieve." –**Andy Andrews, New York Times bestselling author of *The Traveler’s Gift* & *The Noticer***

*"I always say that personal finance is only 20% head knowledge—and 80% behavior. Behavior change is hard, because it requires something a lot of people are missing these days: self-discipline. If you want to make a change in your money, business or relationships, do not miss *Take the Stairs*. It gives you the tools you need to take control of the only person holding you back: yourself!"* –**Dave Ramsey, host of *The Dave Ramsey Show* and best-selling author of *The Total Money Makeover***

"This book on self-discipline shows you how to develop the courage, character and determination you need to succeed in anything you attempt. It can change your life!" -- **Brian Tracy, New York Times bestselling author of *Eat That Frog***

"Having better relationships, staying better connected, and providing more value to your network all rely on your ability to first be self-disciplined. This book won't let you off easy - and that's why it's great. Rory Vaden gives readers what they need to get focused and tackle problems head on - and win." - **Keith Ferrazzi, bestselling author of *Never Eat Alone* and *Who's Got Your Back*.**

"Take the Stairs will change the way you work and live. Rory Vaden has created a gem of a book that will inspire you to do the little extra things that make a HUGE difference. This book gives you a solid plan for success. Two words, BUY IT!" – **Chester Elton, Best-Selling co-author of “*The Carrot Principle*” & “*The Orange Revolution*”**

"Get rich quick, easy and painlessly'. Don't be fooled. There is no escalator to the top. This book will tell you the truth about what it really takes to become a massive success in every area of your life--if you choose to Take the Stairs." -- **Darren Hardy, Publisher *SUCCESS Magazine*, bestselling author of *The Compound Effect***

"The easy way is never the excellent way. Rory Vaden knows this and teaches you the timeless truths of achieving

excellence in your personal and professional life. Take the Stairs is a refreshing look at what it really takes to succeed. For get rich quick or wish upon a star, go elsewhere. For an agenda for excellence, read this book. Rory gets it." - **Mark Sanborn, Bestselling author of The Fred Factor and You Don't Need a Title to Be A Leader**

"If you rarely finish the books that you buy, Take The Stairs will be a change for you. After just a few pages, I was hooked, and I read this absolute treasure of inspiration and practical advice in one sitting. Rory is the real deal. This isn't a book of cheerleading and motivational platitudes. This is the book that can change your life. I highly recommend it to anyone who is looking to take quality of work and life to a higher level." - **Joe Calloway, Bestselling author, Becoming A Category of One**

"Do you have a career worth loving? Rory Vaden will give you the ideas, insight, and inspiration to create a career worthy of your greatest potential." - **Sally Hogshead, author of Fascinate and founder of HowToFascinate.com**

"Rory's Take the Stairs book is an encouraging message of hope and truth that can really help you improve your life. Read it as soon as possible!" **Tom Ziglar, CEO - Proud Son of Zig Ziglar**

"Pure and simple, this should be the only book on the shelf in this category- because it's the only proven way to achieve authentic, sustainable success. In his book "Take the Stairs" Rory Vaden provides a timeless message with a timely sense of urgency. While too many spend their lives searching for the ever-elusive shortcut to success, Rory lays out the only sure path in existence - having the discipline to be clear with your goals, work hard and do what most people are unable, or unwilling to do. Rory Vaden believes it, teaches it and lives it every day. Buy this book and heed this message!" - **David Avrin, Author of It's Not Who You Know - It's Who Knows YOU! (2010 John Wiley & Sons)**

"You can't spend 30 seconds around Rory without getting inspired to change your life. You're about to spend a few hours with him. Get ready." - **Jon Acuff, Wall Street Journal Bestselling author of Quitter, Closing the Gap Between Your Day Job and Your Dream Job**

"An inspiring and empowering book on how to harness your potential and become great." - **Randy Gage, author of The Prosperity Mind**

Take the Stairs

Take the Stairs

7 Steps to Achieving True Success

Rory Vaden

A Perigee Book

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This book is dedicated to the two most important women in my life:

To Mom, thank you for the sacrifices you made to raise Randy and I up in truth, and for making sure we always had extravagant love even though we had little money.

To my precious wife, Amanda. You are the reason that I live and the reason God created me. You are the most abundant blessing in my life. Thank you for being my partner through it all.

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INTRODUCTION

Waking Up in a ProcrastiNation

The last time you came up to a set of stairs and an escalator, did you *Take the Stairs*? If you're like 95% of the world, then you probably didn't. Most people don't; most of the time we look for shortcuts. We all want to be successful and we all want to have a happy life, but we constantly look for the easy way. We look for the "escalator" in hopes that life will be easier. Unfortunately in our search for making things easier, we are actually making them worse.

Americans are failing. Health data shows that 66% of adults in our country are overweight and 31% are obese. The divorce rate for our first marriages is 41% with the rate for second marriages soaring to 60%. There were over 800,000 of us who filed for nonbusiness bankruptcy recently, and an estimated 46.6 million of us are smokers.

Are You Affected by Any of These Problems?

I certainly am, and so are the people I love. And while some of us make these choices deliberately, for many of us our lives have strayed from our original intentions. People are failing. Not by my standards, but by their own.

In many key areas of life we are simply missing the mark. Central to all of these challenges is a lack of one value that is diminishing in modern culture: self-discipline. We live in a "get rich quick" society where we can "lose weight fast" or cure our ailments by "asking our doctor about the next magic pill."

But there is a huge invisible cost to living in our shortcut society.

We are conditioned to believe that it is moral to pursue immediate satisfaction and that difficulties can always be circumvented. We don't want to make any sacrifices, and for many of us we have never had to. Instead, the vast majority of Western societies have adopted an "escalator mentality"—one that says getting what we want shouldn't require much work, and that there are always shortcuts in business and in life.

The problem is that the escalator mind-set is crushing our confidence and paralyzing the very actions it takes to truly become successful.

We have no accountability because we all allow each other to get away with debt, indulgence, and procrastination. We want everything now and we want it without earning it. We've come to expect dessert to be served to us without having to finish our dinner. We almost never finish things that we start; at least not if they aren't convenient or comprehensively entertaining.

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For example, there's a great chance that you won't finish reading this book. At least not cover to cover. If you're like most people in the world today, then you have read fewer than five books cover to cover in your lifetime. According to one major American publisher, 95% of all books that are purchased are never completely read. And congratulations if you've made it this far, because 70% of all books ever purchased are never even opened!

Instead of reading the book, we'd rather get the CliffsNotes. Instead of changing our diets, we'd rather get the latest fitness contraption. Instead of budgeting our money, we'd rather play the lottery or charge up our credit cards. Overall, most of us belong to the school of thought that asks, "Why would I take the stairs when I could just take the escalator?"

Every one of us is searching for shortcuts. In most everything we do. We're basically programmed that way because the idea of shortcuts is being sold to us through almost every major medium in the

world. We see magazine ads that tell us “how to lose weight in 4 minutes a day,” and we buy books that promise us the chance to think and *attract* success to come to us without us having to do a darn thing.

There are game shows that test our own greed through our willingness to backstab other human beings for the chance to make millions or become a reality TV star. There are pills, books, magazines, speakers, contraptions, and jigamaroos sold to us to make our lives easier in all areas, because—let’s face it—it’s easy to be just one more guy out there who is looking for *The Secret*. We’re looking for the easy way—the way where things will come to us so we don’t have to go out and work.

I enjoyed some of those game shows, I tried some of those same magic pills, and I subscribed to some of those same beliefs about success. But then I woke up one day feeling like I had been brainwashed because, without realizing it, my mind had changed to think I could somehow have it all without discipline, sacrifice, or hard work.

The only problem with always looking for shortcuts is that most of us aren’t going to win *American Idol*, the lottery, or *Deal or No Deal*. It’s rare that you or someone you know will make it as a big star in Hollywood, the NBA, or the Olympics. So while there are some great gimmicks out there and some great success stories, the idea of betting on becoming an “overnight success” doesn’t seem like a sound plan to live by. I’m not prepared to leave my life’s success up to chance. Are you?

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Despite many well-crafted marketing messages, the formula for success is no secret. It has just been long forgotten in our world of excess, and it’s so obvious that it’s elusive. The only guaranteed formula to succeed in anything is the same as it has always been.

Around the house growing up, my family always promoted success because my mom and my brother would always tell me, “One day, Ror, you’re going to grow up and you’re going to make it!” I wanted success so I started studying it. I got a degree in leadership, management, and an MBA. While in college I just so happened to get recruited into one of the world’s most intensive training programs on success for young people: the Southwestern Company.

Southwestern taught me the true principles of business and personal success that have enabled them to create an entire family of companies over the past 150 years and literally hundreds of the world's top leaders. Southwestern was a culture that bred success and it not only exposed me to life principles but also gave me a platform to build my own half-million-dollar business while still in college. There I became infatuated with what made people successful.

I started meeting and interviewing successful people from all walks of life. I read dozens of books from the most successful people in the world. I spent thousands of dollars on courses and spent countless hours thinking about one inescapable question: "What makes successful people successful?"

Later, I even cofounded a multimillion-dollar international training company called Southwestern Consulting, which puts on large motivational success conferences. We have tens of thousands of successful people come through our training. We coach hundreds of the most successful salespeople and entrepreneurs in the United States. Now I keynote at corporate events for top organizations all around the world, and what I have learned is that there is one thing that *all* successful people have in common: Successful people have all had to do things they didn't feel like doing in order to get where they are.

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Success isn't easy. Success isn't overnight. Success isn't ordinary. And so becoming successful requires us to do things that aren't easy and things that people don't *ordinarily* do. Success means we have to develop the self-discipline to get ourselves to do things we don't want to do. In other words, success is not about taking the escalator—it's about taking the stairs.

Successful people have the self-discipline to do things they don't want to do. They do the things they don't want to do *even when* they don't *feel like* doing them. Discipline is mandatory if we want to control our own success because most of the time success requires activities that we wouldn't usually *want* to do. But there is good news . . .

Doing things we don't feel like doing isn't as hard as we think—when we know how to think the

right way. It's not that successful people find it easier to do things that most people don't like doing; it's that they think differently about it. This book shows us how to think like successful people think in order that we may do as successful people do so that we can have the things that successful people have.

What would you have if you could have anything? What if you could have it by simply learning to change the way you think? Well, you can.

Take the Stairs is about self-discipline—the ability to take action regardless of your emotional state, financial state, or physical state. This book isn't about doing things the hardest way possible, but it *is* about doing the hardest things as soon as possible so that you can get whatever you want in life—as soon as possible.

Imagine what you could accomplish if you could get yourself to follow through on your best intentions no matter what. Picture yourself saying to your body, “You're overweight. Lose twenty pounds (or more).” Without solid self-discipline, that intention won't become a reality. But with sufficient self-discipline, it's a done deal.

The supreme payoff of self-discipline is that when you make a conscious decision to do something and know before you begin that success is virtually guaranteed, you'll follow through on that decision. You will explode the common misconception that self-discipline is hard because it's only hard for a short time. Yet it's the things that seem easy in the short term that become harder in the long run because procrastination and indulgence are nothing more than creditors who charge us interest.

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Self-discipline can empower you to overcome any addiction or lose any amount of weight. It can wipe out procrastination, disorder, distraction, and ignorance. It can change the course of your career, the path of your financial future, and the trajectory of the rest of your life.

That's what *Take the Stairs* is all about—making better decisions in order to improve your self-discipline and your life. A *Take the Stairs* mind-set can be your first step to liberating your potential, and it is the pathway to achieving anything your heart desires.

Of all qualities, self-discipline is one special quality that will guarantee you greater successes, bigger accomplishments, and more fulfilling happiness. Of a thousand principles for success developed over the ages, this one quality or practice will do more to assure that you accomplish wonderful things with your life than any other.

Self-discipline is a habit, a practice, a philosophy, and a way of living. Taking the stairs is a mind-set; but it's not even about the stairs. You might not physically be able to take the silly stairs—but *anyone* can start making more disciplined choices.

However, self-discipline is diminishing in our modern culture. Our friends, families, and companies are losing to distraction, temptation, creative avoidance, indulgence, apathy, and procrastination because we have been conditioned to believe that we deserve immediate satisfaction and that the government or some other entity will bail us out whenever we need it.

We've become soft, overweight, and spoiled. Sadly, at least in America, we have become a ProcrastiNation.

The Hidden Cost of the “Easy Way”

A study of 10,000 U.S. employees indicated that the average worker self-admitted to wasting 2.09 hours each day on non-job-related activities. Considering the average salaried employee makes \$39,795, that means procrastination costs employers \$10,396 per year per employee!

If you work for a small company of about 100 employees, then as much as \$1 million a year could be lost in productivity because of procrastination. The scariest part is that the problem is so pervasive it's almost completely imperceptible. The same is true in our lives!

Since most of us aren't making disciplined choices, it becomes increasingly difficult to notice ourselves doing things that are self-defeating. It's hard to take notice of \$5,000 of debt when you hear about people going bankrupt for overspending by hundreds of thousands. My 10 pounds of fat isn't as

salient when I'm standing next to people who are 30 pounds overweight. And why shouldn't I get a divorce if 50% of the people around me are doing the same thing?

It seems like many of us have fallen asleep to problems that are *directly within our control*. Often we don't even pay attention to them because we're too consumed with our iPod, our email, or our text messages. These distractions soothe us in the moment, but in the bigger picture they only compound the problem. As it turns out, distraction is a dangerously deceptive saboteur of our goals.

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Think about it. Haven't you noticed that the gym is empty and the food court is packed? Do most people around you pay with cash, or pull out a credit card? Are TV shows celebrating commitment, discipline, and hard work, or are they touting temptation, drama, and greed? To be honest, I didn't really notice it either . . . until one day I looked at a vacant set of stairs and a jam-packed escalator.

Until we acknowledge this damaging trend, we won't stop looking for shortcuts. There are seldom any true shortcuts. Usually there are just deluding self-serving short-term facades. And many of us are buying into them.

The popular book and movie *The Secret* teaches us that we create our lives with every thought of every minute of every day. Yes, this is true and I believe in the concept and practice it every day—but if we don't get off our butts and take action, we won't achieve anything. The real secret to success has more to do with *action* than *attraction*. We just don't talk about it as much because it doesn't sell as well.

The 4-Hour Workweek, as promoted by the bestselling book written by Timothy Ferriss, sounds like fun except the part we missed is that it is available only to those who first work their tail off in order to be able to set it up that way. Again, I subscribe to the concepts and have gotten a lot of mileage from the author's fascinating body of work. Yet at the same time I have yet to meet a single successful person who didn't achieve their dream lifestyle without paying a price, without sacrifice, without self-discipline—including what I know about the impressive Tim Ferris himself.

Ask an Olympic athlete. Read Michael Jordan's autobiography. Listen to what Coach K says is his

secret. They all attribute their successes more to having the self-discipline to work harder and push farther in practice than to an innate talent. Sure, people who achieve greatness in any endeavor might be blessed with some natural talent; and sure, timing and luck play a part. But as Malcolm Gladwell demonstrated in his book *Outliers*, there's no substitute for hard work—10,000 hours of it, to be exact!

Don't you have certain natural talents? Aren't there some passions you were born with? Of course. The question is: Are you using them?

Most of us would agree—at least on a joking level—that we could use more self-discipline. We often know what we *should* do and we even have some intentions of *doing* those things, but we never really get around to it. It's not because we're bad people, or that other people have more talents, opportunities, or gifts than we do; it's just because nobody ever taught us how to think about hard work. This book will. This book won't just increase your motivation; it will shift your mind-set.

After reading this book, you'll know what separates top performers from average performers. You'll understand how your mind-set makes it so difficult to work out, get ahead, or make a difference. You'll even understand why your well-intentioned New Year's Resolutions never materialize.

So why don't we do those things that we know we should do? Maybe it's because things are moving so fast. We're all running a million miles per hour, going a thousand different directions. And in the noise of distraction it's so easy for time to pass by without our realizing it.

Our unwillingness to take action in our own individual lives might not seem like a global problem. But as our procrastination ripples through our homes, our schools, our communities, and our culture at large, we find our country becoming a ProcrastiNation unwilling to take on the tough challenges we face, and seeking immediate gratification instead of real growth and change.

This book is not about solving the world's problems, but it is about helping you overcome your own challenges. It's a book about helping you do the things you've thought about, talked about, and dreamt about. You are in charge of your finances. You are in control of how you look. You have the power within you to live your dreams. You are in charge of your thinking. You are responsible for your results. It is time to throw off that cloak of apathy, to let go of the desire to blame, and to begin being willing to

commit to making a meaningful change in our behavior.

As with many great lessons in life, I first learned about committing to the ridiculous from my early mistakes.

Commit to the Ridiculous

When I was a young boy, I had a problem with remembering to lock the door. It seemed that about once a week, I would leave the house for Lafayette Elementary School without remembering to lock our front door. Since I was being raised by a single mother who went to work early in the mornings and my older brother, Randy, left a few hours before I did, it was up to me to make sure the house was locked each morning.

My mom first discovered my sluggish habit of forgetting to lock the door when she would come home from work for lunch every now and again, only to find the door unlocked. Plus, my brother would come home from school about a half hour before me each day and would occasionally find that I had forgotten to lock the door.

Both my brother and my mother sat down with me on repeated occasions and tried to explain to me the importance of locking the door and how dangerous it was to leave the house wide open. Each time, I swore to them that I understood why it was important and that they could count on me to remember from then on. But for whatever reason, I would start off strong and then eventually I would slip back into forgetting to lock the door—a habit that will be familiar to anyone who has ever abandoned a New Year's Resolution . . . more later on why this happens.

And then it happened. One day, I was the last to leave the house, and after school, my brother went to a friend's, which meant that I was the first one home. I'll never forget the fear that gripped my heart like a vise when I walked up to the house only to find the front door was wide open. As I crept into the living room, I noticed it had been completely ransacked! The couch was flipped, pillows were

everywhere, and the TV was missing! Salty tears began trickling down my face.

Thoughts began racing through my mind. “Had I locked the door?” “What happened?” “Is someone still in the house?” “This is all my fault!” “Mom is going to be so mad at me.” “Is there some other explanation?”

Without being totally sure of what happened, I slowly tiptoed around the corner into my room. TV, VCR, Nintendo, stereo—all gone! We’d been robbed! I dropped my bag, and sprinted out the door! My breath was pounding, tears streaming, and knees trembling. I ran to a neighbor’s house and called my mother.

A few moments later, my mom’s car pulled up in the driveway. I remember the awkward feelings of safety juxtaposed with the intense fear of the ramifications I knew were coming.

When my mom pulled up, I ran out of the house and into her arms, crying, “I’m sorry, I’m sorry. I’m so sorry, Mom.” On my mom’s face was a warm, but unusual smile. And about that moment, behind my mom’s car, a truck pulled in. It was loaded with furniture and electronics. At that moment, I realized who had robbed our house—my mother!

I continued crying, this time with frustration and anger mixed with a certain relief that we had been robbed on her lunch break by Mom. Once I calmed down, she explained to me why she had done what she had done: to teach me a lesson, to show me for my own good and for our family’s good the importance of locking the door.

After having felt the “consequences” of my actions, I can honestly say that I’ve never left my house or anyone else’s house in my life without double and triple checking to make sure the door was locked. Although the experience was painful, it did work. My mom was willing to go to the level of the *ridiculous* so that I would learn the lesson. Are you? How committed are you to changing your life for the better? What are you willing to sacrifice?

How committed are you to changing your life for the better? What are you willing to sacrifice?

For where we are in our lives, for the way things are happening in our world, and for what it’s going

to take to make things better—we have to be willing to go to the level of the ridiculous. Which is why I decided a while back to start taking the stairs everywhere instead of taking the escalator. It’s a symbolic gesture, but people all around me have noticed it; they understand the reason behind this everyday practice, and they, too, have committed to start to Take the Stairs as an outward sign of their inner commitment to lead more a self-disciplined life.

While I initially learned about self-discipline in martial arts and in my family life, there is no doubt that I honed it the most when I worked as a salesperson for the Southwestern Company. For the last 150 years, Southwestern has become famous for “building character in young people” by taking college-aged students and sending them away from home for the summer. They train these students to run their own business selling children’s educational materials known as the Southwestern Advantage door-to-door.

Each summer in college I would leave my tiny hometown of Frederick, Colorado, and travel to Nashville, Tennessee, for an intensive week of sales training, and then I’d go to a city away from home and work fourteen hours a day, six days a week, on straight profit. Since 1855 and still to this day, about 3,000 students do this every summer in the Southwestern program with the goal of transforming the way students learn at home by giving them access to a proprietary system for proven success. Without a doubt, it is one of the toughest and most rigorous yet enriching programs a young person can participate in.

What’s amazing is that the average first-year dealer in the program who finishes the summer makes a gross profit of around \$8,500, with the top students in the program usually earning profits of well over \$50,000 in one summer. Two of my business partners today, Dustin Hillis and Dave Brown, both broke the company record one summer while in college, earning close to \$100,000 each between May and August!

Although I had a fairly successful selling career, earning more than \$250,000 during my college summers, I was commonly known as the guy who recruited small armies of people to go door-to-door each year because I had recruited fifty-seven students to work in the program over a three-year period.

What’s interesting is that a lot of people don’t realize how much I struggled.

It was about 2:30 in the afternoon on my second day of my very first summer, and it had been

raining all morning. I hadn't been in a door since 8:15 a.m. and I had yet to sell anything. A guy had just screamed at me to get off his porch, and it sent me into a tailspin to where a short while later I had gotten myself completely lost.

The rain had basically dissolved my map, I was shivering from the cold, and the blisters on my prune-wrinkled feet were slowing me down. Confused as to where I was, being emotionally spent, and feeling desolate, I sat down on a curb. I'll never forget looking down at my handwritten map and seeing the words "Buckingham Lane" and "Coral Court" merge together by a stream of my running tears.

How did I end up here? Why am I sitting on a curb in Montgomery, Alabama? What was I thinking to get myself into this? Is this really happening to me right now? How am I ever going to survive ninety more days of this?

Here I was an accounting major who took this job because I thought if I could learn how to sell, maybe I could have money—which I had never had before. Yet I seemed to have only made things worse as now I was apart from any family, any friends, and it seemed at the moment that not a single person in this neighborhood wanted me here.

I had been stripped of all my self-confidence and now I was failing all on my own. I felt that no one saw, no one knew, and no one cared.

As I was sitting on the curb, I realized that I resented my job, I wanted to quit, and I wanted to go home.

For you, in your life or your business, have you ever had a moment like that? Where you couldn't believe how bad things were going and you couldn't see a way out? Maybe it wasn't with a job but maybe it was some relationship struggle? Or possibly you were in a battle for your health? Or perhaps you were dealing with some major financial concern?

Whatever it was for you, I firmly believe that all of us, sooner or later, will end up having one of these curbside moments. The surroundings and circumstances will be different, but the feelings will be the same. And although we will all be able to find justifications for why we can quit, give up, or pass blame, the truth is at the end of the day we have to live with the choices we make in these critical

moments. Are we going to give up, or are we going to be the kind of people who stand up and do what it takes, even if we don't feel like doing it?

Are we going to give up, or are we going to be the kind of people who stand up and do what it takes, even if we don't feel like doing it?

Although it was incredibly challenging and I thought about quitting on several occasions, I went back summer after summer. Today, people sometimes ask me why I kept going back, and I have a very simple answer. While it was a difficult job and I never liked going door-to-door, I loved the philosophies the company was teaching me. I loved the people I was working with. Most of all, I loved the person that I was becoming in the process. It was making me stronger, smarter, and more self-aware. I'm eternally grateful I had that opportunity to learn those lessons as a student working under the supervision of strong leadership.

Life isn't fair. Life isn't easy. Being successful doesn't happen by falling into the most desirable situation possible and somehow magically being discovered for some special uniqueness we have that no one else does. That's an unfortunate fairy tale that many of us live by. The truth is that success comes from being tested in the fire, being pushed to your limits, and having your character and confidence shaped by challenging circumstances. Successful people view problems and challenges as setbacks or hindrances but rather they know more challenges they have, the higher the likelihood that they will develop the character required to become great.

I discovered later that many people of notable success in life, including three state governors, U.S. senators and congressman, CEOs and founders of major companies, presidents of universities, and founders of major not-for-profit organizations attribute much of their success to having sold with Southwestern while in college. They, too, had their share of "curbside moments" but chose not to quit.

Simply stated, there are only two types of activities: things we feel like doing and things we don't. And if we can learn to make ourselves do the things we don't want to do, then we have literally created the power to create any result in our lives.

It's pretty safe to assume that we will always continue doing the things that we want to do. So then the only real question is: Do we have what it takes to do the things we know are good for us even when we don't feel like doing them?

Do we have what it takes to do the things we know are good for us even when we don't feel like doing them?

That is one of the only things that separates people who get what they want out of life from those who don't. If that was the only skill you needed to learn in order to have everything you wanted, could you do it?

Small Choices Yield Big Results

If we take an escalator, then there is literally no physical change in our bodies once we're at the top because all we do is stand there while a machine does all the work. However, when we Take the Stairs, a number of things happen, if only to a minor extent. We burn calories, we use (tear) our muscles, and our heart rate increases as we climb. So, there are physiological changes that take place when we Take the Stairs as opposed to taking the escalator. The same is true in your life!

While climbing one set of stairs might not be enough to make a noticeable difference in your health, it certainly could make a difference if it became your daily habit. That's why author Albert Gray once said, "Successful people form the habit of doing things that failures don't like doing."

It's the *habit* that's important. Success is often not the result of our major decisions, but more deceptively it is the aggregate sum total of all our small and seemingly insignificant ones. Success comes down to choosing the hard right over the easy wrong. Consistently.

What if we did adopt the habit to Take the Stairs in both a literal and metaphorical sense? Imagine how simple that would make our decisions. Whenever we had a choice to make, we would choose the

“hard right” over the “easy wrong.” We could make decisions quickly and with confidence knowing that most people will not make the same choices that we make, but also trusting that most people will not have the same development, growth, or results that we have. Those are exactly the choices that successful people are making all over the planet right now!

The Myth of the Invisible Finish Line

Most of us live our lives chasing after an invisible finish line. We are constantly in search of the next destination, living under the falsehood that something awaits us there that will give us a sense of fulfillment we currently don't have.

We say things like:

- Once I finish college, I'll make the money I need.
- If I could just find the right person to marry, I know I'd be happy.
- Once the kids leave the house . . .
- After I get that promotion . . .
- When I retire . . .

Of course, some of those things do happen, but the *feelings* we seek never actually last. Because in our never-ending search for the next destination, we miss out on one of life's great truths, which is, just as the legendary philosopher Hannah Montana said, “It's all about the climb.”

When I interview some of the most successful people on the planet, they consistently talk about a mind-set that pushes toward a destination—but more than that, one that embraces the path and one that finds joy in the journey. Their mentality is altogether different. While most people seem to complain and rant about life's challenges, these ultrasuccessful people, some of which you'll meet in this book, seem to learn how to fall in love with the daily grind.

Learn to fall in love with the daily grind.

Successful people take pride in tackling the tasks that other people rebuke. They understand that there is no real finish line, no magic moment when they will “arrive” and get to rest on their laurels. Discipline is a perpetual process, and the growth is in the journey. Simple, but here’s the part that you won’t like hearing—you don’t get a day off. Ever.

Before you close this book and throw it across the room, there’s good news. Just because you don’t get a day off doesn’t mean you’re going to be miserable. Quite the contrary. The purpose of a Take the Stairs mind-set is to set you up with a life that you can’t wait to live every day. There will be pain on the front end, but once you have formed the habits of self-discipline in every area of your life, you won’t *want* a day off. You will have a life that you love and it won’t be temporary; it will be permanent.

The Rent Axiom

The reason you have to commit to being disciplined every day for the rest of your life is because of something we at Southwestern call the Rent Axiom, which states that success is never owned, it is only rented—and the rent is due every day.

Success is never owned, it is only rented, and the rent is due every day.

Of course, everyone has their own definition of what success is. The Rent Axiom allows for that.

Maybe you want a healthy body, or a thriving business, or financial security, or a happy marriage. Substitute those things for success above, and you’ll see what I mean that all of them are “rented.”

No matter where you are at on the spectrum of discipline, you can improve and grow. Likewise, no matter where you are, you also have some parts figured out. The process you’re about to undertake will build a foundation for which a disciplined life can flourish. This process is going to change the rest of

your life. You are now becoming the person you've always wanted to be.

You may feel like you are getting ready for an uphill battle, and you probably are. Yet the rewards on the other side of this transformation are endless because you are creating the power and freedom to do anything in your life.

So while this may not seem “fun,” it is only that way for a while. Once you get used to taking the stairs, you will find that it's exhilarating, freeing, and invigorating. Plus, with this newfound power in your life, you will be able to design it any way you want it. Remember that once you love what you do, then you never have to work a day in your life.

Seven Strategies for Self-Discipline

In the chapters that follow, I will introduce you to the seven strategies you'll need in order to Take the Stairs to the life you've always wanted. They are seven principles that you can count on that are reflected in the minds and lives of the people I've met, seen, read, or talked to who are living their dreams.

I didn't sit in a room and think these concepts up. In fact, I'm nothing more than a conduit of information that has been assimilated from a variety of sources. What you're about to learn are truths that I've gleaned from successful people around the world. What I'm sharing are not all my ideas but evidence of what I learned from all of them. They worked for them, they worked for me, and they will work for you.

The seven principles for simplifying self-discipline to liberate your potential are:

1. Sacrifice: The Paradox Principle
2. Commitment: The Buy-In Principle
3. Focus: The Magnification Principle
4. Integrity: The Creation Principle

5. Schedule: The Harvest Principle
6. Faith: The Perspective Principle
7. Action: The Pendulum Principle

Each strategy is built around a central framework or concept for that chapter, and each concludes with a simple straightforward strategy that can be implemented right away. There is also a Reader's Guide available at www.takethestairsbook.com that has a video lesson, an exercise, and a personal action plan that goes along with each chapter. Additionally, if you go to www.takethestairsbook.com/focused40, you can take a quiz that will help you rate your current level of self-discipline in comparison to many of the people who were studied for this book. Both the test and the score with recommendations are free.

Self-discipline is the simplest and fastest way to make life as easy as possible. It is the key to everything you've ever dreamed of. Discipline creates freedom—the freedom to do anything! It is what took me from being a poor Hispanic boy raised by a single mother in a trailer park to speaking in front of thousands of people in just a few short years.

Are you ready to start this journey?

Your time is now.

For daily reminders about building discipline, find Rory on Facebook at www.roryonfacebook.com.

For more information about having Rory Vaden speak at your next event, to find out where you can see him live, or to get free updates, tips, and videos, please go to www.roryvaden.com.

If you would like to be considered for our accountability-coaching program, please apply at www.takethstairsbook.com/accountability .

About the Southwestern Family of Companies

In 1868, the Southwestern Company began working with college students helping them to finance their way through school by training them to sell Bibles and other books door-to-door during their summers. Over the last 150 years the company has remained true to that core business although they now sell a subscription-based web product called the Southwestern Advantage. The Southwestern Advantage is an integrated learning system of books and a website that supplements what kids learn in school, helps parents help their kids with homework, and instills the kinds of life principles contained in this book.

Working with Southwestern is one of the most challenging and rigorous opportunities a young person can become involved with. It is a comprehensive professional sales, entrepreneurship, and leadership training program. Average first-summer students make a gross profit of \$8,500 and it's not uncommon for experienced dealers to make more than \$30,000 each summer. Alumni of Southwestern include: Marsha Blackburn (U.S. congresswoman from Tennessee), Max Lucado (bestselling author), Jeff Sessions (U.S. senator from Alabama), Rick Perry (governor of Texas), Ronnie Musgrove (governor of Mississippi), Mac Anderson (founder and former owner of Successories), Bruce Henderson (founder of Boston Consulting Group), Chinh Chu (senior managing director with The Blackstone Group), Donna Keene (former chief of staff for the Department of Education), and thousands more.

Today, in addition to the Southwestern student program, the company has thirteen professional direct sales divisions that sell everything from custom tailored suits (Tom James); to supplemental insurance (Family Heritage); to financial planning (Southwestern Investments/Raymond James); to school fundraising services (Great American Opportunities); to professional placement services (SBR); to all-natural food products through home parties (Wildtree); to professional sales and leadership training, coaching, and consulting (our company, Southwestern Consulting). Altogether the Southwestern family of companies has more than 4 million customers a year and generates more than \$350 million in revenues.

To learn more about the Southwestern Company's Summer Program for college students, please visit

www.takethestairsbook.com/southwestern.

About the Author

Rory Vaden is a Self-Discipline Strategist, Author, and Business Motivational Speaker whose insights have been shared on Oprah radio, in Businessweek, and in SUCCESS™ Magazine. Rory has degrees in Business Management, Leadership, and an MBA. He is also the Co-Founder of a multi-million dollar international training company, *Southwestern Consulting*®. As a two time world champion of public speaking finalist for Toastmasters International, Rory has shared his compelling “Take the Stairs” message on the same stage as John Maxwell, David Allen, Keith Ferrazzi and he’s done special programs for both Zig Ziglar, and for Dave Ramsey’s companies. His speaking and consulting client list includes: Bank of America, Trane, Morgan Stanley Smith Barney, Shaw Worldwide, The Direct Selling Association, United Healthcare, Mary Kay and dozens of others from all over the world.

Rory is also leading a rapidly growing international social movement called the Take the Stairs World Tour in which he is raising charity money for youth character education programs by climbing stairs all over the place including the 10 tallest buildings in the world. Combining a hilarious and compelling delivery with unprecedented expertise, Rory energizes audiences into action with his signature program: Take the Stairs – Success Means Doing Things You Don’t Want to Do.