

WOMEN AND SUCCESS

JUDY TAME



Women are frequently their own worst enemies.

Life is not easy for women. But then it is not easy for anyone. Obstacles are a part of life. Our socio-economic origin, accent, race, sex, can represent obstacles for both men and women. In this essay, however, I will be dealing specifically with the obstacles and opportunities for women.

There are two ways to deal with obstacles. We can winge about how rotten the world is to women, or can can work hard to overcome the obstacles. And if we can't overcome the obstacles then we can do something else.

Ironically, the collectivists who currently masquerade as "feminists" present an appearance of positive action. But their basic premise is the individual woman's helplessness in a massively hostile environment. In actuality they retreat into inward looking groups with a victim mentality.

Negativity and Positivity

The two ways of dealing with obstacles reflect two attitudes to ourselves and to the world about us. *Negative women* give power to the things that hap-

pen to them. They actually give away their own power to events and other people. The sentiments you constantly find them expressing are of the sort: "How can I live a decent life in a male dominated society?" But what they are really saying is: "I allow society to have power over me by not crediting myself with the power to be responsible and to make choices."

Being responsible and making choices does not mean the freedom to do everything our hearts desire. That might be wonderful, but the in the real world our range of choices is constrained by events outside our control. But this fact does not mean that we should not acknowledge those very important areas where we do have full self-sovereignty. For women - or rather, for women in the relatively free semi-capitalist portions of the earth - those areas are:

- * the choice of a life partner (including the choice whether to have one or not)
- * the choice of whether or not to bear children
- * the choice of whether or not to have a job or career. (How ironic it is that women here have

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Judy Tame is a graduate of the University of Lancaster and the London School of Economics. She has worked for the World Jewish Congress, the Economic League and the Association for the Self-Employed and Small Business (ASP) and is now a successful business woman. She has also published essays in *Reason Papers*, *Free Nation*, and *Free Life*. Her paper *The Study of Nationalism: A Methodological Inquiry* is LA Study Guide No. 1. She has delivered talks on motivation and success to the Ladies Forum of the Life Insurance Association, was a special guest at ORT's "Women of Our Time" Luncheon at Mansion House in 1987, and has been the subject of a profile in *The Times*. She is the current Chairwoman of the British Association of

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**Libertarian
Alliance**

25 Chapter Chambers, Esterbrooke Street,
London SW1P 4NN
www.libertarian.co.uk
email: admin@libertarian.co.uk

Director: Dr Chris R. Tame
Editorial Director: Brian Micklethwait
Webmaster: Dr Sean Gabb

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more choices than men. They have the option of being supported by men!)

These areas of free choice are in fact the most important life decisions we have.

In the past, because of the economic dominance of men over women, and because of legal disabilities, it was difficult for women to have these options. The growth of free market relationships, the consequent economic progress and prosperity, and the classical liberal ideals of individual liberty have removed most of those difficulties and will, in time, remove them all.

Perhaps the reason that so many collectivist women choose the loser mentality - the assumption that the world is basically hostile - is to mask their own lack of life skills and fear of freedom. It is interesting how many movements whose professed goals are freedom are actually motivated by the *fear of freedom*.

Positive Mental Attitude

The most important life skill is in fact a subjective one. It is a positive mental attitude. Some are born with it. Others, like me, have to learn it. In fact, it is very easy to learn because it's infinitely more pleasant to practice than negativity. When delivering this essay as a speech I illustrated this point by the slightly tongue in cheek "Oh Joy" process. I simply asked the audience to raise their hands and chant "Oh Joy!" The physical and verbal manifestation of positivity made everyone in the audience feel good.

The essence of positive mental attitude is two inter-linked attitudes: the recognition that reality is what it is, and self responsibility. We don't have freedom of choice about our sex or about male attitudes to us. But we do have freedom and responsibility over our own experience. We can thus turn our experience, good or bad, into negative or positive contributions to our well-being. The world is often a difficult place to live. To the negative woman this is a burden. To the positive self-actualizing woman this is a challenge.

As a student, and later as a political researcher, I have had considerable contact with women's groups. To describe such groups, as they do, as "consciousness raising" is one of the most blatant misnomers possible. They are depressing and dispiriting, dedicated to the inculcation of hatred (of men specifically and of capitalists and business people generally) and of an attitude of hopelessness. Particularly notable were the abundance of apparently genuine

stories of physical and emotional abuse experienced at the hands of their boyfriends and husbands. My initial feelings of sympathy disappeared as it became obvious that these women seemed to have the knack of attaching themselves to such bastards not once, not twice but again and again and again. Their ability to evade decent and humane men was exquisite in its refinement.

Another characteristic of contemporary socialist "feminism" is equally obvious: the deliberate self-uglification of most of its participants. Their own self-perception as victims is merely reflected in the flaunting of physical unattractiveness, and dirty and ugly styles of dressing.

My message in this paragraph was superbly underlined by the disruption of the conference at which this talk was first delivered by a group of socialist feminists. The (now defunct) feminist newspaper *Sisterwrite* accused us of being fascists and holocaust revisionists, and encouraged their "sisters" to come and disrupt the proceedings. The women who arrived, who demonstrated their liberation by being encumbered by babies (couldn't their partners have looked after them for the morning?), were led by an unappetising looking person who hysterically abused us and with great relish threatened to make us all suffer "after the revolution". Her "soldiers" resembled most the deliberately uglified skinhead street jobs of the National Front (a British Nazi group). Their faces were contorted with aggression, and all had long ago closed their ears and brains to simple statements which they didn't wish to hear. Their eventual departure, marching out with further threatening chants to "burn (us) down", was symbolically appropriate.

The typical contemporary feminist is, then, trapped in negativity. They become professional victims claiming never-ending support and hand-outs as a right. They become quintessential socialists. (This applies equally to those so-called "radical" feminists whose hatred of men overrides even their commitment to the word "socialism". They remain socialist in fact.) Socialism rationalizes their belief that they are helpless victims in an all-powerful environment.

Hatred for the Successful

Also notable at the meetings, and in the literature, of contemporary socialist feminists is the hatred of successful women, whether Margaret Thatcher or the average business woman. Our success is either claimed to be a sell-out to "male" values and hierarchies, to be impossible for "working class" or "eth-

nic” women, or even achieved at their expense (e.g., the crime of employing a cleaning lady!) It is also frequently claimed that women who achieve success, who look after and nurture themselves as individuals, don’t care about “women’s problems”.

Clearly, the fact that we are involved in groups like the (British) Association of Libertarian Feminists gives the lie to the last accusation. It is a typical socialist tactic to try to induce guilt in the successful. Would it be better for the disadvantaged if we were to abandon our achievements and prosperity? One of the things we can do is communicate and share our experience and hope that others can benefit from it.

The Techniques of Success

The fundamental technique of success is to use every situation, comfortable or uncomfortable, for our advancement. There is a saying in *Insight*, one of the best of the self-help and awareness groups, that “What we focus on is what we get”. This probably accounts for the appalling black holes of disaster that some women get themselves into - and why others achieve success.

How does the positive woman differ from the loser? Firstly, she assumes success. If it does not occur in a particular context she asks herself what she has learned from the experience and does something else. Secondly, she has a positive self image. “Sexism”, that is, irrational and unfair attitudes to women, does exist. But the positive woman does not allow it to matter. She does what she wants to do anyway, with or without support.

In his book *Executive Tune-Up: Personal Effectiveness Skills for Business and Professional People* (Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1981) Dr. Karl Albrecht lists the contrasting characteristics of the effective and the ineffective person. Let’s consider some of them:

The Ineffective Person The Effective Person

Loses temper easily.	Takes events and actions of others in stride.
Reacts irritably; snaps at others.	Reacts pleasantly and affirmatively.
Gets “wounded” or offended easily.	Declines to get “hooked” by provocative remarks or actions of others.

Does battle over small offenses.

Grim facial expression; negative emotional bias
Little sense of humour.

Thinks predominantly negative, discouraged, or defeatist thoughts.

Gets discouraged by small setbacks; lets small obstacles frustrate her.

Refuses to get drawn into useless and unproductive skirmishes with others.

Maintains a positive emotional bias; smiles, expresses herself freely. Laughs easily; can laugh at herself.

Keeps her mind on positive ideas, thinks about success, happiness, positive experiences.

Follows a flexible plan; accepts and adapts to setbacks; takes obstacles in stride, and adapts to surprises.

One doesn’t need to belabour the obvious contrast between the behaviour of some contemporary socialist “feminists” and the successful and self-actualizing individual.

When I am asked what it is like being a woman in a man’s world I am lost for an answer - because I have never thought about it. That is the key. I have never thought about the possibility of discrimination. I have always assumed equality, and when I did not get it in the past I simply moved to a career where results mattered more than the race or gender of the person who produced them. What we focus on is what we get.

Let me demonstrate the power of positivity by another personal example. My male colleagues sometimes compliment me in a patronizing manner, with a “pat on the head” and a comment like “I’m impressed”. This could be annoying. I do not take it seriously, and choose to take it fully as a compliment. Why focus on the negative aspects of a genuine compliment? The business I have chosen to work within is a meritocracy, so it does not matter how irrational many of my male colleagues might be. In fact, so overwhelmingly male was the work force that until recently Memos started with the salutation “Gentlemen”, and at a recent business convention in Hong Kong the Programme informed me that during a particular business session my “wife” would visit a porcelain factory.

Rather than moaning about discrimination the task for women is to choose those areas where market induced rationality is at its most notable. The lessons of the ultimately successful ethnic minorities who

have faced discrimination and difficulties are relevant here. Those ethnic minorities who have most effectively overcome discrimination have been those who have engaged in businesses where the pursuit of profit is unencumbered by statist and regulatory intrusions (see the work of Thomas Sowell and Walter Williams on the economics of race and discrimination).

Socialism is, of course, the ultimate enemy of success for women. One of socialism's original complaints against capitalism was that it did not discriminate between men and women, that women were encroaching upon "men's work", and that the crude "cash nexus" was dissolving traditional social forms and practices. State intervention has favoured trade union restrictionism which has erected barriers against women (just as the white trade unions in South Africa erected apartheid to reinforce their barriers against black economic advancement). A system that destroys all freedom and prosperity for everyone, male or female, as well as unleashing the horrors of mass murder and genocide is the appropriate ideological home of self-hating, freedom fearing inadequates, male or female.

The Psycho-Technology of Success

There is in fact a huge self-help literature on the attainment of success. Although held in contempt by most intellectuals and ignored by many academic psychologists there can be found in this literature a proven "psycho-technology" of success - a battery of processes, techniques and life styles that produce results. There are also a wide range of personal growth and self-help courses available. My colleagues Brian Micklethwait and Chris Tame have dealt with these at greater length in their respective papers "Libertarianism and Success" and "Politics Is Not Enough: The Importance of Psychology and Psychological Liberation", delivered at the Second European Libertarian Convention, West Germany, 1987. Both these papers will be published some time in the future so I will not go into any great detail here. But I would like to describe three particular techniques I have found of special value:

* *Positive Mental Attitude.* Even unpleasant experiences and setbacks have, when handled from this attitude, proved totally appropriate learning situations and opportunities for effective growth.

* *Visualization.* Simply visualizing, or mentally rehearsing, whatever it is we wish to achieve can make an amazingly powerful contribution to achieving goals.

* *Affirmation.* An affirmation is a positive and accurate statement about ourselves which becomes more and more powerful with repetition. It usually starts with "I am" and might sound like this: "I am an intelligent, resourceful and powerful woman, successful in my career and in my personal relationships". By constant repetition the qualities that the statement affirms come forward and we begin to experience them more frequently.

Conclusion

I cannot correct every injustice in the world - and I cannot stop the world being a difficult place to live in. But I can, as we all can, take charge of my own reactions and my own life. And that is success.

Appendix

A full list of self-help and personal growth courses and groups would take many pages to list and describe. I have found the following particularly useful. All are open to both men and women.

Insight
9 Spring Street
Paddington
London W2 3RA 01-706 2021

Organizes seminar-type courses which utilize a wide range of humanistic techniques to enhance self knowledge and personal growth.

The Centre for Achievement
12-14 Cloisters House
8 Battersea Park Road
London SW8 4BH 01-627 2123

Offers effective techniques, in group or one-to-one sessions, to enhance personal success and effectiveness.

Wellspring Clinic Ltd.
1 Coniger Road
Parsons Green
London
SW6 3TB 01-736 3367

Director: Lola de Gelabert.

Offers very effective dietary, health and counselling services.