

# CHOICES MATTER- EVERYDAY!



**How to Get the Most Out of  
Your Choices and Your Life**

**BARRY GALLAGHER**

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# CHAPTER 1

## CHOOSE TO CHOOSE

*Destiny is not a matter of chance; it is a matter of choice. It is not something to be waited for; but rather something to be achieved.*

—William Jennings Bryan

Choices, choices, choices, choices, and more choices. I like to describe people as “two-legged, living, breathing choice making machines.” Our lives are full of choices. I wonder what the average number of choices is for an American in one day. One hundred, two hundred, three hundred or more? What about a lifetime? A half million, a million, or more? It is absolutely mind boggling to think about the impact that choices have on our lives and the world in general. This chapter takes a closer look at why our choices are so important to living our best life and achieving true wealth and happiness. I am confident that this chapter will cause you to think much differently about your choices and how you can use them to achieve everything that you want in life.

“Choice Power” is my expression for the ability to consistently make good choices. After breathing—there is nothing that you do more in life than make choices. I remember a song called “*Love Makes the World Go Round*” from my youth. I liked the song, but I do not think love makes the world “go round.” I think love makes the world a much better place, for sure. What makes the world “go round” is choices. Yes, people make choices every minute, every hour and every day that make the world what it is. It is a process that is repeated billions and billions of times. Yes, the power of choice is a force in our world.

Again, the importance of Choice Power was revealed to us over one-hundred fifty years ago by President Abraham Lincoln. Mr. Lincoln said

that “People are about as happy as they make up their minds to be.” Yes, Choice Power is the awareness that you have the power—to make up your mind and make your own choices. Lincoln’s quote can be restated to express the impact that choices have on every aspect of our lives. Let us look at some examples:

People are as wealthy as they choose to be.  
People are as poor as they choose to be.  
People are as happy as they choose to be.  
People are as miserable as they choose to be.  
People are as kind as they choose to be.  
People are as mean as they choose to be.

Mr. Lincoln’s line of thinking demonstrates the true simplicity of the power of choice. In every situation we face, we always have a choice. Sometimes they are difficult choices and sometimes they are easy ones. Will we react positively or negatively to a rude person? Will we respond to difficulties in a positive or negative way? Will we save our money or spend it?

Will we exceed the speed limit to get somewhere on time or slow down and arrive late? The simple fact is this: we are constantly making choices—all day, every day. It is called life!

Yes, we make a lot of choices in a day, a week, and a month. The ability to make more good ones than bad ones is the key to a successful life. Your life will only be as good as the choices you make, one day at a time.

## **Your Greatest Power!**

What is your greatest power? Have you ever asked yourself this question? I did and that is the primary reason I decided to write this book. I discovered my greatest power after reading a book called *Your Greatest Power* by J. Martin Kohe. His remarkable book started changing lives as soon as it was published in 1953. It changed mine too when I read it nearly thirty years later. The message of this book is so simple and so sensible that it almost defies description.

My greatest power, and your greatest power, is the power of choice. Does this surprise you? Does this amaze you? Does this seem too simplistic? If you answered “Yes” to all these questions, you responded like most people. There certainly must be other aspects of life that are more important than the power of choice, right?

I thought about this question frequently after reading Kohe’s book. I also read and re-read the book before I finally gave in to his line of thinking. As Mr. Kohe said in his book, “You can’t fight life.”

(Kohe, Page 8) After much thought and introspection, I made a choice to accept Kohe’s statement that my greatest power was, in fact, the power of choice. From that day forward, I have been using this amazing force to build my best life—one choice and one day at a time.

I was twenty-six years old when I first read Mr. Kohe’s remarkable book. At the time, I was teaching junior high school Geography and Physical Education in New Baltimore, Michigan. I had a high school diploma and a college degree, but I had never been taught about the power of choice. Yes, this concept had a tremendous impact on my life. It helped me to improve my attitude, my self-understanding, and my teaching. In fact, it helped me improve everything about my life. By understanding the power of choice, I was able to comprehend the control that I really had over my life and my destiny. I finally came to realize that I had the power to make life happen instead of just letting life happen to me!

Choice Power—the power of destiny is the greatest power that any person can possess. Our choices, every single one of them, drive our personal and professional success in some way. There is no magic in this process, just as there is no magic in farming. Farmers reap what they sow. You reap the life you live by the choices that you make or allow others to make for you.

When you learn to master your greatest power, you will create the best life of all—a life of choice! Yes, the power of choice can be your best friend. It is the primary tool that you can use to have everything that you want in life.

## **A Closer Look at Choice Power**

Choice Power will do more to improve your life than any other concept in this book. This is because our choices affect everything that we do or do not do, every day. The power contained in your choices is revealed when we examine the letters behind the word **CHOICE**. Now, it is time to take an in depth look at the power of this amazing word!

## Control

Our choices provide us with the opportunity to exert the maximum control in our life. As I mentioned earlier, we make hundreds of choices every day and thousands every month. By the time we go to our graves, we will make millions of choices. Some will be big and some will be small. Many others will be in the middle.

The ability to make good choices gives you the most control over your life. As Thomas Wilson said, “He that will not command his thoughts will soon lose the command of his actions.” Mr. Wilson’s powerful truth can be rephrased to emphasize the importance of our choices: a person who does not command his choices will lose control of his actions too!

## Honesty

Our choices are the gauge that we can use to measure the degree of honesty that we have in our life. Yes, our choices force us, sooner or later, to be honest with ourselves. If we are happy and content with where we are in life, we can reward ourselves with a pat on the back. We have probably made many good choices and are enjoying the benefits of those choices.

However, if we are not happy about the direction our life has taken, we must be honest with ourselves; our choices probably had a lot to do with the situation that we are in. We have probably made some bad ones in the past and are paying the bill, plus interest, on a charge made long ago. Ultimately, an unhappy life means that you are not happy about your choices. The good news is that Choice Power gives us the opportunity to make new choices at any time!

## Opportunity

Choice Power allows us to look for the opportunity that exists in a situation instead of focusing on the obstacles. This habit of thinking can empower us to see the potential in each choice instead of the problems. Mr. M. L. Jacks placed the concept of opportunity in perspective when he said, “The pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity; the optimist, the opportunity in every difficulty.”

Once again, the influence of our choices can be seen when this great quote is rephrased. Yes, the pessimist chooses to see the difficulty in every opportunity while the optimist chooses to see the opportunity in every difficulty.

Many of the greatest people who have ever lived did not have any special skills or powers except the ability to create opportunity. You will create more wealth and success in your life when you choose opportunity. It is the surest way to create the best life that you can live—a life of choice.

## Independence

Our ability to choose is also a barometer of our level of personal independence. The ability to make our own choices is related to our degree of individuality. If we make our own choices and live the life we choose, then we are free to live our own life. However, if we let other people make our choices for us, then we lose much of our personal power.

As children, we did not make too many of the important choices in our lives—our parents and guardians did. As we grew older, we should have been given the opportunity to make more and more of our own choices.

Hopefully, as an adult, you understand the importance of making your own choices and you accept that awesome responsibility. I have learned that our choices are always under control, either ours or somebody else. The question is: “Who controls your choices?”

## Creativity

Our choices provide us with a tremendous source of creativity. People who understand the power of choice know that they can create the kind of life that they choose by making one good choice after another. If you know

your goals and objectives, the power of choice can convert your dreams into reality. The power of creativity gives us the opportunity to convert setbacks into solutions and obstacles into opportunities.

We always have a choice to create something better in any situation. Choices do not have to be big to make an impact on our life. Even small choices can make a huge difference in your life. The ability to make our own choices is the foundation of building a successful life. We can create our best life using this great power.

## **Expectations**

Choices are always a reflection of our personal expectations. People who have low expectations for themselves and their lives usually make choices that support this outlook on life. If you do not think that you are going to do much in life, you will make choices that are consistent with this view. However, if you have high expectations and you have confidence in your abilities, you will make choices that display your optimistic view of life. Sadly, too many people are weighted down by the limitations that they place upon themselves. Unfortunately, millions of people fail to make choices that they have the power to achieve.

To summarize, Choice Power can give you greater control over every aspect of your life. It can help you develop more honesty about your abilities and your responsibility for developing more of your potential. This amazing power can also help you become an opportunity finder. The power of choice can also help you become more independent in your daily living. It can energize your creative abilities and help you master everyday challenges. Finally, the power of choice can help you raise your expectations for what is possible in your life. I hope that you learn to use the power of choice to create the absolute best life that you can live!

## **The Dynamics of Choice Power**

Your life will only be as good as your worst choices allow. The plain fact is that no choice stands alone. Our choices are linked and joined together like a great chain that connects our life moments. This chain can unify our choices, dreams, and goals into a powerful force in our life. Unfortunately,

it can also anchor us to our failures and attach us permanently to low aims and mediocrity. The strength of our “choice chain” is only as strong as our weakest choices.

A person can make great choices in many areas of his or her life and blow it all with one bad choice. We see this played out every single day in the local and national news. Many young athletes and entertainers struggle to overcome drug or alcohol problems when they seem to have everything going for them. How can this happen? Well, it happens like everything else that we have mentioned so far. Everything starts with a choice. When things start to go bad in someone’s life, it can always be traced back to a choice, and then another choice. And so on. Maybe just one bad choice, but that can often set you on a bad course. The sad fact is that not even an Olympic sprint champion can outrun the consequences of a bad choice. Yes, bad choices always catch up with us!

## **The Critical Importance of Supporting Choices**

No choice stands alone. We must understand the importance of what I call supporting choices. Supporting choices are secondary choices that we need to make to turn a big choice into reality. For example, you make a choice to lose weight. You decide on your target weight and that is all there is to it, right? Of course, we know that is not how it works!

Losing weight might be your primary choice, but there are many other choices that you must make to achieve your objective. First, you will have to make some changes in the types of foods you eat and the portions. Secondly, you will probably have to start an exercise program if you want to permanently lose your excess weight. Third, you may have to change the timing of your meals. Finally, you will have to make better choices about between meal snacks and the beverages that you drink.

These are just a few examples of the supporting choices that come into play when you decide to achieve a big goal. As you learn more about the power of choice, you will increase your ability to make them work using your primary and supporting choices.

## **The Choice Test—As Easy as 1-2-3!**

One of the most important aspects of choice making is determining the quality of the decisions that we make. I developed a “Choice Test” that I use to maximize the quality of my choices and minimize the number of bad choices that I make. No, I do not use this test for every single choice that I make. However, I make certain that I use it often.

The test is simple. I just ask myself three questions about a choice I am considering. If the answer is “Yes” to any of the three questions, I make a different choice! Here are the three questions that can help you pass the “Choice Test” every time:

1. Does this choice violate any laws—natural or civil?
2. Will this choice harm me or endanger my life or the life of another person?
3. Will this choice prevent me from reaching or getting closer to the achievement of an important personal or professional goal?

That is it! It really is that simple. I have these questions written out on a small card that I keep in my wallet. These questions can help you quickly think through any important choice or decision that you need to make. However, do not allow the simplicity of this system fool you. It works and it has saved me a lot of pain and frustration that could have resulted in my life if I had not used this technique to make better choices.

## **The Secrets of Choice Power**

I have been thinking and writing about the power of choice for many years. Now, I would like to shift the focus of this chapter to some of the most important lessons that I have discovered about the power of choice. I call them the Secrets of Choice Power because I did not learn about ideas like this during my school years. You did not either! The only place to learn them is the school of “hard knocks” or, in a book like this. Some of these ideas have had a dramatic impact on my life and my family members. I know they will benefit you and your life.

### **Secret #1**

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