

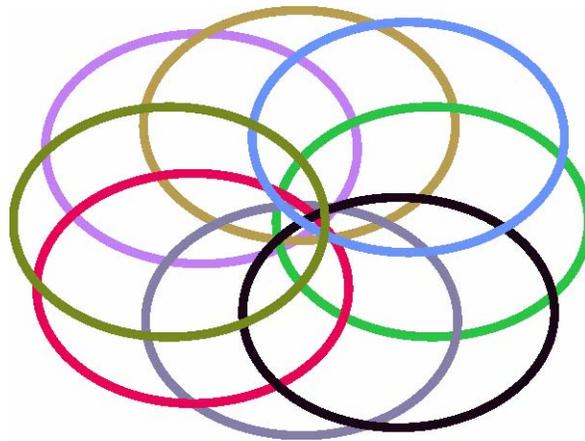
I CAN DO THIS

PERSONAL ACHIEVEMENT WORKSHOP

Helping Offenders Have The Strength To Not Re-Offend

Seven week course

Helping you learn how to be all that you can be,
by applying principles that are incredibly simple!



Each of the parts of life are inter related. You cannot separate this interaction. Everything we do in one part of our life has a far-reaching effect on all the other parts of our life. Therefore, learning to do one thing well will help us do everything well.

Presented by Cordell Vail
Editing and Updating by Kenneth Teglia

These seven lessons are based on the “*My Turn To Win: The Secret Of Excellence*” Personal Achievement Workshops.

Lesson 1

MY GOALS:

In presenting this seminar, I have two goals:

1. To help you improve your life so you will never be the same again.
2. Give you the power to so control your life that you will never come back here again.

I have given this seminar many times across the United States and Canada. And each time I give the seminar I learn new things. One of the main things that I have learned is when we just sit and listen we have about 5% to 10% retention of the material. If we take notes we increase our comprehension and retention to about 30% to 40%. If we ask questions and participate we increase our comprehension and retention to about 60 to 70%. If read the lesson before we come and then if we go home and read the material and study it over again 2 or 3 times after the seminar we increase our comprehension to 80% to 90%. I will give you a copy of the next weeks lesson each time so you can study it before you come. I will challenge you to read the lesson at least 2 or 3 times before you come and 2 or 3 times after. If you do that, you will be able to use the material in this seminar to greatly improve your quality of life.

One of the most important things that you can do to improve your life style is to learn to read. If you cannot read, then learn to read. If you are a slow reader then start practicing and learn to read faster. The more you read the better chance you have of success in life. They say that those who do not read are no better off than those who cannot read. Don't let that be said of you. When I was in school I discovered that I had a learning disability. I actually flunked the 1st grade. But my mother would not let them hold me back so I moved on to 2nd grade. But I really struggled all the way through High School and even the first 3 years of college. I got mostly C's and D' in school. When I went to BYU I only had a 2.0 grade point average. Not to get in you have to have a 3.8. I was lucky. But during my senior year at college I got drafted and spent 4 years in the Army. When I came back I was fortunate enough to stumble into a no credit class during lunch hour that was on speed reading. When the teacher tested me, she said I could read about 120 word a minute with about 20% comprehension. She said that is why I was getting C's and D's in school. I could not remember what I we reading. After I took the course I got so I could read 1200 words per minute with 85% comprehension. Yes you guessed it. I started getting A's instead of C's and D's. I could go 15 to a test 15 minutes early and sit on the steps and read the whole lesson over again and then go in and take the test. I was getting perfect scores on the test because I could remember what I read. If you want to improve your life, improve your reading skills. I am now taking a class in PHOTO READING. That is the ability to read the whole page at one glance. The students who take this class can read normally 10,000 words a minute or faster with 85% comprehension. There was a young man a couple of years ago who got a perfect score on the ACT college entrance exam. WHY? Because he is a PHOTO READER and he reads 5 or 6 books a day. He does not have an above average memory and his IQ is not exceptionally high. He is just a photo reader. President Kennedy was a Photo Reader. They would lay the new papers from all the major cities out on the floor of the white house each morning and then he would just walk along and read them. People though he was brilliant because he knew so much about so many things. But the real reason was not because he had an exceptionally high IQ or photographic memory. It was because he was a photo reader.

If you have trouble with the English language, then start taking classes to learn. Learn grammar and spelling and punctuation. They have done studies on the relationship between your knowledge of the English language and success. They found that the two people who know the English language best are College teachers who teach English and CEO's of large companies. Isn't that interesting that the head of corporations know English better than almost anyone else. That should tell us something's. If you go for a job interview and your English on the job application is poor, or your language skills are below normal during your interview, your chances of getting a job are greatly reduced. I have a web page where I help deaf people get jobs. They often write to me and ask me to help them. One of the things I almost always tell them is to LEARN ENGLISH. Deaf people many times write in American Sign Language. That is English words with French Grammar. When they email me it is very evident that they do not know English very well. Who is going to hire them if they have very poor English writing skills. That greatly limits the jobs that are available to them. The other thing I always tell them is to go to school and get certifications or degrees. Having a certification or degree will open doors for you that would otherwise not be open. While you are an offender you have a wonderful opportunity to take classes and learn. I hope that you will take full advantage of that opportunity so that when you are released you will have a much greater chance of finding a good job and being successful in your new life. I have had several jobs in my career and each one of them required that I have a college degree. Do you know that no one has ever asked me on a job application what my degree was in. They just require that I have a degree.

While I was at college we had a speaker come one day who told us two very profound things. They were things that literally changed my life. She said: "(1) When you leave this college, you will find that in four years from now, what you have learned here will start to become obsolete. You will have to get a new college education every four years. (2) And second, the most important thing you can learn here at college then is not the material they will teach you, but is rather LEARNING HOW TO LEARN." Both of those things she said have prove to be very true in my life.

When you are released you need to have a positive attitude and believe that you can be a success. Believing will do more for you than anything else you can do. That is one of the main purposes of this seminar is to help you learn to believe you can be successful and then help you learn how to gain the skills to do that. One thing that I would like to suggest to you is that you learn these six words that I put on a 4 X 7 index card for you in your packet:

Realistic, Responsible and Right

Honesty, Truthfulness and Integrity

One of the most important things that you can learn in this life is to accept responsibility. If you try to blame others for your situation it will only hurt you. We have to learn to live in our society. We have to live in our culture. And in our culture there are things that are considered wrong. An example would be smoking marijuana. You may not think that is wrong. But you have to accept the fact that right now it is against the law. So if you get caught with it, or especially if you get caught selling it you likely will come back here to the same room you are staying in right now. It has nothing to do with what is "RIGHT" or "WRONG". It has to do with what is legal or illegal. Back in the 1920's it was illegal to buy or sell alcohol. If you got caught you went to prison. That is what the story of Al Capone and Elliot Ness is all about. So at that time in our "CULTURE" it was illegal. Now days it is not illegal. We have to learn to live within our culture. We have to learn the difference between right and wrong verses legal and illegal. In Turkey if they catch you shop lifting they cut your hand off. That of course is not the

case in our culture. But above all else we have to learn to stop blaming others for what we do wrong. We have to start accepting the responsibility of our actions and realize that if we break the "RULES" so society we will likely suffer consequences that are not desirable for us.

We have to have values. Those values are what we judge RIGHT and WRONG from. If you start to do things that you know are wrong for you to do then your self worth starts to suffer. You start to lose integrity. You start to be more inclined to lie or blame others. As you do that, then your life starts to be filled with negative consequences. When I was in school I was studying to become a therapist. But I was very opposed to the things that Sigmund Freud taught and most of the classes were based on hid philosophy. He said that if you had moral values and your performance was below those values then you should lower you values and make them more like the way you live. As I watched those I was working with, I realized that was the very thing that caused them to be so emotionally sick. They were suffering from low self esteem because they were not living up to their potential. They hated the life they were living but did not know how to change that feeling. As I observed, those who then lowered their standards normally got worse not better. I left graduate school to do other things. I just could not teach or use those principles in working with others. Later I discovered a book called "Reality Therapy" by William Glasser. If I have found that book in Graduate School I would likely be an therapist instead of giving you this seminar. His philosophy was that I you have moral values and your performance is below those values then you need to change your performance to match your values. That is the whole basis of this seminar.

When you are released you are going to be faced with situations that you must accept. They are things that you cannot change. I wish I could tell you that people are not going to be prejudice against you. But some will. You cannot change that. I wish that I could tell you that when you are released and get off parole then you will not have to worry about having a felony conviction any more when you apply for a job. But that simply will not be the case. You cannot change that. So all you can do is learn to deal with it. When you fill out a job application there may be a check box that asks if you have ever had a felony conviction. **DO NOT EVER LIE.** If you do they will eventually find out and fire you anyway. If that check box is on the form then ask to see the manager and talk to them about your life and how you have changed and ask them if they are willing to give you a chance. If they say no, **THEN LEAVE.** You would not want to work there anyway.

Another piece of advice I would like to give to you is that when you are released, you not tell everyone you meet that you just got out of prison. They do not need to know that. If you tell them that, some people will immediately start to treat you differently. If they don't need to know that then why tell them. Why go on living like a convicted felon when you are not? If you have done your time and served your parole, then leave it in the past and **NEVER** bring that up to anyone for any reason unless it is necessary. You need to start a new life. A part of starting that new life is to feel like a new person. To feel like a new person you need to act like a new person. If people know you have served time, many of them will then treat you like the old person you used to be, **AND YOU ARE NOT THAT PERSON ANY LONGER.** So don't give them the opportunity to put you back into that situation. Only you can change your life. Only you can take charge and be different. No matter what your parents, family or friends did to you, you cannot blame them for what you will be in the future. They may have shaped your past but they cannot stop you from becoming anything you want to be in the future **IF YOU WILL.**

There is one more thing that I have learned as a lesson in life. One of the most important things you can lean in this life is to just **SHOW UP!** Those who signed up for this seminar but who did not show up will not get anything from it. You will because you came. You asked for help and now you will receive it because you asked.

YOU CAN'T FOOL THE CHICKENS:

A true story by Cordell Vail

One of the most important things in my life is my family. I love my family and I want the very best for them. I have felt ever since the day our first son was born that one of the greatest gifts I could give to each of my children would be to teach them how to be hard workers. I have seen common people climb to uncommon heights in all walks of life just by being hard workers. They are not smarter than the other people are; they just work harder and pass up the rest.

When my children became old enough to work, I started helping them learn to work. Work hard. Rather than easy jobs, I tried to find hard jobs for them to do according to their age and abilities. I knew that would help them learn to do the job anyway, even if they did not want to. But how many times can six children mow the lawn, do the dishes and clean their room in one day? Living in the city, in a subdivision, was not making it easy for me to find "HARD" work for them to do. (Hard work like farmers' kids do!)

That was my goal because I read about a study that was done at a University where they found that farmers' children were more likely to succeed than children of parents that had other jobs. The second most likely children to do well in life are the ones who delivered newspapers when they were young; the ones that had paper routes. Those facts made me think working hard as a child would increase a child's chances to succeed in life. I could see that if they had to do something such as getting up at 4:30 a.m. to milk cows or deliver papers, they would learn a lesson I could not teach them any other way.

When my oldest son was about 12 years old, I was lucky to meet a neighbor who had a huge empty lot behind his house. The empty lot was about one full acre. He had irrigation water rights for it. You cannot have a garden if you do not have lots of water for it. For me, it was like finding a gold mine, because now my kids *would* be able to be little farmers. It truly was an answer to my prayers.

That summer we all pitched in, tilled up the weeds, and made ditches for the water. We planted more garden than I ever knew could be planted by one family. We bought some goats, rabbits and chickens. We were in the farm business right in the middle of Salt Lake City, Utah. I was thrilled beyond measure. (Too bad my kids were not as excited about it.) It was a lot of hard work. I saw it as the golden opportunity to help my children learn to work.

We lived about one mile from the garden. I did not want their mother to have to start a mother's taxi thing for them, so we let the children walk or ride their bikes to the garden every day. Each day they were expected to work for two hours in the garden before they could go out to play.

We decided to assign each child a specific job. They are each 2 years apart in age. Some were able to do harder work than others were. There were three main jobs that needed to be done

every day. One was to weed the garden, another was to water the garden and third was to water and feed the animals. The goats were on chains around the edge of the garden. Each child had a job that they could do that would help them learn to work that wasn't too hard for them to do. At least I *thought* the jobs were not "TOO" hard. But I knew they weren't exactly easy either.

My oldest son was assigned to take care of the chickens. If you haven't already figured it out, I grew up in a farming community. Most of my neighbors had a big barn and milked cows right in town at their home. Growing up there gave me a lot of experience as a farmer. Every summer I worked for neighbors who were farmers. My dad also owned a potato farm and a wheat farm in Idaho that I worked on every year. But my dad's "day job" was to own and run a grocery store in town. However, like our neighbors, we owned about 1/3 of a city block that was what you might call our little "In Town Mini Farm". We normally had four or five pigs, at least two or three calves, several sheep and three horses that I had to take care of. As a part of that "In Town Mini Farm", we also had about 30 or 40 chickens that we raised for the eggs. Therefore, I knew how to raise chickens and get them to lay eggs.

If you want to have eggs to eat, you have to worry about four things. First, you have to give the chickens the right amount of food every day. Second, you have to make sure they always have water. Third, you have to gather the eggs every day. If you leave eggs in the nest, the hens will stop laying eggs and begin to sit on the eggs she already laid to try to hatch them. Fourth, you have to have a place for them to lay the eggs where you can find them. If you do not do that, the chickens will go lay the eggs in the grass all over the garden. That makes it very hard for you to find the eggs to gather them.

It was my oldest son's duty to take care of the chickens. We knew the chickens would need a place to sleep and lay eggs, so we built a nice chicken coop for them where they could roost at night and lay the eggs. All he had to do every day was go to the chicken yard, feed the chickens the right amount of food, make sure all the water trays were full, and gather the eggs from the nests. I guess there was one other job he had to do. He had to get the eggs home safe without breaking them.

He was probably the hardest worker of all the kids. He even seemed to like to work, especially when I would work right along with him. We had a lot of fun together at our garden. All of the children worked hard, even the very young ones. However, there was one small problem with the hard work our oldest son did. He was great at starting jobs, but not as good at finishing them. It was just a bad habit he had. It was hard for him to stay at the job until it was done. That was one of the things I loved about our garden. I knew it would help me teach him and all the other kids to not just work hard, but to finish a job once they started it. Nevertheless, the harder I tried to teach that to Gene, the less it seemed to work with him. He would go to the garden every day. He never missed. However, every day when I checked up on him, I would find that he had either watered the chickens and fed them but forgot to gather the eggs, or he would gather the eggs and water them and forget to feed them. He just could not seem to remember to do all three things every day.

Now when you have a chicken that lays eggs for you, it will not lay one egg every day. A hen will normally only lay one egg every day and a half. We had twenty-one chickens and they

were laying an average of from fifteen to seventeen eggs a day. As you can see we really had them humming. They were top performers. That is why I checked on Gene every day. If he missed one of the three things, I had to do it for him, or the hens would stop cranking out those eggs. However, for some reason, I could not get him to do all three things every day. Try as I would, he often would miss one of them.

But one fine day, I was standing in the chicken yard looking over our little flock, and puzzling (?) again because he had missed feeding them the night before. I made it my mission to find some way to get him to learn to do *all* of the tasks *each and every* day. Then the most wonderful idea came into my mind. It was an idea that I had learned about 20 years before from my aunt and uncle in Star Valley, Wyoming. They had taken a little plot of ground on their farm and had actually handed it over to their son. We were both about 10 years old then. It was not a big plot of ground. Just a little garden sized piece of land about 100 feet by 100 feet behind their house.

My cousin began to raise a garden on the land his folks had given him. He would make money from it by raising vegetables, and then his parents would purchase the vegetables from him instead of buying it from the store. Not a bad deal! He could then spend the money on anything he wanted. They lived way out in the middle of nowhere, in Wyoming, so there were no store around. So he would buy what he wanted from the Sears and J.C. Penney mail order catalogs. I remember so well the great pride he took in that money he had earned. It gave him great satisfaction because not only was it "HIS "money that he had *earned* with *his* hard work, but also he could buy anything he wanted with it! It was liberating! We spent hours looking through those catalogs trying to decide what to buy. Need I mention there was not a weed anywhere in his garden?

So as I stood there in the chicken yard that day having that childhood memory, I said "Why not?" Why wouldn't that work for my son? I decided to try it. Therefore, when he came to the chicken yard that evening, I told him my new wonderful plan. I told him that I was going to *give* him the chickens. The chickens would be his very own. Then I told him that we would buy the eggs from him every day. I told him that he would then have to take the money he made from selling us the eggs and buy the chicken feed for the chickens to eat each week. Then, whatever money was left over would be his to keep. He could spend it any way he wanted. I was so amazed at how excited he was about it. You could see the dollar signs gleaming in his eyes. He just knew that he had found a way to make his first "fortune".

Days came and went as usual for all of us at the garden that summer, except for my oldest son and the chicken yard. I was so thrilled. He never missed. Eventually I was able to quit checking up on him every day to see if he had done his job. Each time I would check, just as I had hoped, all three jobs were done. He never missed. They were his chickens and he took even better care of them than I had done.

We decided to put a little chart up on the refrigerator door at home. Each day when he brought the eggs home he would put them in the refrigerator and mark on the chart how many eggs he had gathered. We paid him a little more money than regular store prices for the eggs so he was sure to make money doing it. He was doing really quite well financially for a 12 year old.

Each week I would go with Gene to the feed store and help him buy one sack of feed for the chickens. That was just enough to last until the next week. He had more money to spend than any kid in the neighborhood could even hope to have as a 12 year old. I was thrilled beyond words at how well it was working.

After several weeks of successful work with the chickens, I began to notice something unusual on the refrigerator door chart. It had a long list of numbers that went something like this: 18, 18, 17, 17, 17, 16, 16, 16, 16, 15, 15, 14, 14, 13, 13, 12, 12..... The egg production was going down a little every week. Not a lot, but a little each week. I did not say anything to him about it, but I knew what was happening. He was not out of feed at the end of each week like he should have been. However, they were his chickens and I wanted him to learn well the lesson of ownership. After all, it was like him having his own little business, and the both of us were happy with that.

However, as the weeks progressed, the numbers on the chart on the refrigerator door continued to go down. One weekend when it was time to buy feed again, I went over to the chicken yard to take him to the feed store. I could tell that he was not very happy to see me when I entered the yard. I ask him if he was ready to go to the store to buy feed for the chickens. However, he told me that we could not go. I asked him why. He said that he did not have enough money this week from the eggs to buy the feed. I knew he would not have enough money because there had been so few eggs that week; but I wanted to see if *he* knew why he didn't have the money.

I asked him why he did not have the money necessary to buy the feed this week and he said he didn't know. He said that the chickens had just not laid enough eggs. I asked him why the chickens had stopped laying and he again said, "I don't know." He said he fed them every day and never missed. He said he watered them every day and never missed. He said he gathered the eggs just like I told him every day and never missed. However, for some "mysterious" reason, they had stopped laying eggs. He said he just didn't know why!

Then I had an experience I will never forget the rest of my life. I asked him if he had cut down the amount of feed he had given the chickens every day. He got such a shocked look on his face when I asked him that question. It was as if he did not think anyone would ever figure out what he had done. I so well remember him looking down at the ground and nervously kicking little rocks with his foot. Finally, after a long silence, he looked completely away from me and said that he had cut down the amount of feed he had been giving the chickens each day. I asked him why, and he said that he thought if he gave them less food, he'd make more money. That was followed by another experience I will never forget. I called him by his name so he would look back at me. I wanted him to look me in the eye, which he did. I then asked him if he thought he had been fooling me. He was almost in tears and he said that yes, he thought he had fooled me. Then this powerful impression came into my mind and I heard the question in my mind, "did you fool the chickens?" I was just stunned that the question just popped into my head. I was rocked by the significance of it: the very thought of it. You can fool everyone else, but you can't fool the chickens. These events literally changed my life from that moment forward.

I have seen or heard about literally thousands of situations that remind me of my chicken yard story. Everywhere I go, I see people trying to fool their chickens. At work, I learned very quickly that, as a manager, I didn't need to watch my workers, because I could easily know when they had been working. I knew they weren't working when they took two hours to do a fifteen-minute job. I see over and over in life that you cannot fool the chickens.

I have seen so many people being unfaithful to their marriage partners on the sneak. I have seen many people try to be dishonest and get away with it, and they have, some of them, for a while. They thought they were fooling those around them, at first. In some cases, I even saw that they had been successful in fooling themselves. However, in the end, they found out you cannot fool the chickens. I guess it is the same lesson that was taught in the old saying, "what goes around comes around". So it is not some new lesson of life no one ever heard of before. I just learned it in what seemed to me to be a profound parable of life from one of my own children. You can sometimes fool your parents or spouse. Your boss or church or community leaders and friends can sometimes be fooled for a while. However, I know for certain, from many experiences in this life that when all is said and done, and when all is done that was said, you cannot fool the chickens, your friends, family, employer and especially, not yourself. The greatest of life's lessons I have ever learned is that one is either following the "rules" or one is not. And if one is not, one's "chickens" will eventually know it.

Therefore, some time in years to come, after I have passed away, if you are ever in Hyde Park Utah, I invite you to go to the city cemetery. You may get the surprise of your life, because I have asked my children to make me a solemn promise. It is a custom these days to have the names of all your children written on the back of your tombstone. I have asked them to promise me that when I die, they will put a special inscription on the back of my tombstone, below their names. The special inscription is to read, "YOU CAN'T FOOL THE CHICKENS". Most passers by will not know what on earth that means. Nevertheless, all of my descendants will know, and now you know too. That is my dying wish from my family, just a simple inscription on my tombstone.

Discussion Items:

1. What are some things that you have done in your life that may have been the same as trying to fool the chickens?
2. How can we know when we are trying to fool the chickens of life?
3. How is trying to fool the chickens related to trying to blame others for our troubles?
4. How is fooling the chickens related to dishonesty?
5. What are the results of dishonesty in our lives?
6. What can we do to change our lives so we are not trying to fool others; but rather accept responsibility for our own lives and the choices we make?

~~~~~

[Return to VCAA.com main page](#)  
[Return to Cordellvail.com main page](#)