

Big Potential

How Transforming the Pursuit of
Success Raises Our Achievement,
Happiness, and Well-Being

Shawn Achor

New York Times bestselling author of
The Happiness Advantage and *Before Happiness*

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Bestselling author Shawn Achor shows how to unlock hidden sources of potential in ourselves and others.

In a world that thrives on competition and individual achievement, we are measuring and pursuing potential all wrong. By pursuing success in isolation - pushing others away as we push ourselves too hard - we are not just limiting our potential, we are becoming more stressed and disconnected than ever.

In his highly anticipated follow-up to *The Happiness Advantage*, Achor reveals a better approach. Drawing on his work in 50 countries, he shows that success and happiness are not competitive sports. Rather, they depend almost entirely on how well we connect with, relate to, and learn from each other.

Just as happiness is contagious, every dimension of human potential - performance, intelligence, creativity, leadership ability and health - is influenced by those around us. So when we help others become better, we reach new levels of potential, as well. Rather than fighting over scraps of the pie, we can expand the pie instead.

Small Potential is the limited success we can attain alone. BIG Potential is what we can achieve together. Here, Achor offers five strategies - the SEEDS of Big Potential--for lifting the ceiling on what we can achieve while returning happiness and meaning to our lives.

The dramatic shifts in how we approach work today demand an equally dramatic shift in our approach to success. Big Potential offers a new path to thriving in the modern world.

Big Potential: How Transforming the Pursuit of Success Raises Our Achievement, Happiness, and Well-Being Details

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From Reader Review Big Potential: How Transforming the Pursuit of Success Raises Our Achievement, Happiness, and Well-Being for online ebook

Catherine Basu says

Shawn Achor has been my personal hero since I first watched his TED Talk a few years ago. I was not only struck by the fun story of Amy the unicorn, but also felt such hope and excitement as he revealed research showing that seemingly small actions can have a huge positive impact on our personal happiness and success as well as the happiness and success of our communities. I've since devoured his best-selling books and you bet I signed up to receive an advance copy of Big Potential. When my apartment's fire alarm went off before 5 AM one day (luckily a false alarm!), guess what I grabbed by instinct? My laptop, phone (I run my business off of both), and copy of Big Potential. Seriously! (Sorry, family photos and heirlooms!).

All kidding aside, this is a really important book that will prove invaluable to anyone looking to reach their own true, big potential as well as those hoping to help others in their quest to achieve great things.

I wish it had been available and required reading for parents when I was a teacher! I cringe to think of how many ways the current education system and, unfortunately, many parents, prevent students from reaching their big potential. Hint: If you're teaching your children that being #1 is the most important and only important thing, you are not setting them up for longterm success and happiness.

I'm really excited to share this book with fellow business owners, my sister (who I know will love some of the sleep time tips Shawn shared from his experiences with his own 3 yr-old, Leo), teacher friends, and more and to implement the advice myself to continue to encourage my team at Fit Armadillo to reach their Big Potential so we can together reach ours.

Thank you, Shawn, for all your work, inspiration, and sense of humor!

David says

All that's in me says, READ THIS BOOK. Shawn Achor has written an amazing work of nonfiction backed by research and carefully worded for major life transformation.

For the first time, we have a well-written book that allows each individual to shine like a star but to learn to do so as other bright stars shine around you.

In his words, to reach your big potential, you must do so in community. You can only go so far along and in your personal growth. Once you realize this truth, you find your path to big potential - teams of high level leadership. Stars shining bright in a universe of stars.

Learning your brightness combined with others shines far brighter and more attractive than anything you could ever do on your own. Again, READ THIS BOOK! You won't regret it. Trust me.

✿ Susan G says

[https://ayearofbooksblog.com/2018/04/...](https://ayearofbooksblog.com/2018/04/)

“Success is not just about how creative or smart or driven you are, but how well you are able to connect with, contribute to and benefit from the ecosystem of people around you”.

After reading *The Happiness Advantage*, I was quick to borrow *Big Potential: How Transforming the Pursuit of Success Raises Our Achievement, Happiness and Well-Being*, placing it on hold at the library before it was even released. My goal is to read a few leadership books amongst the fiction and this was a terrific change of pace after reading the Canada Reads short-listed books.

Shawn Achor's newest book considers the importance of connection and working together towards success moving away from ruthless competition. It is an easy read and offers everyday suggestions that can easily be adopted (such as writing a thank you note which not only makes others feel good but makes you feel good and encourages positive behaviour.

“Just as happiness is contagious, every dimension of human potential – performance, intelligence, creativity, leadership ability, and health – is influenced by those around us. So when we help others become better, we reach new levels of potential, as well. Rather than fighting over the pie, we can expand the pie instead”.

The book offers an acronym to remember the SEEDS of Big Potential:

SURROUND yourself with positive influencers

EXPAND your power by helping others lead from every seat

ENHANCE your resource by becoming a “prism of Praise”

DEFEND the system against negative attacks

SUSTAIN the gains by feeling the “virtuous cycle”

Shawn Achor offers some positive suggestions to working with others but if you only have time to read one of his books, I would suggest that *The Happiness Advantage* is the strongest choice. Looking for more?

Watch the YouTube video that has had over 2.28 million views and chuckle at his story about his sister, “the Unicorn”.

“The key to real leadership is inspiring others to be leaders”.

Charles Dean says

This book comes out in February, but I got it early from the author for pre-ordering it on Amazon.

While it's based on the ideas in Achor's earlier books, this book emphasizes the role of others in achieving your potential. In short, there are no superstars in isolation.

What I like most about this new book is that it's chock-full of strategies for reaching your potential. I can't wait to discuss this book with others to see what ideas it leads to for us!

Jill says

The methods, strategies and research developed by top positive psychologist, presented in Big Potential, will be a tool that I wield again and again.

"The average age of being diagnosed with depression in 1978 was twenty-nine. In 2009, the average age was fourteen and a half. Over the past decade, depression rates for adults have doubled, as have hospitalization for attempted suicide for children as young as eight years old."

This statistic, found on page 22, is staggering, but even more frightening it is unsurprising. With the creation of social media, bullying has only increased. Lately, the news seems fraught with stories of violence, bullying and underage deaths which support the findings above. As a graduate of Harvard, Shawn Achor witnessed (and experienced) the depression that comes from no longer being the superstar students once were in high school. Not to mention the me, me, me, individualistic ideals breed in the traditional workplace. These feelings combined with the constant barrage of negative certainly play a strong role in the statistics cited above.

"The decades-long study in Framingham, Massachusetts, has revealed powerful findings about the relationship between social connections and our cardiovascular health. While the results of their research are far too wide-reaching and complex to fully address here, the main takeaway I had from that meeting was that they found having healthy individuals in our community or network actually increase the chances that we ourselves will be healthier." (p.40)

Literally put, having friends and meaningful social connections helps your physical health. Get off Facebook or Instagram, surround yourself with positively health conscious friends and in turn stimulate happiness, healthiness and prosperity (okay the prosperity is just assumed).

"Given how contagious negativity is, surrounding yourself with optimists is like giving yourself a flu shot against stress and apathy."

2017-2018 brought with it the most flu caused deaths in as long as I've been alive. For this reason, the quote above from page 73 stuck out to me. Aligned with the cardiovascular research, this point hammers home the importance in who you surround yourself with as it has a direct effect on your health. Shed the negative people like you hope to shed your winter weight, they aren't good for you, so protect yourself and your health.

"The brilliant Amy Wrzesniewski, professor of organizational behavior at Yale University's School of Management, has dedicated much of her research to expanding meaning in our work. According to her research, people view their occupations in one of three ways: as a job, a career, or a calling. A job is merely something to endure in order to get a salary. A career is work that gives you prestige or position within society. A calling is work that you view as integral to your identity and meaning in life, an expression of who you are that gives you a feeling of fulfillment and meaning." (p. 109)

This was not my first time reading these specific descriptions surrounding our work as it relates to job, career and calling. When I first came across these three work descriptors (job, career and calling), I was working for a large company, in a dull workplace, with people that had been in their roles for many, many years. I asked them each how they would define their current position, given the definitions presented above, and EVERY SINGLE ONE said they viewed their work as just a job...that's when I knew it may be time to start looking

for a new job, and more positive surroundings.

Defining your work in one of these three categories requires some serious self-reflection. I was fortunate to realize quickly in my career that I needed to find something more than just a job. Spending much of your day in a role you defined as “merely something to endure in order to get a salary” was not only going to depress me, but cause strains on my marriage and personal relationships outside of work. Reflecting on the positions I’d had that didn’t feel like a job, no matter how menial or what my age was at the time of employment, allowed me to focus my career search more adequately.

“One of the most common mistakes I see people make, [is] with praise: giving such compliments as 'Your report was better than Jack's' or 'You're the smartest person in the room' or 'You were the best player out there on the field.' Why? Because what you are actually doing is comparing not praising. You are attempting to prop people up by kicking others down!” (p. 120)

This may be my biggest take away from this book. Having been a competitive athlete through the collegiate level I am extremely guilty of providing others with comparison praise. In banking, this type of praise is ingrained in us, our success is literally measured on how well EACH of us individually grew the overall loan or deposit balances and how well we compared via benchmarks to our competitors. It starts from the time we are born, but we are past due, the “at least you were better than that guy” mentality needs to be wiped away. Comparison praise plants the seed of self-doubt that feeds into our individualistic society.

“Dr. Seligman stated these wise words: ‘Action is not driven by the past, but pulled by the future.’” (p. 199)

Ultimately, the act of determining your future, whether it be by setting goals for yourself or the dreams of others, propels you, your energy and your motivation forward. In summation, readers must continue to strive for the goals they’ve set, using the positive techniques, strategies and insight given to them by Shawn Achor in Big Potential to pull them towards their bright, bright futures.

For the full review, please visit: <http://fortheloveofthepageblog.wordpress.com/2013/09/17/big-potential-by-shawn-achor/>

*Disclaimer: a copy of this book was provided by Blogging for Books in exchange for an honest review.

Shannon Kauderer says

Great information and easy to read.

Much of it was ideas and research I had seen already, but presented in such a well done fashion that it was worthwhile. Lots of actionable items.

I would be more likely to choose this over other books to loan to friends on the start of their self improvement journey, though less likely for those already on their way.

Victoria says

I'm a Shawn Achor fan (loved his previous book *The Happiness Advantage* & his TED Talks). He is smart, funny, and backs up his positive psychology with research and case histories. Some of his conclusions might sound like pop psych bumper stickers until you read the details that went into his research and you realize his stories are actually quite profound. E.g., Helping others literally makes you feel better. Watching negative news literally makes you sad. And here's one of my favorites: Taking ALL your vacation time increases your chances at getting a raise! This book has many profound moments - applicable for both career and home.

Bottom line is this: Don't view success as a lone competition. If you help others succeed then you will succeed. "Big potential isn't about trying to go faster alone. It's about working to become better together."

But bottom-lining a book like this doesn't do it justice. You could simply skim some of his main points and research results to have one - or two - or three - "aha!" moments. He even puts key points in bold text. Nice!

Patty says

In this book, Shawn takes the latest research on happiness and potential and gives us the formula to make great improvements in our lives **WITH** the help of others. With evidence revealing that relationships are the "secret sauce" of living a long and happy life, Shawn gives us a step by step guide as to how we can also **ALL** achieve more with the help of one another. As he did with his other books, Shawn masterfully weaves the latest evidence with personal anecdotes and experiences that bring the research to life. His style makes it easy to quickly devour the book and look for opportunities to put his strategies into practice.

I'm a huge Shawn Achor fan. His TED talk inspired me to learn more about positive psychology and the science of happiness. Summer 2016 I was fortunate enough to hear him speak and meet him at a book signing. After, I felt compelled to go back to grad school for a certificate in positive psychology (completed Dec 2017). Read all his books, watch his talks, and listen to his interviews. Everything he says is based on research and experience. His life's work is dedicated to improving the wellbeing of others. His sister (Amy Blankson) and wife (Michelle Gielan) are also fantastic writers, speakers, and researchers. I recommend checking out the entire dynamic family!

Jessica Bucci says

Big Potential carries a vast amount of motivational themes surrounding leadership, teamwork, and success. Shawn Achor illustrates the concept that pursuing success with others leads to better results. Sharing one's achievements with others can have a positive domino effect, especially among co-workers.

The book contains lots of great advice, applicable to different situations and work environments. I look forward to sharing the messages I learned with my co-workers about teamwork and leadership. Shawn stresses the idea that leaders don't have to have a fancy title or be the same person. Different leaders can emerge from group to group and project to project. Managers should encourage leadership in all respects to grow.

I was hesitant, at first, to read this book, as sometimes I don't get out what I should from these types of books. I believe one has to be in the right learning mindset to absorb the lessons introduced. I choose to read

this book during the day, as a supplement to another fiction book I read at night, to keep myself in a learning mindset. Shawn's writing style is simple enough that any reader can take away something and apply it to their life. But, Shawn also includes enough detail for those wanting to delve deeper into certain concepts and expand their knowledge base. I found some sections to be quite repetitive (which I know can be a successful teaching and learning strategy), which is why I rated the book a 4 out of 5.

I would recommend reading *Big Potential* in sections, specifically chapter by chapter. There is a lot of material cover, and readers will miss certain messages by rushing through it. The steps and strategies introduced need to be absorbed piece by piece for readers to have the most success. I believe managers have much to gain by reading this book, however the material is applicable to all audiences.

Charmin says

1. Be a superstar in a constellation of superstars. Average individual team members can possess collective intelligence, leading to higher success rates vs. individual geniuses. When you work to help make others more successful, you in turn take the invisible cap off your own success. *Protégé Effect*: We learn better when we teach others rather than study simply for the sake of individual knowledge.
2. True leadership is about caring enough to find solutions to problems, instead of continually shifting the blame. Truly forward-thinking leaders recognize that letting their employees slow down is one of the best strategies for creating a productive workforce.
3. Celebrate others and celebrate our own wins. Celebrations are the ultimate motivating force, because they not only highlight a high moment in our life, they simultaneously ARE a high moment in and of themselves. Reinforces a more empowered self-image and helps them see a vivid image of themselves.
4. Renewable Resource is the power to multiply when we tap into the potential of people around us.
5. You can be a superstar; you just can't be a superstar alone. The key to real leadership is inspiring others to be leaders. Surround yourself with a stronger system.
6. Virtuous Cycle: upward spiral of potential, with each success, you garner more resources, which allow you to achieve greater success.
7. The more diverse your ecosystem, the stronger and more resilient it is. Pillars, Bridges, Extenders. We need to limit our exposure to "collaborative overload" by not trying to be everything to everyone, and being strategic about who we form connections with.
8. Trying to carry all the leadership responsibility alone is the quickest path to burnout. You simply cannot meet those demands unless you EXPAND responsibility and the work of leadership to everyone who has a stake in the mission. For power to expand it needs to be recognized, desired, and reinforced.
9. Big Potential praise shines on the support system that made high performance possible. Collective wins should get collective praise. The more specific you are, the more authentic the praise will feel and the more likely people will be to bounce it back to others. Turns other people into praise providers. Praise is a renewable resource, don't compare.

10. Whatever seat we sit in, we have the power to create change worth celebrating. The more we celebrate, the more we enrich our lives with meaning.

Simple Actions: Build a Moat around daily routine: no media before breakfast/coffee, no media after lying in bed. Meeting Detox: objectively assess the value of each of the meetings before they added it back into their workday diet.

Jadelyn Bailey says

Achor's points to overcome small potential and move safe through life as opposed to taking some risks outside your comfort zone and reach big potential are simplified into SEEDS: Surround, Expand, Enhance, Defend, and Sustain. Although these actionable steps have research to back them up and seem easy, they are not. My difficulty in application may lie in my personal circumstances while reading this book. My mother was dying and I chose to go be with her for several weeks. I don't know how much of the book processed when I was processing so many other concepts at the same time. I did not finish the book then. I read bits and pieces as I returned home and daily tried to connect with my mom who wanted me to write her obituary and eulogy. It was Christmas and my kids were home from college. I didn't feel I was fulfilling anything well let alone absorbing this information. After my mom passed I focused on self compassion for several weeks. Finally in February I finished this book. At some point I need to read this book again to understand the virtuous cycle and apply these things in the space I reside. How do I contribute to success of the greater good?

Petra says

I won this book in a GR Giveaway in exchange for an honest review.

If one is unaware of the concepts within, this book is enlightening. It outlines the concepts of working together as a team, allowing each individual to be the best they can be....to lead, in their own expertise ("The key to real leadership is inspiring others to be leaders") and stating that a leader cannot shine without his/her team behind them.

If one is aware of these concepts, this is an easy read book that is laden with reminders of the importance of not forgetting to include your team in your successes, how to engage them in a positive manner and how to include them in planning & scope. Without the team, there would be no successes.

An easy, interesting read. Working together as a team is a concept I endorse. Having reminders such as in this book keeps one focussed.

Allison ?hikes the bookwoods? says

We need to stop asking "How many points did you score?" and start asking "How did you help your team

win?"

This is the premise of Shawn Achor's latest book, encouraging a shift from thinking about success as the achievement of an individual, to the support team that helped that individual reach full potential. The book is a nice collection of optimistic ideas to promote a positive attitude in the workplace (or any organization).

Niels Philbert says

No doubt, that Shawn is great at what he does, the book is ticking off boxes of good research, engaging writing style and a lot of casestories. I would have like to have more concrete examples of what to implement exactly instead of multiple case stories, that skim the surface.

Donna says

I've read this author's other book, *The Happiness Advantage: The Seven Principles of Positive Psychology That Fuel Success and Performance at Work*, and I really liked that one. It seemed so applicable. I liked this book too, but for some reason, it didn't seem as "real" to me. But I like this author. I like his honesty and I LOVE his positive approach to life and how to get the most from life. He seems like the guy next door and I also like the fact that he narrates his own audios. So, three stars because I am a fan of his message.
